**Ephesians 4:7-16**

**The Word**

Read together Ephesians 4:7-16

**The Big Picture**

Within the body of Christ, we are called to pursue spiritual friendships with each other in which we are committed to growing in Christ and doing that together. While there are many marks of a true friendship, truth and love are two qualities that are essential to growing in Christ together.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What one idea struck you most from Sunday’s message and why?

2. On Sunday, “spiritual friendship” was explained as two or more people committed to walking towards Jesus together. How does that explanation sit with you? What would you want to change or add to that explanation?

3. Some barriers to deep friendships were mentioned at the beginning of Sunday’s message. As you think about your own life, what would you say are the biggest barriers to having deep spiritual friendships (these can be internal or external barriers)?

4. Consider your current home group. How are you doing at being a place of “relational hospitality” where people in the group feel free to share the deeper challenges going on in their lives rather than having conversations that always stay in the realm of ideas and theology? How satisfied are you with the level of sharing in your group?

5. Consider the Greg Morse quote in the sermon outline. When have you seen that kind of loving confrontation done well, and when have you seen it done poorly?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Spiritual Friendship

A. C.S. Lewis on friendship: “Friendship arises when two or more people discover that they have in common some insight or interest or taste which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure. The typical expression of opening Friendship is something like, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one”

B. Spiritual friendships are forged when that common passion is Jesus. Spiritual friends are committed to following Jesus and helping each other along the way. Spiritual friends are walking towards Jesus together (notice how the community is growing together towards Christ in v. 13 and 15-16)

C. True spiritual friendships hard to come by these days

1. Our culture promotes romance above all else

2. Our busy and fast-paced lives do not always create the space for deep friendships

3. Our consumeristic tendencies have us focusing more on wanting friends than doing what it takes to be a good friend.

D. Marks of a spiritual friendship: “speaking the truth in love.” (v. 15)

II. Marks of a spiritual friendship: love

A. Loving hospitality (1 Peter 4:8-9)

1. Physical hospitality: opening your home and creating a physical space where people feel at home

2. Relational hospitality: your presence becomes the space where people feel at home to be themselves and experience love and acceptance just as they are. Henri Nouwen talks about being a “free and fearless space” for others

3. Loving hospitality from the Proverbs

a. Proverbs 20:5: helping draw out what is going on in a friend’s heart

b. Proverbs 18:13: listening well before speaking

c. Proverbs 25:20: offering true empathy rather than trying to superficially cover up the pain

4. Brene Brown on empathy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>

B. Consider your own relationships

1. Are you a person who is hospitable? With whom people feel totally safe to be themselves?

2. Are your small groups places where people are sharing the real issues of their lives and where there is room for that kind of vulnerability?

III. Marks of a spiritual friendship: truth

A. Speaking encouragement to each other

1. Reminding each other of God’s goodness, presence, and promises

2. Hebrews speaks about encouragement

a. Life is a marathon that requires perseverance (Hb 12:1)

b. We need to encourage each other daily so that we are not hardened by sin’s deceitfulness (Hb 3:12-13)

c. We need to encourage each other to spur one another on (Hb 10:24-25)

3. Are you an encouraging presence in other people’s lives? Do they leave time with you feeling more hopeful and encouraged?

B. Warning each other of the dangers of sin

1. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Proverbs 27:5-6)

2. “Safe friends wound us for our good.  Safe friends are dangers to our sin.  Your soul needs friends who are willing to risk wounding your pride in the moment for the long-term good of your soul. Safe friends wound us for our good.  Safe friends are dangers to our sin.  Your soul needs friends who are willing to risk wounding your pride in the moment for the long-term good of your soul. Praise God then for the faithful wounds of true friends who protect us from ultimate injury. Friends who ask us hard questions, who crush the whispering lizard on our shoulder, who are for our eternal soul above our momentary feelings — these are true friends.”—Greg Morse