Friendship Redefined

Week 2 We need human touch.

Mike Colaw

I want to circle back around to the new liturgy we introduced last week based on John 13:35.

Here is how it will work. I will say the first part and you can respond.

Worship leader:

How will they know that we are Christ’s disciples?

Congregation:

By our love for one another.

Just a reminder this whole series coincides with the book we produced for the church family. Each chapter aligns with the weekly sermons.

Let’s do a quick review so far.

Week One: We are made to be interdependent not independent.

Week Two: We are made for human touch.

Illustration:

Last week Leslie and I took our staff on our annual retreat. We were going to be gone for one night. As many of you know our kids are divided age wise. The older kids don’t really care anymore. We let them know we will be gone, and the response is simply, “Cool, have fun.”

But when you sit the little ones down and let them know you will be gone things get crazy. All heck breaks loose. Tears, outbursts of unfair rejection, doubts that we truly love them. It’s all there. I was laying down with the little girls and reminded them they could Facetime in the evening. It’s almost like we were really there.

The response was decisive and clear. “No daddy, it’s not the same.”

Interesting…

Even the little ones who are growing up around technology and use it well know deep down, it’s not the same.

They want daddy to hold them.

The research offed in chapter two of the book Friendships Redefined reveals this.

Oxytocin, often referred to as the 'bonding' or 'cuddle hormone,' is closely associated with physical touch. The release of oxytocin during healthy physical interactions enhances feelings of well-being, safety, and connectedness among individuals. (pg. 26-26, Friendships Redefined)

Scholar Fr. Michael Baggot points out that we are living an ever-increasing disembodied life. The problem is this disembodied life is starving a key element of being human, personal engagement.

(Pints With Aquinas Podcast, Here’s Why People are Smashing Their Smart Phones, Feb 14, 2024)

Here is a way to say it.

God designed you to need real, in person, human engagement. This can be as simple as a friendly handshake, high five, or grandbaby sitting on a grandparent’s lap. It can also be as unique and special as God-honoring sexual activity.

Lectio:

There is a story that Jesus uses to describe how God wants to interact with us. It’s called the Parable of the Prodigal Son. In this story we have a rebellious boy who embarrasses, squanders and rejects his family. When he finally realizes how lonely and foolish he has been he returns home. Listen to how Jesus describes the relationally present heart of God.

Luke 15:20

**20**And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.[[1]](#footnote-2)

Meditatio:

* God desires to be physically present with His people.
  + Think of God walking in the Garden with Adam.
  + Think of the Incarnation of Jesus.
  + Think of Christ’s second coming.
* God desires for His children to be held and embraced.
  + Think of how God designed reproduction.
  + Think of how God models reconciliation.
  + Think of how Jesus healed people.
  + Think of how God is described as a “Father”.
* Heaven itself is right presence with God and God’s people.

So, there I am tucking my little girl into bed. I’m telling her we will be gone for one night. I’m working hard to convince her our digital engagement is enough. She knows very little science. She has no idea what Oxytocin is. Yet intrinsically she is aware that real presence is required for real relationships. I can’t just send her a text, send her a video or even Facetime with her. Nothing compares to daddy actually holding her.

Real relationships require you to be really present.

Let’s circle back around one more time today to the new liturgy we introduced last week based on John 13:35.

Worship leader:

How will they know that we are Christs’ disciples?

Congregation:

By our love for one another.

Love requires you to be present and to physically engage with others.

Actio:

(Next Steps)

What environments is God calling you to make time to be physically present in?

Would you consider making time for God’s family?

1. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Lk15.20&off=0&ctx=+hired+servants.%E2%80%9D%C2%A0%E2%80%99+~20%C2%A0And+he+arose+and+) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 15:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)