

FRIENDS FOR LIFE

Following Jesus into friendship with non-believers





INVITE

Inviting others
to follow Jesus
with us



GROW

Growing more
like Jesus



LOVE

Loving with a
servant heart



SEND

Sending and
supporting
ambassadors for
Jesus

FRIENDS FOR LIFE

FOLLOWING JESUS INTO FRIENDSHIP WITH NON-BELIEVERS

Jesus was infamously known as a friend of sinners. The supposedly “decent” members of society were scandalised by the kind of people he ate with and partied with. Jesus spent more of his time with prostitutes, criminals and other rejects, the ones the rest of society called “sinners”, than with the well-respected, religiously upright people. Jesus did this precisely so that these “sinners” could get to know him and so be saved from their sins.

But today, many of us who claim to follow Jesus don't really follow him in that regard. Christians aren't often accused of spending “too much” time with people who don't yet know Jesus! Is that OK? Or should we be following the example of Jesus more closely? Remember, one of our four key goals at MPC is to “invite others to follow Jesus with us.”

This is a really practical series. Its aim is to help us be better friends to people who don't yet know Jesus.

Week 1: We'll see that good friendship is really key to people coming to know Jesus. If we're true friends, if we're people who actually love our friends and want what's best for them, then we'll be desperate for our friends to be saved from their sins and we'll do anything we can to help them know Jesus.

Week 2: We'll see that one of the things that helps is getting your non-believing friends to know your Christian friends. That way your non-believing friends can know you're not the only dummy who believes this weird Jesus stuff and might give it more of a hearing! We'll work through how we can actually do that together.

Week 3: Another thing that helps is deepening your friendships. This makes it more likely that you can have deeper conversations about Jesus. We'll work through together how each of us can actually do that.

Week 4: Finally, if we're broadening and deepening our friendships, it would be great if church worked well for bringing friends to. We'll work through together what helps non-believing visitors get to know Jesus at church, and what doesn't.

As well as input from the Bible, each week will have practical tips via video from Christian leaders around the world - Mez McConnell, Sam Chan, Tim Keller, & Rosaria Butterfield. There are even some tips from us ordinary folks here at MPC! All the videos can be found at <http://mpc.org.au/friendsforlife> or point your phone at the QR Code below.



Our prayer should be that this series helps each of us be a better friend. A friend who loves enough to want our non-believing friends to know Jesus. A friend who's intentional about helping them do that. A friend who has a good idea of what helps and what doesn't. A friend who isn't just a friend for life, but a friend for eternal life.

Phil Campbell

Peter Kutuzov

Jeremy Wales

Doug Wannenburg

Dan Wilton

MARCH, 2019

STUDY 1

BE A FRIEND

PAGE 1

STUDY 2

MIX YOUR FRIENDS

PAGE 6

STUDY 3

DEEPEN YOUR FRIENDSHIPS

PAGE 11

STUDY 4

CHURCH FOR YOUR FRIENDS

PAGE 16

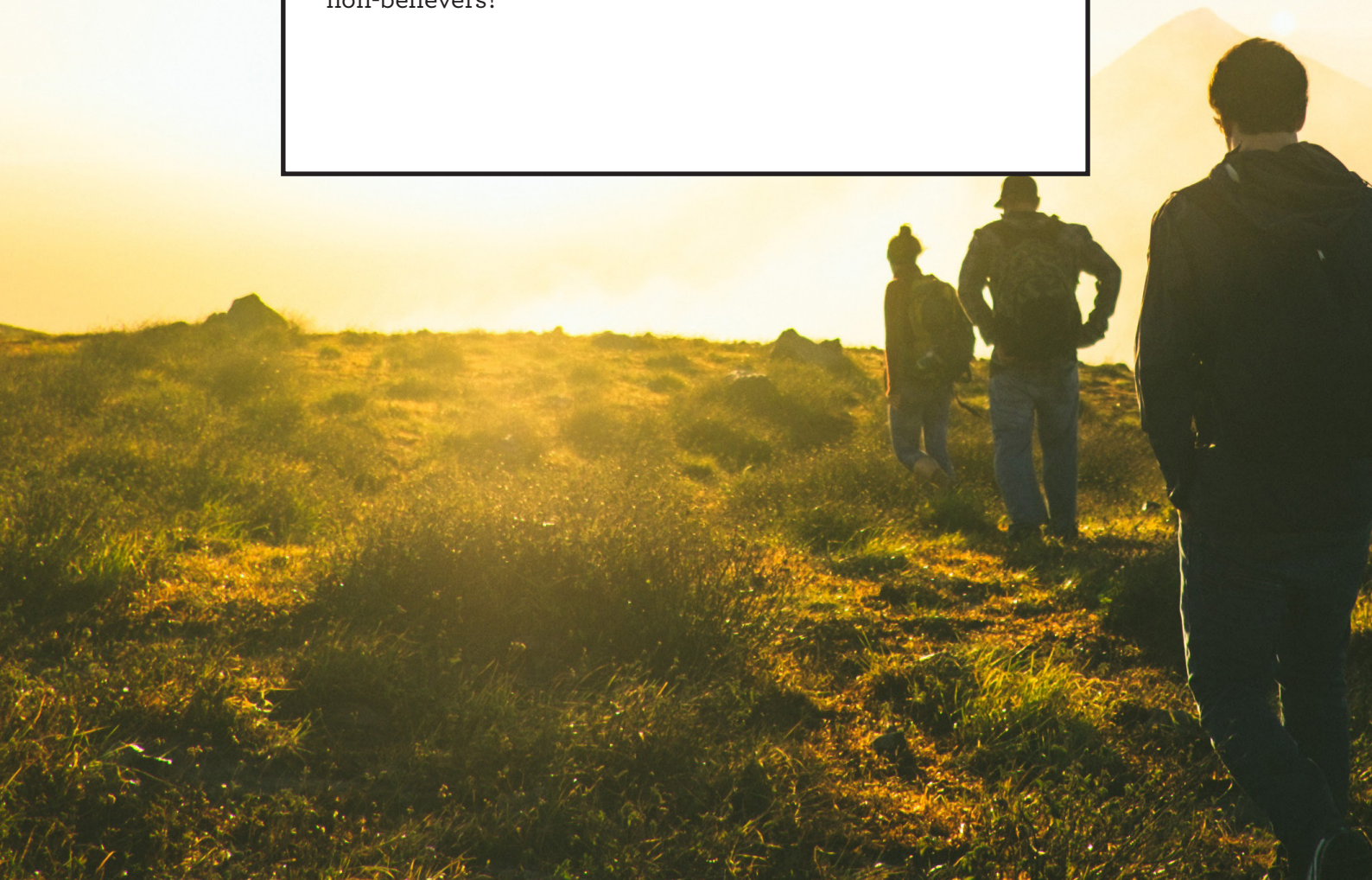
STUDY 1

BE A FRIEND

A church member says, “As a Christian teenager, I had a bunch of good Christian friends. But in year 11 and 12, my closest friends at school weren’t Christian at all. I’d typically hang around with the kids who were smoking behind the science building at recess. Funny - I actually thought that was what Christians were meant to do. But lots of my Christian friends disagreed.”

If you’re a believer in Jesus, where and when have you most comfortably had friendships with non-believers?

Why would some Christians want to avoid friendship with non-believers?



1 Corinthians 9:19-23 & 10:31-11:1

¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings...

³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ³² Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— ³³ even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. ¹ Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

OUTSIDERS WELCOME

Read Paul's words from **1 Corinthians 9:19-23 and 10:31-11:1** printed in the sidebar.

7. Spot the word Paul uses five times in the first five sentences to describe his motive and goal. What does he mean by it, and what does he think is at stake? (Notice the word he uses as an alternative in two different places!)

8. Why might we be hesitant to relate to people so purposefully? How do you feel about the last two sentences in the passage? ("For I am not seeking...")

What are some other ways that you purposefully look out for your mates? Did it feel normal and natural to do this? If not, was it a good thing anyway?



Penn Jillette

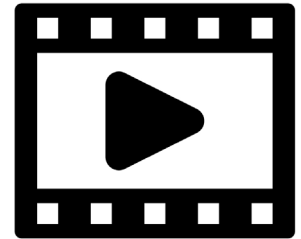
If you haven't seen it before, take a look at the Penn Jillette (from Penn & Teller) video about the integrity of the guy who wanted to share the gospel with him. (visit: mpc.org.au/friendsforlife and watch the first video under 'Week 1')

9. Suggest some ways that you personally, and we as a church, might need to change if we want to be more serious about "winning" more people in our time and place.

BEING A FRIEND

It's easy to turn into a "holy huddle," isn't it? The people Jesus called to be "salt and light" seem afraid of the dark in the world, they see the darkness, don't like it, and shrink back from it; Christian friends, Christian schools, Christian soccer clubs... seems like we'll take every chance we can to stick together and pull back from the messy world and messy people around us.

10. Watch the three minute testimony of Mez McConnell, who came to faith because Christians were prepared to make friends with him in the toughest of circumstances.



Mez CcConnell Testimony

What can we learn from his story?

Who would you mention in your 'testimony'? (Are there particular Christian friends who helped get you to this point in your faith?)

What would it take for you to be this kind of friend for someone else?

The upcoming studies in this series will help us to think through some ways of merging our friendship groups (not just breaking out of the Christian bubble, but mixing our Christian and non-Christian friends); of listening to the cultural story of our friends before expecting them to listen to ours; of moving our relationships beyond "public space" into safe "private space" where people are ready to talk about life issues; and to keep deliberately shaping church so that we're always ready for our friends to be there.

Pray together for opportunities to "be a friend" to those around you who need to be "won." Make a personal prayer list of three or four people you'd love to see won to salvation.