

## **A Church of Friends** **Philippians 2:1-11**

*Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

*5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

*6*

*Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

*7*

*rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.*

*8*

*And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!*

*9*

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,*

*10*

*that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

*11*

*and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.*



### **The Genius of a Small Church**

I have been a pastor of churches much bigger than F3C.  
I have also visited mega churches with over ten thousand.  
I have visited churches with a handful.

When we planted F3C I often had to deal with the inevitable questions that people would ask: How big is your church now?

At first there was some angst in answering because although we grew in the first three years, we plateaued around 50.

All the church growth gurus and church planting projects always looked towards growth as evidence of effectiveness.

Even folks in our own community sometimes grew restless as other church plants took off and grew large. But there is a secret to churches that people don't teach in church growth.

You see, there was a church leader who, on all accounts was a terrible church planter.

He preached well, and even attracted people in the thousands but mostly, he worked on training and discipling a very small core group of people.

The thousands dwindled to a couple dozen and even then those in his core group left when things became difficult.

He was a terrible church planter.

But I look up to him and make him the model of our church.

His name was Jesus of Nazareth.

He is the messiah, the son of God, died on a cross and was resurrected from the dead.

He is the Saviour of the entire world.

He is our Lord and our God.

He was not building a church on being popular.

He was not about bigger is better.

He said, that anyone who would follow him must deny themselves and take up their cross daily.

He taught that there was a narrow gate with a narrow path and that few would find it because they preferred the wide and easy path.

This is not to say that a Jesus is against big churches, not at all.

But big churches get a lot of press while the majority of the church remains small.

The worldwide church consists of very few mega churches.

[\[http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2015/spring/your-small-church-is-big.html\]](http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2015/spring/your-small-church-is-big.html)



The global mission is not being accomplished primarily by big churches but by little ones.



The kingdom of God is not about empire building.

It is not about domination, numbers, money, assets.

The kingdom of God is a kingdom of hearts - of people.

It is a kingdom of friends.

What I love about our church and my hope is that you discover this for yourself is that at our core we are a church of friends.

### **Exposition of Passage**

Like Christ our true friend

We express him to each other and the world

### **Strive for Depth of Friendship in Direction & Understanding**

*1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.*

If being loved by Christ, being in friendship with him, then we are to be:

**Like-minded** is the word *phroneo*, meaning understanding.

We are not to be like-minded like robots but to have a common understanding.

One of the deepest aspects of friendship is understanding because it allows for grace.

Friendships can be threatened by mis-understanding so we need to communicate honestly and clearly.

It means we need to take initiative.

A **same love** is the word *agape* - which is a divine love.

Being **one in spirit** is actually *sympsuchoi* - one souled and knowing.

In English we may have a similar term when we say we are kindred spirits.

All of this put together is a composite picture of a people who are in sympathy, in understanding of one another.

Finally **one in mind - again** the word *phroneo* - perspective, understanding, direction.

This is what Christ's example leads us towards.

Our unity is one of relationship with Christ.

It is visceral, psychological and spiritual.

How does one achieve this?

### **Humility is the Foundation of Friendship & the Kingdom**

Attitude of humility paramount

*3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

### **Questions**

What are your fears or ambitions?

Are you capable of valuing others more than yourself?

Do you really look to serve those around you?

Application: forgiveness, understanding, compassion, confession, forgiveness

The rest of this passage reveals the true Character of God:

*5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

6

*Who, being in very nature God,*

*did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

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*rather, he made himself nothing*

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The glory and beauty of the church is in the expression of the Character of Christ.

My caveat here is that Christ's values is what we are striving for.

There are people who are not going to be your friend.

There are people who should not be your friend.

Even in the church there are people who at times need to be not in our community.

People who are destructive to others, people who are not humble.

We can only set the path together - and this is the responsibility of the pastors and elders.

The part of traveling this path is up to each one of us.

And yes there are people who are not ready to travel with us in the present time.

That is totally okay.

They may have to find their own path.

But for those who need to be here, who find a sanctuary and friendship.

Who are able and willing by the grace of God to share with others,

This is what we are called to.

But within the life of the church, friendship is that basis of our life.

The church is a crucible of grace.

We are not perfect people.

But in looking to live in this manner,

we have the chance of forging meaningful lifetime friendships.

It means being a healthy community as much as possible.

It isn't easy.

Forgiveness isn't easy.

Vulnerability isn't easy.

If there is someone here in our church that you are at odds with,

I am going to invite you to pray for yourself and for them.

Ask God what you might be able to do to resolve the issue.

Ask who might be able to help you resolve.

If you have no particular tension in relationships at this church, thank God for that.

Continue to pray for the church and its leaders.

## **Q&A**

### **Communion:**

This is a table of our communion with Christ and with one another.

We recognize the Body of Christ, not just his physical body,

But the Body of the Church.

To be in communion with Christ is to be communion with all those who are his.

Not just in this room but around the world - all who share his love.

Not just in this time but all those who have gone before us and all who will come after us.

We become part of something much greater as a part of his body, his kingdom.

This is the mystery of the communion.

May you recognize it.