

## Session 3: Our Friend, the King

### SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**Main Idea:** The coming of Jesus revealed God’s desire to be intimately acquainted with his people.

**Head Change:** To know that God dearly loves those whom we consider outcasts, marginal, and broken.

**Heart Change:** To feel joy at God’s delight in us, which was confirmed by the coming of Jesus.

**Life Change:** To pursue closeness and intimacy with the creator who calls us friends, living out his call to love and serve others.

### OPEN

**Think of your best friend. What qualities draw you to him or her? Why do you enjoy spending time together?**

Good friends can make all the difference during good times and bad. They know us intimately and love us anyway. They rejoice when we rejoice and hold us up when heavy times come. It may seem impossible to think, but Jesus came as Immanuel, God with us, because he wants to be our friend. As Derwin says in this session, Christmas is meant to remind us that God wants to have a personal relationship with you.

## **VIEW**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Derwin Gray's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Derwin answers the following questions.

**Why does God want us to be friends with him?**

**How does friendship with God lead to friendships with others?**

Watch Session 3: Our Friend, the King (9 minutes).

## REVIEW

When Jesus came as a baby that first Christmas, the world didn't quite understand what was happening. But when he grew up and began teaching, his disciples came to realize that he was the Messiah they'd been waiting for. They revered him. But even more amazing to them is that he called them friends.

Derwin said, "Jesus is not a king who wants to be separated from his people, high and lofty. He's a God who wants to be intimate with us." **What does it say about God that he acted upon his desire to become friends with us?**

Jesus illustrated the concept of intimacy between himself and his friends with the picture of a vine. Branches bearing fruit only thrive when they are connected to the vine. Read John 15:5–12. **According to verse 12, what fruit should Christians be producing?**

**What loving behaviors, attitudes, and words are you producing today?**

**What can you do to encourage more godly fruit in your life?**

Lifelong friends usually become more alike over the years. When we stick close to Jesus, allowing him to be a friend who knows us and whom we are getting to know better and better, we begin to resemble him in a variety of ways. Perhaps we enjoy serving others more, as he did. Or we discover we are more courageous about sharing his good news. **How have you changed for the better since beginning your relationship with Jesus? In what ways do you want to become more like him still?**

We are often tempted to deny Jesus's friendship because we do not feel worthy of him. Derwin pointed out that part of what makes it good news is that Jesus is looking for people who are wounded, ashamed, guilty, rejected. He wants all of us, and he doesn't expect us to fix ourselves first. **What, if anything, delayed you from accepting Jesus's love and forgiveness? What overcame your reluctance?**

On the other hand, longtime Christians can forget that Jesus sought the outcasts and rejects. We are called to

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## BIBLE EXPLORATION

Derwin reminded us that Jesus cultivated an intimate group of followers during his years of active ministry in Israel. The Twelve, as they came to be called, accompanied Jesus as he traveled, teaching and performing miracles. As a leader, he would have expected a group to follow and learn from him. But his followers were more than students—they were his closest friends.

On the eve of his crucifixion, he addressed them as friends one final time.

Turn to John 13 and read verses 1–15. Jesus and his disciples were celebrating Passover, an annual feast day commemorating the Jews’ rescue from slavery when Jesus flipped the script and began washing their feet.

**How did the disciples react to Jesus doing servants’ work?**

Think of a time when you’ve witnessed a leader doing menial work or joining employees in their daily tasks.

**What did you think as you watched him or her?**

**How did seeing a leader serve influence the way you viewed him or her? In what ways did that event impact your understanding of leadership?**

In verses 12–15, Jesus tells the disciples that he washed their feet as an example of what they should do for one another. **What does Jesus’s act of service tell you about his character? In what ways could you imitate his humility?**

Now read John 15:12. Jesus rarely states his teachings as commands, but he does so here: “This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you.” **In what ways can someone show love regardless of feelings?**

Jesus’s next words in 15:13–14 are both inspirational and motivating: He challenged his followers to show the greatest love possible, then called them his friends. **What is the essence of friendship, according to Jesus? How have you experienced friendship that reflected such devotion?**

Jesus’s words foreshadowed his imminent death—he literally would lay down his life for his friends the next day.

But rarely are we called to risk our lives for others. **How could his call to “lay down your life” look in your everyday circumstances? How might regularly sacrificing for others be a challenge for you?**

Much of what Jesus taught was difficult to understand, but he often elaborated on his teaching privately to his disciples, a habit that revealed the depth of their friendship. They were special to him. And so are we.

**What does it mean to you that the Son of God became human so we could know him in a revolutionary way? In what ways has the Bible, his Word, enabled you to know God more intimately?**

Jesus told the disciples that he had chosen them and appointed them to go and “bear fruit”—that is, love other people as Jesus loved them. **What is one way you can obey Jesus’s command to love your neighbor, sibling, spouse, or coworker?**

## **LAST WORD**

A king rarely befriends a commoner, but our high king of heaven wants a relationship with you. Jesus is the model of a best friend. He shared his heart, his daily life, his concerns, and his joys. He saw his friends for who they were, faults and all, and loved them anyway.

As Derwin said, Jesus is the friend who heals you, who doesn’t abandon you, who stays with you, and who accepts you as you are while making you the best you were meant to be. If you haven’t friended Jesus yet, what’s stopping you? He already loves you.

## DEEPER WALK

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**Read:** Read John 15:1–17. Spend time meditating on how Jesus demonstrated his love for you on the cross, and how you can, in turn, show sacrificial love to others.

**Write:** Journal a list of ways you can “lay down your life” without resorting to actual death. What smaller ways can you put aside your own needs and wants in service to others?

**Pray:** Spend time thanking God for sending Jesus to be the kind of friend who would sacrifice himself on your behalf. Ask him to show you how you can be the same sort of giving, loving friend to others.

**Memorize:** Memorize John 15:13, “No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.”

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