

## Time for God – Take 2

Purpose: To assist the congregation with further reflection on the theme of the Sunday service/passage.

### Week beginning Sunday 24 March 2019 Friendship

Pray that we would be grateful for the gift of friendship – do all that we can to nurture and foster it, endeavouring to be inclusive and caring towards those who find making friends particularly hard – and above all that we are open to be friends with Jesus who wants to be friends with us all.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Luke 5:17-26.

Background Clearly, Jesus' popularity was on the rise. This incident may not have had the numbers of the feeding of the 5000, but numbers were greater than expected and so there wasn't room for everyone to get in. A crowd gathered around the doors, straining to see and hear what Jesus was up to. The spotlight shifts to a group of friends who were intent on taking their paralysed friend to Jesus, presumably so that he might be healed. Not able to gain access by unnormal means, because of the crowd they carry him on to the roof. My version says they removed tiles, made a hole and lowered him down in front of Jesus – who said that his sins were forgiven, and after complaints from the Pharisees, told him to get up and walk.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. What does this passage say about the commitment of the men to their friend in need? Even if you take the view that in those days the roof would have been easily fixed this was an unusual and potentially costly step to take. What consequences might there have been for the men concerned? What place did friendship play in this? Where does faith come in – for the friends? For the paralysed man?
2. Where do we draw the line in being supportive of our friends? We're not advocating vandalism or property damage but what might be the consequences of taking friendship really seriously? The man was willing to be helped. How ready are we to allow others to support us? Why can friendship never always be about helping others? Why must we allow others to help us? They did all they could to help but they realised that some things were beyond them and so they took their friend to Jesus. Are we ready to pray for our friends as well as offer them practical support? How might we do more on the spiritual side?
3. Shared interests, shared values and some compatibility of personalities along with other factors will contribute to the success or otherwise of friendship – give and take, working at it and giving one another time are important too. How do we reconcile the wish to develop close friendships with (relatively) few people with whom we have common interests and a common bond with Jesus' injunction to be open to care to the stranger, to the vulnerable and to the marginalised? Is the former needed to support the latter or can it be an excuse to avoid the latter? How far is it ok to have different degrees of friendship? (This isn't always easy in practice, but even Jesus appears to have had different levels of friendship. Just watch the pitfalls!).
4. No doubt there would have been critics. How do we cope with those who criticise our best intentions? How do we learn from valid criticisms? How do we distinguish these from attempts to put us off doing what is right? How might the way we respond, the tone as well as the words, help or hinder our cause? Jesus touched on the faith of the friends being a factor in the paralysed man's healing. How might our faith be shown – eg in practical ways, in prayer? Was the disabled man simply a passive observer? If not, how was his faith shown?
5. What does it mean for us to have Jesus as our friend?
6. There are other issues that could have been discussed - feel free to explore any topics from the passage or theme even if they weren't raised on Sunday.

Prayer Lord thank you for the many benefits of friendship. Help us to foster it and develop it and to help those who don't appear to have friends to benefit from it too – and help us all to take more seriously the gift of friendship with Jesus – and to work at what that means. Amen.