Outside The Box Series #3 - **Outside The Box Friendships**

**We’ve been talking about the Out Of The Box Church!**

* We knew when we *started this church* that it **would not be a traditional church.**
* **Our desire** was to build a church ***without walls or restraints*** that would *reach this community* and *advance the Kingdom of God* locally.

I want to belong to an ***Out Of The Box Church***, how about you?

**Last week we talked about Outside The Box Evangelism!**

**Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man…**

**Observers or Participants? – Jesus was cut short mid-sentence and *confronted with a needy man* and *four determined friends*.**

* **The four friends who had heard about Jesus *stepped forward in Faith*.**
* **They became *active participants* in the Kingdom of God bringing their friend to Jesus for a miracle.**
* It is **our desire** to do exactly that. **Whatever we must do…**

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**Today we are talking about Out Of The Box Friendships.**

**We are so glad to have all our friends here today.**

* We purposely called today’s service ***“Out Of The Box Friendships”***

**Proverbs 18:24 – NIV - 24One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.**

**Proverbs 18:24 – CEV - 24Some friends don't help, but *a true friend is closer than your own family*.**

**What does the Bible say about friends?**

Human beings were created to be **relational,** and **friendships** are an important part of our lives.

**We need friends—people *we bond with* in mutual affection.**

**But *not just any friend* will do;** having ***the right*** *friends* is key, and ***discernment* is required:**

**Proverbs 12:26 -The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.**

***In Scripture, we see what a***[***true friend***](https://www.gotquestions.org/true-friendship.html)***should be:***
**A true friend** shows love, no matter what ([Proverbs 17:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2017.17)).
**A true friend** gives heartfelt advice, bringing joy to the heart ([Proverbs 27:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2027.9)).
**A true friend** rebukes when necessary, but the correction is done in love ([Proverbs 27:5–6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2027.5%E2%80%936)).
**A true friend** influences, enlivens, and sharpens ([Proverbs 27:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2027.17)).
**A true friend** avoid gossip ([Proverbs 16:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2016.28)).
**A true friend** forgives and does not hold grudges ([Proverbs 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2017.9)).
**A true friend** is loyal ([Proverbs 18:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2018.24)).
**A true friend** helps in time of need ([Ecclesiastes 4:9–12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eccles%204.9%E2%80%9312)).

**One of the greatest biblical examples of friendship** is [***David and Jonathan***](https://www.gotquestions.org/David-and-Jonathan.html)***,*** son of King Saul.

***Jonathan’s loyalty to his friend, David***, *exceeded that to his own father* and his own ambitions.

**Friendship can have its negative aspects as well.**

* **Supposed friends can lead us into sin,** as when Jonadab counseled Amnon to rape his half-sister, Tamar ([2 Samuel 13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Sam%2013.1%E2%80%936)).
* **A friend can lead us astray spiritually,** as Israel was warned about ([Deuteronomy 13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut%2013.6%E2%80%9311)).
* **Even well-intentioned friends can provide false comfort and give bad advice**, as *Job’s friends* did, making his suffering worse and displeasing the Lord.
* **People we thought were friends can prove false**, deserting us when ***our friendship no longer benefits them***.

**For all these reasons and more, friends should be chosen carefully.**

**As Paul taught,**

[**1 Corinthians 15:33**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2015.33) **- “Bad company corrupts good character.”**

[**Proverbs 1:10–19**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%201.10%E2%80%9319) ***warns us against those who entice us to do wrong.***

***We should not associate with evildoers***, no matter how great **the promised reward** or ***how appealing their “friendship” seems to be***.

Those whose **“feet rush to sin”** should be avoided at all costs.

The path they choose is ***no place for a Christian*** whose choice should be **to follow the “*path of the righteous*.”**

**Only that path leads to *friendship with God*.**

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**In the world that we live in, good friendships are hard to find.**

* **Technology** is constantly causing our interactions with other people to become **less and less authentic**.
* Things like *email* and *texting* and *Facebook* allow us **to communicate with our friends**, but **they do not** allow us the opportunity for ***face-to-face conversation and companionship***.

While these ***modern-day*** *ways of communicating* **are convenient**, they can *never take the place of real people connecting* with real people ***face to face***.

**Strong relationships are usually forged through adversity.**

* As with most anything, ***fire* causes things** to be *tempered and strengthened*.
* ***Steel* becomes hardened** *only* after it has been *heated and cooled* **repeatedly.**
* In the same sense *relationships that have endured hardship* are most often ***the strongest* of relationships**.

***The friendships in this room that have the strongest relationships, have probably been though a few things together.***

* **Friends** *care* **about you.**
* **Friends** *will share something* **they enjoy** with you.
* They will *introduce you to people* **who can help you.**

**The reason** many of us are here today is because ***someone thought enough of you that they wanted to share*** this service, this church with you today.

* They have found something **good**.
* They have found something **that makes sense**.
* They have found something **that has helped them**.
* And they wanted to share it **with you today**.
* **You mean something** to them.
* **They care** *about you*.
* **They are concerned** *about you*. **You are their friend!**

**Most often in a church, people become casual friends.**

* They shake hands and greet one another.
* But very often ***do not*** have a connection the rest of the week.

While these people ***share an intimate experience*** each week ***as they worship God together,*** they most often *know* ***very little*** *about* **what is going on in the other people’s lives** the rest of the week.

* The *hardships and trials* most of us endure throughout the week ***are too often unknown*** *to the rest of us*.

**Most** churches create ***casual relationships.***

 ***Here***, we work hard *to* ***create close*** *relationships* between members that would **cause help and encouragement to develop** between one another.

* This is **why** we ***focus on the youth ministry. Lighthouse!!!!***
* This is why we focus on the ***Celebrate Recovery ministry***.
* This is why we are a discipleship church Project 52.
* **We don’t want *casual relationships* here…**
* **We don’t want** *handshakes and smiles* alone…
* *We want to develop genuine* **Out of the Box relationships**.

***The strongest families are families who have the strongest relationships.***

* ***The strongest Churches*, ones with Close Relationships.**

We cannot be an **Outside the Box church** *if all we have* are ***casual relationships***.

* We’ve got to **get to know** one another.
* We must **help** one another.
* We’ve got to learn to ***love one another***.

***Why* would I help you if I do not Love you, and how can I love you if I do not know you?**

A church that has only ***casual relationships*** **will not reach** its community.

**It will not** care about the needs of those ***who look to it for direction/help.***

**Church should be *the first* place** a family thinks of when they are ***struggling with their relationships.***

* **Healing** should come from the church.
* ***Help*** should come from the church.
* ***Spiritual guidance*** should come from the church.

**Church should be the place** where ***families and communities*** *come together to* *support*, *encourage*, and *love* **one another.**

***A dysfunctional church*** will create *dysfunctional families* and **dysfunctional families** create *dysfunctional communities*.

**Help, healing, spiritual guidance, and a relationship with Jesus Christ starts here!**

* **This IS the Church of the Living God**
* **He desires to have relationship with you and I.**

**James 2:23 - And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend.**

**What an amazing thing to be called… *“A Friend Of God”***

**How does someone become a friend of God?**

* Well, ***it doesn’t happen by staying home on Sunday*** mornings, I’ll tell you that.
* **It starts like any relationship, *with an introduction*…**

**John 1:45 - 45**Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” **46**“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.” ***Come and see,” said Philip.***

**Have you ever *heard someone say* something like that about *church or God*?**

* **What good** is there in going to church?
* **Why** would I want to go there?
* **What’s** so big about God?

**“Come and See!!!**

* As hard as you try, *you’ll never be able to explain* to people ***all that God can do*** for them.
* ***You just need to*** get them here.
* “**Come check it out**!” “**See for yourself**”

I’ve had a lot of people tell me **that the roof of the church would fall in** if they came to church, but I have yet to see a roof fall in.

***I have found as many of you have,*** that the people *who come here,* **have found that God** is and can be ***an amazing friend*** to have.

* There is **a friend that sticks closer** *than a brother* and ***his name is Jesus***
* He is there ***all*** *the time*.
* He **doesn’t mind** you calling him up *in the middle of the night* ***to tell him your problems.***
* **He is concerned about** your job and your family and the things that you are concerned about.
* **He invites us all** *to ask anything*…

**CLOSE:**

**Luke 11:9 - Keep Asking, Seeking, Knocking -** “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

**“*Anything you need*!” - Jesus says to you and me today, *ask and it shall be given to you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you.***

**It really is amazing what kind of friendship that God wants to have with you and I.**

* We may **not deserve** His friendship…
* We may **not want** His friendship…
* We may **not think** we are worthy of it,

**John 15:15 - I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.**

**The greatest friend anyone could possibly have is Jesus Christ. He gladly calls us friends.**

**He proved His commitment and affection for us in a convincing way:**

**John 15:13 - Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.**

**Jesus wants to have a relationship with you and I that is outside the box.**

* One that is **not a casual friendship**.
* One that is **not self-serving**
* ***One that helps and encourages and blesses.***