

## **Best Friends: Support**

Aug. 21, 2022

### **Slide 1 - Title**

Today we once again address the idea of Jesus as our best friend. It is a glorious truth about which we can rejoice! In fact, that is what we discussed last week; the desire of our best friend Jesus to make our joy complete. We have also looked at what it means for us to be a loyal friend to Jesus. Today we are going to discuss the idea of support. Friends support one another. When times get tough, we need a friend to lean on. When we are trying to make a big decision and we are not sure what to do, the voice of a friend's input can bring a sense of calm and much needed guidance. We seek support from those we trust and we trust those who lend their support when we are in need. This is certainly a big part of what Jesus' does for us. In our daily lives, he is a rock that can be trusted, a support to us in any situation. Scripture is replete with verses talking about God as our rock, a stronghold, a shelter in time of trouble. We can always find support in his faithful love. But do we? How often are the loving arms of Christ the first place we turn to? We live in a very supportive culture. We have therapists and support groups and advocates all over the place. And though these people might prove to be helpful, we so often overlook our best friend, Jesus Christ himself.

### **Slide 2: Therapist with couch or something**

But support can be a tricky thing. When I am going through a hard time, I want to be affirmed, built up and encouraged. I do not want someone to come along and tell me that I am doing something wrong. This notion is actually taking affect in the realm of counseling. It's a new move called "affirmative therapy" which seeks to validate and advocate for the person coming in for

support. What kind of support would that be? We want a friend, a therapist, a god, who can make us feel better! But what if that path we are heading down is not the path of life? What if the decisions we are making are not for our own good in the long run? Doesn't what we really need take the form of correction and not just a pat on the back?

When it comes to a supportive friendship, one of the best examples we have from culture is that of Sherlock Holmes and the good Dr. John Watson. Sherlock is a force of nature. He is cunning and brave and always determined to solve the mystery. Watson feels as though he has done his time. He was injured in his service to the army and he would love to partake in a slower pace of life. But something about their friendship continually draws Watson into the adventure. Holmes is capable, he does not need Watson to come along, but his presence, his support, is certainly appreciated. Now there have been many iterations of this famous character, but we are going to look at the 1980's British version starring Jeremy Brett. Observe how these two best friends interact:

**SLIDE 3: CLIP**

**SLIDE 4: Watson Holmes**

Holmes asks Watson to stay and "keep a record of the case". He wants to share this adventure with his friend. He knows it will be better together. He would rather not do it alone.

Let's take a look once again at John 15:9-17. As we read this passage, think through how it is that Jesus lends support:

**SLIDE 5-7: John 15:9-17**

## **SLIDE 8: Holmes / Watson**

First of all, Jesus chooses us to be his supportive companions (verse 16). Just as Sherlock Holmes chooses Watson to stand by him in the course of his adventures, so Jesus chooses us. We have been called by name...What will we do with such an invitation? Surely Jesus does not need us in order to accomplish his good work, just as Holmes is capable on his own and yet, he wants us to go with him, to engage in the adventure. Maybe we were looking forward to the quiet, settled life. Maybe, like Watson, we have to give up our own plans.

This passage from John gives us some other hints as to the ways our best friend Jesus supports us. One of the crucial things Jesus does is make known to us the will of the Father. We get to have an insider's perspective on what God is up to in this world. That's why Jesus can call us friends; because we are the same page, we are informed believers. Holmes and Watson share the same dynamic. If Holmes formulates a plan, he tells his friend about it. Watson may not always understand it, he may have many questions, but in the end, he trusts his friend. When it comes the Jesus' plans, we have questions don't we? We want to clarify a few things. We want to ask, "Are you sure about this?"

## **SLIDE 9: complete understanding of what God has planned is not required**

But our complete understanding of what God has planned is not required. Our friendship with Jesus, our trust in Jesus, covers our questions. So we receive support from Jesus by being informed of his plans, and at the same time, we are asked to support those plans! This is not a one-way friendship! We are asked to come along side Jesus and support the work of the kingdom in this world. What a privilege! Want an adventure! To go out and to bear fruit with our best friend...

Probably the most prominent way we find support in Jesus is found in verse 13: No one has greater love than to give up one's life for one's friends. Now certainly at the time, the disciples hearing this would have nodded in agreement. Yes of course, a friend in need is a friend indeed. We are supposed to give up our time and maybe even money in order to support a friend. We are not supposed to be selfish or stingy. We ought to respond to the best of our ability. But oh how the weight of this verse changes once we know the end of the story. Jesus uses the term "life" here not as a stand in for time or money or efforts. Jesus literally means our lives, our breath...our mortality. He gave up his life for his friends...The apostle Paul expounds on this in Romans 5: 6-8.

**SLIDE 10: Romans 5: 6-8.**

Someone might dare to die for a good person. That is true isn't it? My second-best friend is my wife Tracy, and I would die for her in a heartbeat. I love her, we've been through everything together and she is a good person. I would dare to die for her. That might be the end of my list right? Maybe there are some circumstances in which I would be willing to die, but how insane would it be for me to give up my life for a bad person, a villain, an enemy? Verse 8: But God shows his love for us, because while we were still sinners Christ died for us. What more support could we need? What more could we ask for? Jesus has taken me, his enemy, and turned me into his best friend. Now does that relationship benefit Jesus? Or does it benefit me? I could never deserve that kind of support. I could never pay back that kind of debt. You know how people will say, "I owe you one" or in movies they say "You saved my life." I will always owe Jesus my life. So living for him and obeying these commandments that he is talking about in this passage is not a burden or a duty...it's not even a repayment, because that would be impossible. It is a joyous response to a God who has somehow made me into a friend.

And there is even more than that. Jesus gave his life for us on the cross. He gave his life so that we could live eternally. He demonstrates his friendship to us by literally giving up his life, and he continues to do so. Every moment of every day I can talk to my friend Jesus and I can dump all my frustrations and worries onto Him. 1 Peter admonishes us to “Throw all your anxiety onto him...Why would we do this? How is this possible? Because he cares about you.” That’s all we want in this life...someone who cares about us, someone in whom we can confide, someone who can relieve our worries. Can Jesus do all that? Yes, he can, yes, he does.

**SLIDE 11: Can Jesus do all that? Yes, he can, yes, he does**

We live in a time of unprecedented wealth, technology, medical advancement, and certainly a lifestyle of ease and comfort. And what has such a world produced? The most anxious generation ever to live. The American Psychological Association has long tracked mental health statistics and their findings should be informative for us: When asked to self-report about their own mental health 70% of boomers would describe their condition as very good or excellent. This drops for Millennials down to 56% and the up and coming Gen Z group fares even worse at 45%. They are feeling afraid of various factors in this world. They are unprepared, nervous and lost. They need Jesus. They don’t need more therapy...they don’t need to find themselves; they don’t need their thoughts and decisions affirmed. They need a friend who can actually save them. They need a support that can never be shaken. This world needs Jesus, a best friend who says, “Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest.”

**SLIDE 12: SHERLOCK QUOTE**

Dr. Watson may at times feel like Sherlock is dragging him along. He might even feel taken advantage of in the course of their adventures. But who would Watson go to at the first sign

of trouble? Who would he trust with his deepest fears and darkest secrets? It's elementary my dear listener: To Holmes of course. And so even as Watson lends his support to Holmes, he is given much more of the same in return. And more than that, Sherlock Holmes has injected excitement and joy and adventure into what was a rather dull life.

It's the same with Jesus. Who will trust to lead us into a full and meaningful life? Who will we turn to in times of trouble or stress or chaos?

### **SLIDE 13: TURN TO JESUS**

Turn to Jesus, your best friend, the One who gave his life for you, the One who shares his plans with you, the only one who can actually support you and bring you life and peace. Amen.