

Friendship with God | Ted Tash

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Preacher: Ted Tash

[0 : 00] Are we on now? Aha. I'll start over. First of all, good morning to most of you.! A small portion.

I feel like a lot of people were sick. In my house, we had somebody sick from February 13th until March 15th. Pretty much every day.

The flu was crazy this year, for us at least, and for the other people I know that got it. You would feel terrible for like two days, and then you'd feel good, and then you'd feel terrible again for like two more days. And then you'd feel good for like half a day, and you'd feel terrible for like two hours. It was like, it was a really weird flu bug. But the good news, you know, with five in the house, once one person gets it, then all the rest get it. But at least when we were done, we all started throwing up for a day, so that was cool.

Lily finally stopped throwing up on March 15th, two Sundays ago, so that was a lot of fun. I say all that because Noah Agnew is supposed to be speaking today.

[1 : 21] I'm not Noah Agnew. That's why the podium was lower earlier. He let me know Friday that he has got the flu bug. So here I am. Which it actually works out really well.

So I am regularly scheduled to speak next Sunday out of our study in Matthew. And so what I'm going to do is I'm going to take his passage from Matthew and just combine it in with that passage from Matthew next week.

And today we're going to play a game of Yahtzee. Did everybody bring dice and a pen? No. I'm going to give a message that is kind of halfway done, that I've had bouncing around in my brain for a while.

And I had a day and a half to kind of polish it a little bit. So to be fair, Noah got to speak on New Year's with like 10 minutes of notice.

So really two days is pretty gracious on his behalf to me. So anyway, we're going to talk about just something that's been on my mind lately. And so let's pray and then we will get into it.

[2 : 28] And Father God, just thanks for loving us. And thank you just for a beautiful spring day. And just for the nice weather we've had the last couple weeks, Lord. And just thank you for your word. And we know it doesn't return void, even if it's maybe not well prepared by the presenter.

And Lord, we do pray for Noah and lift him up. We love Noah dearly. And we just pray you would help him to feel better. And he said he's never felt quite this sick in his life. So Lord, we just pray you'd heal him and be with him.

And thank you once again for an opportunity to share from your word. So we pray all this in Jesus name. We will read plenty of scripture today.

But it will take me a minute to kind of set the table, if you will, before we get to that scripture. So bear with me a little bit before we get there. But kind of the thought that I've had a lot lately is we talk a lot in the modern church and also just at Bethel about like the what of Christianity.

And I'm not asking a question. That's a statement. We talk a lot about the what of Christianity. The W-H-A-T what of Christianity. Like how or what as a Christian should your life look like.

[3 : 43] And, you know, specifically at Bethel, we really emphasize a good, clean gospel. So before you even talk about the what of Christianity, it's what is salvation. And, you know, we would take pretty much straight out of Acts.

What must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We would say faith alone and Christ alone is the prerequisite for salvation. But then from there, what does the Christian life look like?

And obviously, you know, there's not one square answer to that question. But there's lots of what's. You know, the Bible says, do this in remembrance of me. When you break the bread, do it in remembrance of me.

Do it until I come. And so that's one of the what's that we would teach here. Another one would be like baptism. We don't teach a ton on baptism. But we do a baptism once a year down at Pinecrest. And we'd probably do it more often if somebody wanted to. But that's another what of Christian living. And then obviously just obedience to God. That would be kind of an important what.

[4 : 47] You know, for me as a father, one of the what's would be raising godly kids. You know, in that room right over there, we watched. I have watched Ted Tripp say that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child.

And the rod of correction will drive it far from him. And there is a lot more of the what of rearing kids that has been taught. And that's a good thing. You know, as a husband, we're taught we should love our wives and honor her.

Lots of what's, right? But sometimes what gets lost or maybe gets a little muddled is the how's. Does that make sense? So the what's we kind of have covered.

But the how's get a little gray, a little fuzzy sometimes. And we'll hear all the right answers. You know, you should walk in the spirit. What does that really actually look like? You know, like I'm sure from up here I have said that we should walk in the spirit.

But what does that really look like? What does the how, the actual practice of that look like? I know for sure I have said from up here that we should daily renew our minds. We need to be in the word of God renewing our minds.

[5 : 51] You know, the world is constantly bombarding you with falsehood and with lies and with, hey, you need to do X, Y, and Z. And we need to get back to the truth of the word of God daily and renew our minds from all the falsehood we hear.

So we do hear a little bit of the how's. You know, Romans chapter 12 says, do not conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Again, it's saying the world has a pattern. It has a way of doing things. Don't conform to that pattern, but rather be transformed by the renewing of your mind, going back to the truth of the word of God. But today I want to look at a little bit more of the how's, if you will, the how's of Christian living.

And if you get nothing else from this message, if this is the only point you take away, God is a God of how. That is what I would say, is that God is the God of how.

And you can look all through this book and you will see that that is true. And specifically what I want to draw out is that while there are obviously general principles that are universally true to us as believers, God is a personal God.

[7 : 00] And he is a God that is desiring a friendship with us and relationship with us. And that might look, on a micro level, different to me than it does to you and different to you than it does to you.

Obviously, like I said, God has got some general principles, but on a relational level, we'll all have a different relationship with God. And so one thing I want to look at, if you turn to John 15, just to kind of set the stage here a little bit more.

The last time I spoke, I ended up in John 15. If you remember, this was the message on the Pharisees and the chief priests. They were questioning Jesus's authority and they kept saying, by what authority do you do these things?

And obviously they knew that, but they were still questioning Jesus anyway, almost antagonizing him. And we ended up in John 15 where Jesus calls himself the vine and he calls us as believers the branches.

And he says, I want you to bear much fruit. That's the what, right? I want you to do what? I want you to bear much fruit. But then the how came in verse five, where he says, apart from me, you can do nothing.

[8 : 13] You've got to abide in me as the vine. I am the source for you to bear fruit. I am the how for you to do what? Bear fruit. Well, later in the passage, in verse 15, he says something really interesting.

He says, no longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends for all that I have heard from my father.

I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide. So that whatever you ask him, the father in my name, he may give it to you.

Two things there. One, Jesus just flat out says, I call you my friend. That's pretty cool. Like if you just pause there and think about that. Jesus, the one who created everything, who came and lived perfect lives and died on the cross and rose again, power over death.

The one who's like every knee will bow to his name calls us friend. That's pretty cool. Like that's really cool. Garth Brooks says he had friends in low places.

[9 : 23] We have friends in a high place. You know, Dave Baumgartner, this was, man, a couple years ago. He talked about buddy Jesus or buddy Christ.

I don't know if anybody's familiar with that. It was like a little figurine you could put on your car and it's Jesus doing finger guns. That is not what this is talking about at all. The word friend, do you remember that, Dave?

Yeah? No? No? That's okay if you don't. You did though, I promise. The word for friend here, it's actually really cool.

It's like one that the bridegroom would choose to stand next to him at his nuptials. Like literally inner circle groomsmen of Christ is what he says. I call you friends. That alone is cool.

But then he goes into like that relational part of friendship, right? Like in order to be a friend, you have to get to know them. You have to communicate with them. There has to be some dialogue.

[10 : 18] And that's what he says at the end of 16. Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. Like it's almost an expectation of the friendship. Does that make sense? Like God expects us to ask things in Jesus' name as part of the friendship that he has with us.

Which is not always how I think about God. You know, I kind of think, I don't know how I think about God sometimes. But he's a relational God is what I'm trying to say. And he has chosen us as friends.

It says you didn't choose me, but I chose you. So God has chosen us as friends with the expectation of some communication with him. What's interesting, if you go all the way back, you know, to Genesis, when God created the earth and he said it was good, you know, before sin, you had Adam and Eve.

And there's two things I want to point out about the friendship of God from Adam and Eve. The first thing is that God takes Adam and he puts him into this crazy world with all the animals and all the, you know, birds and fish and crawling things and trees and plants.

And he says, I want you to rule and subdue. I want you to name everything. And I want you to be fruitful and multiply. Which is kind of a wild task if you think about it. Like, God didn't say, okay, this is a fish.

[11 : 37] Repeat after me, fish. F-I-F, fish. Like, that is bird. Like, he didn't do that with Adam. He gave him some free will, some free reign to name all the animals and to rule and subdue.

Which is really cool. Like, that's kind of honoring to Adam as a man. Like, Adam, you are capable of ruling and subduing. You are capable of naming and domaining this earth that I've given you.

Which, again, I think that's kind of a cool thing. Like, as a man, that is an honor to be entrusted with such a noble task. He's saying, Adam, you have what it takes to do this. But what's cool is he would walk with Adam in the cool of the day.

Right? And so they had, like, a friendship there. They had a bond where they could talk and be with each other. For me personally, I appreciate that God didn't just spell it all out for Adam and say, Hey, this is what you're going to call that animal and this is what you're going to call that animal.

I really don't like to be bossed around much. If you're around me much, you will quickly pick up that I do not like to be told what to do. I will do anything for anybody, for sure. But let it be my idea.

[12 : 48] And so God honors Adam by not doing that and letting him, in his sound judgment, name all the animals.

And so I appreciate that friendship that God had with Adam. And I'm sure that, obviously, God, but also Adam really missed that after the fall. Right? I mean, how could you go from walking with God in the cool of the day in an awesome garden with no shame and just wide open relationship and then missing out on that?

That had to be so tough. You know, you think when Cain kills Abel, you know, your own son killing your other son. Man, I bet Adam really longed for that friendship with God.

Anyway, the second thing that I think we can learn about friendship with God from Adam and Eve might be a bit of a hot take, so bear with me. I think you'll all agree with me in the end.

But I think we can learn this from Eve. You see, it says that God created them in his image. Male and female, he created them. Now, I think God is a he.

[13 : 51] Don't get me wrong. But I think that you can look at Eve, the creation of Eve, and draw some things about God's personality from Eve.

Does that make sense? Male and female, he created them. In his image, he created them. So there are some things about the image of God that we can draw out of Eve. Obviously, beauty is there. That shouldn't be a hot take.

Women are definitely more beautiful. Life-giving, right? Men can't give birth no matter what MSNBC says. That is what women do. They give life.

And obviously, God has given life physically, literally, and also spiritually to us. But then maybe the hot take here is that women are a bit mysterious. So follow me on that.

If you wanted to look at how to make me happy, there is a formula that I could give you. And that formula would be true today.

[14 : 50] And it would be true tomorrow. And the next day. And presumably, as long as I live. I need a little bit of adventure. Like, I need to be put in a situation where I am not in complete control.

And what I mean by that is, like, hunting or fishing. Those types of things. Hiking. You know, when you go out to hit golf balls. No offense to this section of the room.

You know the golf ball is going to be there. And you know you can hit it. No matter how much you wish a deer would walk across your path. Unless you have outsmarted the deer. And all the things have worked out in your favor.

No deer will come. Right? And so when you do outsmart the prey animal who is trying their whole entire life to stay alive. It's a really good feeling. It's very validating for you.

And so I like the adventure. That's all I'm trying to say. I like adventure. So give me a little adventure. And feed me. That would be like one and two on the formula of how to please me.

[15 : 49] You could sprinkle some red wine in there. But mostly adventure and feed me. You could give me that forever. And I would be happy. On the other hand.

If you. If you read any book on marriage. There's for the women. Talking about like how to.

You know pursue your husband. It's kind of like checklist. Like men like this. Men like that. Men like this. Men like that. For women it's always. Like for how to. How should the husband love the wife. It's always.

We need to communicate. And the reason for that is it changes. And that's a good thing. There's nothing wrong about this at all. I think we see part of God's image in that. But why do you have to communicate?

Because. Because the likes and the desires change. Lydia. This is probably two months ago. Lydia really enjoyed the way that I smell. My scent was pleasing to her.

[16 : 49] She's like what did you put on? And do you know what I put on? I put on the same old spice deodorant that I've been wearing for the last 20 years. Every single day. But that day.

It was really pleasing to her. Again there's nothing wrong about this. The reason for communication. And I think the changing desires that you tend to see with women.

Again I'm not putting women in a box. The reason for the communication. And the thought behind it. That is important. And I don't want to get missed. Is that there's a pursuit there.

Does that make sense? Like as men we need to pursue their desires. And pursue them as a person. And I think that we can see that. In creation. And it is true of God as well.

He wants us to pursue him. Does that resonate? Does that make sense? And that pursuit again comes through communication. That's exactly what he says in John. You are my friends.

[17 : 49] I chose you as friends. Whatever you ask the Father in my name. There's an expectation of pursuit. There's an expectation of communication. And I think that you can see that in creation from God.

Turn if you will to Judges chapter 6. We are going to spend pretty much the rest of the time looking at Gideon.

What's interesting is when you start thinking about friendship with God. There's about a bajillion examples you could draw from.

You look at Moses. Moses. And again like the unique relationship that we as individuals have with God. You look at Moses. He has a burning bush with Moses.

And he says, Moses, I want you to go to the most powerful man on earth, Pharaoh. And I want you to tell him to let my people go. Which is crazy, right? Like that's the what. Moses had a tough what. [18:55] And he says, how? How am I going to do this? And he says, well, throw your stick on the ground. It will become a snake. And he does and it becomes a snake. And he says, no, not me. I'm not your guy. I can't talk very good.

Don't send me. He says, well, I'll send your brother with you. He provides another how. He says, I'll let Aaron do the talking on your behalf. And then he says, I want you to lead him out. And I want you to run away from the most powerful army on earth.

And he says, well, there's a big ocean there. He says, don't worry about that. I'll take the how for you. And he splits the sea. They walk on dry land. And then it drowns the army. Right? God is a God of how.

You look at, we're going to look, obviously, at Gideon defeating 120,000 Midianites. And he uses torches and pots and some horns. You could easily look at Joshua in Jericho.

Right? He walks around the city for six days. Which is equally as crazy as torches and pots and horns. And on the seventh day, they blow some trumpets and the walls of Jericho collapse. Right?

[19:53] Like, God is the God of how there. And you could go through, again, just account after account. Even earlier with Abraham and Hagar. Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael out into the desert.

And it says that she set him down so that she didn't have to watch her son die. Because it was too much for her to look at. And God says, what are you doing? Grab the child.

And here's a well. And presumably the well wasn't there before. Right? He intervenes on Hagar and Ishmael's behalf. You know, I think about when Jesus heals the blind man.

He never does it the same way. Right? Like, there's three or four accounts. One time he spits on the ground. One time he spits on the eyes. Another time he touches it. Another time he just says, you're healed. The point is, don't worry about the what of healing the blind.

God's got the how. Right? He's got it. So anyway, you look at Judges. And you just look at the friendship and the relationship with God. And in this story, you'll see over and over again, it says, Now the Lord said to Gideon, and Gideon said to the Lord.

[21:03] And you see that all over the place with David in the Philistines. It says, you know, David said to the Lord, and the Lord said to David. And again, there's this relationship. There's this back and forth between the two.

So in Judges chapter 6, we'll go ahead and read the first couple of verses here. It says this. It says, So the people disobey God.

God kind of forsakes them for seven years. The Midianites come in, and they take all the crops. They take all the livestock. It's kind of like the movie A Bug's Life, if you're familiar with the grasshoppers coming in and taking all the ants' food.

It says, Sometimes God's got to bring you low for you to pursue him.

That would be the point that I'd want to make there. Sometimes he has to bring you very low before you will cry out to him. Verse 7. When the people of Israel cried out to the Lord on account of the Midianites, the Lord sent a prophet to the people of Israel.

[22:57] And he goes on to talk about how he brought them out of Egypt. But the point I want to make there is when the people cried out, the Lord responded. You know, in the book of James chapter 4, it says, Draw near to the Lord, and he will draw near to you.

So they cry out to the Lord, and the Lord sends a prophet. And then we'll look at the call of Gideon here. Down in verse 11, it says, Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, so on and so forth.

Verse 12. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor. This is a great response from Gideon.

I relate to this response a lot. And Gideon said to him, Please, my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?

And where are all the wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian. Have you ever been there?

[24:04] God, if you're so good, why is my life so bad? That's a bad question to ask God. That's a prideful response to the Lord. If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?

That's Gideon's first response. And the Lord turned to him, and he gives him the what? Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian.

Do not I send you? Look at Gideon's response. He said to him, Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh.

And if I remember right, I think Manasseh was already like a half-tribe because of how they treated Joseph, right? How can I do this? I'm the weakest one of the weakest one, and I am the least in my father's house.

I'm not your guy. And here's the how. Verse 16. And the Lord said to him, But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.

[25 : 04] Apart from me, you can do nothing, right? The Lord said, Here's how you're going to do it. I know you're the least, the least of the least of the least. I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.

And here's what I love about Gideon, and just, I don't want to read three chapters out of the book of Judges today. But he says, Please show me a sign.

Even there, he kind of falters. You know, he doesn't have total faith in the Lord. He says, Please show me a sign. And if you go from here until chapter 8, after they've defeated the Midianites, God actually gives him four different signs.

He sets up an altar here, and God takes fire and consumes the sacrifice. He does the dry shirt, and then he does the wet shirt.

If you remember that, Gideon sets a fleece out, and it's dry on the ground but wet on the fleece. And he says, Well, that was cool. Let's do it again the opposite way. Let's make the fleece dry and the ground wet. And so God does that.

[26 : 00] And then there's a dream that comes later on. So God actually gives him four different signs just to encourage him to keep going. And sometimes that's what God has to do for us. He has to encourage us to, Hey, let's keep going here, right?

So then let's go to verse 25 here of chapter 6. And he says this, So Gideon took ten of his men and did as the Lord...

So Gideon took ten of his men and did as the Lord had told him.

But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night. It's kind of an interesting thing.

He's obedient, but he's afraid. And so he does it by night. And just an interesting aside, it says he's afraid of his family. I would imagine if he took two of your father's bulls and sacrificed them, I would be afraid of my family as well.

[27 : 22] But the point is that he obeyed even though he was scared to do it. He trusted the Lord and obeyed him even in his fear. And so then, of course, the men of the town are mad.

And actually what's really cool is Joash, his father, intervenes on his behalf and says, Hey, let's not kill Gideon. If he wasn't supposed to tear down this altar of Baal, let Baal judge him. But we're not going to do it.

Which is kind of cool. Even though he's down two bulls, he defends his son. And so then you get to the good part of the story.

You get into chapter 7. And Gideon takes in, at this point he's called Jerubabab because he's torn down the altar of Baal. And he goes with his men and he's got like 32,000 men.

It's like a pretty formidable army. Unfortunately, they're up against about 135,000 guys. And he goes and he's going to deliver Israel, right?

[28 : 20] That's what God told him to do. I want you to go and strike Midian and deliver Israel. And so then you get into just the crazy part. Verse 2 of chapter 7. The Lord said to Gideon, The people with you are too many.

You're already outnumbered four to one. But the people that are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand. Lest Israel boast over me saying, My own hand has saved me. I know for sure I'm guilty of that. The Lord will 100% provide for something. And I'll be like, Look what I did. Have you been there? Like, Man, look at me.

100% from the Lord. So he says, I'm not going to even make that an option. I'm going to provide for you in a way that is so obvious that it is me, the Lord, doing the work. So then he says, Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.

Then 22,000 of the people returned and 10,000 remained. He says, Hey, if you're scared, go home. And so 22,000 weenies run away and 10,000 of the brave soldiers remain.

[29 : 29] And then the Lord said to Gideon, The people are still too many. Now you're outnumbered 13 and a half to one. He said, There's still too many. Take them down to the water and I will test them for you there.

And you guys know the story, right? Some of them kneel down. Some of them cup the water. He says, I want the ones who cup the water. And of the 10,000, there's only 300 that did that. So you end up with 300 of the oddball brave men that are still there doing the water.

And after all this, and Gideon's already had at this point three signs from God. And he's had direct dialogue with God. He's still afraid. And what's really cool is that the Lord recognizes that and is just gracious to him in it.

Look at verse 9 of chapter 7. That same night the Lord said to him, Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand.

But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Pura, your servant. He says, You're afraid of doing the altar?

[30 : 38] You've been afraid this whole way? That's fine. I want you to obey me. It's fine to be afraid. Take your servant with you. And I think that the graciousness of the Lord there is just so cool to come down onto Gideon's level and say, Hey, I know you're scared, but here's what I want you to do.

And so what does he do? He goes down and he actually overhears some Midianites talking to each other, two soldiers talking to each other. And one says, Hey, I had this dream that we're all going to die.

And Gideon hears this conversation and the other soldier says, Well, that must mean that Gideon is going to come kill us all. That's what he says in verse 14. This is no other than the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel.

God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp. Boy, if you're Gideon and you heard that, that would be pretty cool. Like, hey, these people are getting some divine revelation that I'm going to wipe them out. And so from there he goes and God gives them the craziest attack plan of all time, 300,000 versus 135,000.

They go and they blow a horn and break some pots and they have torches. And all of the soldiers of Midian and the Amalekites turn on each other in the confusion and kill one another.

[31 : 51] It's a pretty wild how, right? Like, that's a pretty wild how. That's a pretty wild way that God came through and provided for Gideon and for the nation of Israel.

And I say that to say there are tons of examples of this in the Bible. God is a God of how. The point is you need to pursue him and not run from him.

And the point is you need to trust him, even if you're afraid, and still have that relationship with him. If the musicians want to come up, I do want to put a big asterisk on this.

And the big asterisk would be we do not pursue God and we do not pursue a friendship and relationship with God for personal gain. You may have personal gain.

I think John Kuppel says that we don't preach a prosperity gospel, but there is prosperity in the gospel. But the prosperity and the blessing that comes with having a relationship with God should not be the priority.

[32 : 57] That should not be the motivation behind having a relationship with God. There's an old cowboy singer, Tom T. Hall, and he has a song called Faster Horses.

And in the song there's an old-timey cowboy whose hips were crooked from hanging on a horse. And there's a young rider. And the young rider knows that this old cowboy's got all the answers, right?

And he's just got to get the story. And we don't take spiritual lessons from old country songs. And in fact, the old-timer's advice in life is that the four things in life are faster horses, younger women, older whiskey, and more money.

So we don't take that. But there's a good thing in there. He says that it does men no good to pray for peace and rain. For peace and rain is just another way of saying prosperity.

And he says, and buffalo chips is all it means to me. The point is we don't go to God and pray for peace and rain. We don't go to God and say, God, please bless me because I want to be blessed. It's God, how can I serve you?

[34 : 01] How can I know you? How can I pursue you? And the blessing will come or it may not come in this life, right? But the point is we go to God for friendship because that is what we were designed for.

He created us to have perfect relationship. When that was broken by sin, he sent his son to restore that relationship so that we can have fellowship with him. And us as believers in the church age, we have the Holy Spirit inside of us, which is just an amazing thing.

Thanks for hanging with me on short notice. And we'll be in Matthew again next week. Father God, just thanks for loving us. Thank you for pursuing us, Lord. It says that you chose us, we did not choose you.

And we pray that each one of us here in the room would pursue you and desire to be your friend as well, Lord, and be in open communication with you. Lord, deal with the sin in our lives and restore that bond if it needs to be restored.

God, I pray that we would not just come to you when we need help or when we're cast down, but we would come to you in the good times as well, Lord. We just ask a blessing on everyone here and thank you for our day.

[35 : 07] God. Thank you.