

THE FRIEND CONNECTION



5: Friendship Between Men and Women

[Sermon preached on Sunday 6th May 2018]

Resources needed: Bibles, a bowl of colourful fruit and a marker pen.

WELCOME

Icebreaker: If you were holding a fantasy dinner party with famous people, which members of the opposite sex would you find it interesting to invite, and why?

BIBLE FOCUS

Esther and Mordecai. What friendship qualities do we see in this opposite-sex relationship, which moved from being like father and daughter to being peers and co-workers for the good of the Jewish people? (e.g. respect, honour, concern, integrity, commitment, mutual submission, harmony, challenge, encouragement of growth and acceptance of authority). See Esther 2:5-7, 19-20; 4:1-17; 9:29-10:3 etc.

PRAYER TIME



Have a bowl of colourful fruits, each labelled in pen with the one of the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23. Have people choose one and think for a few minutes about how Jesus modelled it in his life and relationships. Spend time praying together, thanking Jesus for his example of what God is like and what we can be like, and praying for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

DISCUSSION

1. What value do opposite-sex friendships have? Is there anything we have found them to provide which is different from same-sex friendships?
2. What do you think God loves and hates about the relationships between the sexes today? What do you think he wants to see?
3. How could the church be counter-cultural and provide a good model to society concerning opposite-sex friendships? Why are we well-placed to be different? See Galatians 3:26-28

4. 1 Timothy 5:1-2 says we honour our fellow Christians by treating them with “absolute purity” as fathers and brothers, mothers and sisters. What does this look like in our friendships with the opposite sex?

5. In Titus 2:1-6 Christians of all ages are urged to exercise self-control. The Collins English dictionary defines self-control as “the ability to exercise restraint or control over one's feelings, emotions, reactions, etc”. How and why do we need to exercise self-control in our relationships with the opposite sex?

6. Can men and women ever be just friends without sex or attraction getting in the way? Which of the arguments below do you agree with?

A. NO - See You Tube clip, When Harry Met Sally... (2/11) Movie CLIP - Men and Women Can't Be Friends (1989) HD (2:22 mins), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEV_pQlf3Og

(Please note that this is not a clip which everyone would want to watch, as it speaks explicitly and humorously about sex, so please watch it in advance and use your discretion in deciding whether to use it, so that you do not cause offence).

B. YES - ‘Lived experience contradicts the claim that opposite-sex friendships are impossible—rather, non-romantic cross-sex friendships after marriage become indispensable, speaker Elizabeth Chapin said. “They've helped expand my understanding of what it means to be a woman who is not just an object of sexual desire, but a valuable human with ideas, feelings, and experiences.” From an article: “The Benefits of Men and Women Being Friends, Even if One Is Married” by Hugo Schwyzer, May 1, 2013, www.theatlantic.com

7. What boundaries do you think appropriate for: (a) Friendships between single people of the opposite sex, and (b) Friendships between married and single people of the opposite sex?

8. How can married people avoid becoming complacent about their relationship, and instead maintain their friendship? What are the benefits and challenges?

9. Is friendship the best foundation for dating and marriage? How does this square with online dating (which has recently become the primary way people meet a partner)?

10. How can BEC become a place where single people do not feel marginalised or lonely, but can have healthy friendships with both sexes? How can you help to create this culture?

WORSHIP ACTIVITY

“Do not forget to do good and to share with others for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Hebrews 13:16
Think of people known to your group who are in need of friendship at this point of their lives, and invite them to a meal as your offering of worship to God. Don't only invite those who are easy company, but choose people for whom this will be a significant blessing. Remember that Jesus is among you and that your offer of hospitality, generosity, acceptance and kindness to others is a picture of him.