



John uses the image of a vine (probably a grape vine) that bears fruit. The repeated references to fruit bearing emphasize that this is God's purpose for humanity and all creation going back to the earliest descriptions of creation in Genesis 1:11-12. God has made us to flourish and bear fruit.

In John 15, we learn how flourishing happens: when we abide in Christ and Christ abides in us. Jesus continues to explain what this means by saying to his disciples you are my friends. This implies a stunning level of comfortable, personal interaction with the eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful Creator of the universe.

Pete Scazzero hosts the Emotionally Healthy Leadership podcast and in this episode he shares his research on what we can learn from 3-4th Century Christian practices of silence.

Starting this Sunday at 9am, there will be a class called Spiritual Practices held in the Madison Library. We will be using Tish's book as a jumping off point.

Scripture Reading

John 15:4, 12-17, 26-27

Friendship with God

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Discussion

1. Recall a time you have felt close to Jesus in a way that you felt known and loved by Jesus. (A time you felt God's forgiveness in a fresh way. A time you narrowly escaped danger or a foolish decision. An ordinary moment.)
2. Recall a time you felt you genuinely knew Jesus (even if you were aware there was still much to know about God) and loved Him. In your life, what are some of the frequent barriers to the sort of intimacy with God described in John 15?
3. What are some practical next steps you could take to practice a posture of silence with God? What are other ways to "abide in Christ"?

Sources

- *Listen* Emotionally Healthy Leadership podcast from 09/25/18 <https://goo.gl/QxDaQA>
- *Read* [Liturgy of the Ordinary](#) by Tish Harrison Warren
- *Meditate:* John 15

Closing Prayer

Friendship with God

Review: We have discussed how friendship is a form of love marked by mutual vulnerability and mutual intimacy and shared affinities. Spiritual friendship has a shared affinity for God and, more specifically, an affinity for Christ who laid down his life for us and calls us friends. We are able to love as a true friend, genuinely caring for the other person (not simply friends for utility or for pleasure) when we know Christ's self-giving love for us. In week two, we looked at the significance of Jesus coming in person and committing to deepening relationship with a relatively small group of friends. We wrote down a list of "active friends" we would like to deepen connection with using social media but also other non-digital ways of connecting. In week three, we looked at how Jesus had a diverse friend group and how He uniquely brings about unity while honoring diversity in His reconciling work because all you need is need. Today, we look at what it means to be called "friend" by Jesus.

Friendship with Christ and Dependence upon Christ

Jesus calls us friend. But how do we become friends with the person we are dependent on for forgiveness? For protection? For salvation? For even our own existence? How can we be friends while being utterly *dependent*? How can we be friends with someone we can't even see? We are *dependent* on Him to reveal Himself to us in the account of eye witnesses and the work of His Holy Spirit. How does our *dependance* upon Christ make our friendship unique? How does understanding friendship as *dependance* shape our experience of all friendships?

How Christ Forgives

David Whyte, a Marine Biologist turned poet philosopher and Whidbey Island resident, writes with a great deal of insight about friendship: "Friendship is a mirror to presence and a testament to forgiveness. Friendship not only helps us see ourselves through another's eyes, but can be sustained over the years only with someone who has repeatedly forgiven us for our trespasses." We can recognize in our friendships the need to be forgiven in order for the relationship to continue. This is in an ultimate way also recognizable in our relationship to Jesus. Closeness to the Holy One requires our forgiveness.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace. | [Eph 1:7](#)

How Christ Sees Us

David Whyte: "Through the eyes of a real friendship an individual is larger than their everyday actions, and through the eyes of another we receive a greater sense of our own personhood, one we can aspire to, the one in whom they have the most faith." *And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people' | Hosea 2:23*

How Christ's Friendship Transforms All Relationships

David Whyte: "Friendship is the great hidden transmuter of all relationship: it can transform a troubled marriage, make honorable a professional rivalry, make sense of heartbreak and unrequited love and become the newly discovered ground for a mature child-parent relationship."

[Jesus Christ] is before all things, and in him all things hold together. | Colossians 1:17

How Christ's Grace is Expressed in Friendship

David Whyte: "The ultimate touchstone of friendship is not improvement, neither of the other nor of the self, the ultimate touchstone is witness, the privilege of having been seen by someone and the equal privilege of being granted the sight of the essence of another, to have walked with them and to have believed in them, and sometimes just to have accompanied them for however brief a span, on a journey impossible to accomplish alone."

Jesus said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." | Luke 5 The ultimate touchstone of our friendship with Christ is that He meets us in our need. He doesn't leave us where He finds us, but what qualifies us for His friendship and what allows us to continue to grow in our friendship with Christ is a recognition that we are dependent upon Him. We do not graduate from being dependent upon Him. This is what the *abiding* imagery captures— a branch is dependent on its connection to the vine to survive and bear fruit.

The Importance of Silence in Friendship with Christ

3-5th Century desert monks practiced abiding with "silence" and referred to a place of silence as "the cell." As a fish must return to sea, so we must return to our cell. — a desert monk named Athanasius. Silence that is attentive time to God where we let nothing get in the way. It is also how we help ourselves to receive God in the ordinary work and bustle of life.