



**MESSAGE: (22) 19 AUGUST 2018 – 09:30**  
**PASTOR MICHAEL KEEVE – SUNDAY MORNING**  
**THE FAMILY OF LOVE & FAITH**

**(A) TITLE:** “EMPOWERED THROUGH RELATIONSHIP!”

**(B) SCRIPTURE READING:**

**John 15:12-15 MSG**

(12) This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you.

(13) This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends.

(14) You are my friends when you do the things I command you.

(15) I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.

**(C) TEXT:**

**John 15:13 AB**

No one has greater love [no one has shown stronger affection]  
than to lay down (give up) his own life for his friends.

**Johannes 15:13 AOV**

Groter liefde het niemand as dit nie, dat iemand sy lewe vir sy vriende gee.

**(D) INTRODUCTION:**

I once heard the story of two friends who were camping in the bushveld. As they were having their morning coffee, they heard something in the bushes. Coming toward them at full speed was a very large lion with a very hungry look on his face. One friend started pulling on his running shoes. The other friend turned to him and said, "You don't think you can outrun that lion, do you?" "No," said his friend. "I don't need to. All I have to do is outrun you." That is how a lot of so-called friends are. They run away at the first sign of difficulty. It has been said, "A friend is one who walks in when others walk out." I wonder how many friends we truly have. And I wonder what kind of friends we are to others. It is the month of **August** and we are focusing on relationships. As believers, we carry the precious gift of God inside of us. We are human containers of the love of God and enabled to have Godly relationships. Today I want to focus on how God ordained relationships are created to empower us.

**(E) GODLY RELATIONSHIPS:**

What is a Godly relationship?

Let us define a ‘**Godly relationship**’ by breaking it down:

**Godly** - of relating to, or proceeding directly from God, divine.

So God has to be involved in something that is Godly.

**Relationship** - the state or character of being related or interrelated, connection between two or more things.

Therefore, we could say that a Godly relationship is a connection between two persons proceeding directly from God. Or to put it another way, two people relate to each other divinely. I love to call it ‘God ordained relationships’.

A scripture that is of the utmost importance in this regard is:

**Ephesians 5:21 MSG**

Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to one another.

This is the most important principle and then follows the relationships between husband and wife (**verses 22-33**), parents and children (**Eph 6:1-4**), Employer and employee (**Eph 6:5-9**).

**(F) GOOD RELATIONSHIPS VS BAD RELATIONSHIPS:**

The Harvard University in the United States of America did a study on adult development. This was the longest study ever done on the adult lives of 724 men. It was done over the past 79 years since 1938 and is still ongoing. They were and are asked questions about their work, family life, health etc. About 60 of the original 724 men are still alive and still practicing in this study, most of them already in their nineties. They are now also studying more than 2000 children of these men. These men are from all walks of life like factory workers, lawyers, doctors, one President of the USA. Some became alcoholics, a few developed scitsophrenia, some climbed the social ladder to the top, and some made that journey in the opposite direction. They were and are interviewed in their living rooms, their medical records are checked, their blood are drawn, their brains are scanned, their children are interviewed, their wives are interviewed and much more.

The lessons learned are not about achieving more, working harder, money and being famous. The clearest message from this 79 year old study is this:

“Good relationships keep us happier and healthier for longer.”

Three big lessons were learned about relationships:

1. Social connections are really good for us and loneliness kills.  
It turned out that people who are socially connected to family, friends and communities are happier, healthier and they live longer than people who are less connected. People who are more isolated are less happy, their health declines earlier in mid-life, their brain functioning declines sooner and they live shorter lives.
2. The second big lesson regarding relationships in this study is that it is not about the number of friends that you have and it is not whether or not you are in a committed relationship, but it is the quality of your close relationships that matters the most. It

turned out that living in constant conflict is really bad for your health. At age 50 it wasn't these men's cholesterol levels that predicted how they are going to grow old; it was how satisfied they were in their relationships. The men who were the most happy in their relationships at age 50, were the healthiest at age 80.

3. The third big lesson learned in this study regarding relationships is that good relationships do not only protect our bodies but that it also protects our brains. It turned out that to be in an attached and secure relationship, to another person in your eighties is protective. When you have the assurance that you can count on one another, those persons minds were better and stronger than those who had bad relationships with the knowledge that they cannot count on one another. Those were the people who experienced earlier memory decline.

Please remember that this research is totally based on facts and findings over a period of 79 years. This proves once again how important relationships are in our lives. Good close relationships help us a lot in life in so many areas and levels. Why is it so hard to get and so easy to ignore? We are humans and we want quick fixes all the time! We must remember that relationships are life long, it does not end.

## **G. THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD ORDAINED RELATIONSHIPS:**

We as Christians must never forget that, in every relationship of life, another person is involved. There are not only the two of us involved – the husband and wife, the parent and child, the boss and employee, the slave and master. In every relationship, a third person is involved – the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, the ever present question in a God ordained relationship must be, 'what does Jesus, living in me, expect of this relationship?' If we do not recognize His presence, then we cannot submit ourselves to one another. We will easily let our own selfish, prideful motives get in our way, and thus damage the relationship. If we insist on satisfying the urges within ourselves for self-justification or vindication, then that is our god. However, if we are willing to obey what Christ would have us do, we prove that he is our God.

The relationships we develop with fellow believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have far greater meaning and depth than we are able to comprehend with our human minds. When we understand the eternal longevity of Godly relationships, then we will cherish and value these relationships even more — and they will enhance our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Whether they are romantic or platonic, God ordained relationships are based on a joint love for Christ and a desire to obey the Word of God.

## **H. A TRUE FRIEND OF JESUS:**

### **John 15:14 MSG**

You are my friends when you do the things I command you.

Three important points in order to be a true friend of Jesus:

1. True friends of Jesus will **obey** Him. If you are not obeying Him, then you have no right to claim that you are His friend. God is looking for consistency and regularity in your life. If you are really a friend of Jesus, then you will obey Him.
2. The obedience Jesus requires is an **active obedience**. Some people think it is enough to merely avoid what God forbids. They might say, "I am not a thief, an adulterer, or a murderer." That would be like saying to someone, "I am your friend because I don't rob you or cheat you or insult you or beat you up." Granted, your friend will appreciate the fact you don't do these things. But maybe you can go a little further and deeper in the friendship than that. It is not just a matter of refusing to do the wrong things. It is also a matter of doing the right things. That is what God wants. That is what it means to be His friend.
3. True friends of Jesus **obey** Him because they want to. It is a **free choice**. Obedience comes as a desire and not a duty if we really have a friendship with Jesus. We don't say, "I don't feel like reading my Bible" or "I don't really feel like praying right now." When Jesus is your friend, you look forward to reading your Bible. You look forward to prayer. You look forward to your time with Him.

## **I. FOLLOW JESUS' EXAMPLE:**

When you have deep friendships with other believers, they are able to encourage you to be obedient to the call of God in your life. Through your relationship with God and your God ordained or Godly relationships with those around you, you will be empowered! With bad, no or the wrong relationships, you will be weak and ineffective!

### **John 15:15 AB**

I do not call you servants (slaves) any longer; for the servant does not know what his master is doing (working out). But I have called you My friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from My Father. [I have revealed to you everything that I have learned from Him.]

Jesus Christ is the greatest friend that any of us ever will have.

To say, "Jesus is my best friend," almost sounds like a cliché, but when you think about it, it really is true. You can have a close friendship with God. Clearly Jesus Christ has offered His friendship to all of humanity. The question is how many of us really want to be friends with God? He cannot be our friend if we don't respond to His offer. I can't decide to become someone's best friend unless he wants to be my friend as well. I can't just choose him. He has to choose me in return. Jesus offers His hand of friendship to us. He wants to be our friend. He ultimately proved the legitimacy of His offer by laying His life down for us.

Can you see the power in this! Think about it — if the God of glory shared His life with His friends, then who are we to refuse to do the same? When we share our lives, we can spur each other on in our walk with Christ in order to be successful in life.

**John 15:16-17 AB**

(16) You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and I have appointed you [I have planted you], that you might go and bear fruit and keep on bearing, and that your fruit may be lasting [that it may remain, abide], so that whatever you ask the Father in My Name [as presenting all that I AM], He may give it to you.

(17) This is what I command you: that you love one another.

When Jesus called us friends, He initiated choosing us, and He's saying here: “you do the same. Follow my example. Love one another.”

So what is required of us to call ourselves true friends of Jesus Christ?

Certainly our Lord had a lot of fair-weather friends when He walked this earth. Jesus was popular when He was handing out free lunch. When He fed the 5,000, He was the most popular guy in town. But when He started challenging the crowd and telling them they needed to love Him and obey Him and do what was right, many of them turned away. They were fair-weather friends. Don't be a fair-weather friend. Be a true friend to others. More importantly, be a true friend to God. So if the greatest commandment is love, then how is love defined?

**John 15:13 AB**

No one has greater love [no one has shown stronger affection] than to lay down (give up) his own life for his friends.

Are you willing to put your life on the line for your friends?

Are you willing to give yourself in your Godly or God ordained relationships?

We must base our God ordained relationships on this kind of love, the love of God.

A love that gives. Then and only then will we really experience fullness of life! And then will we be empowered through relationship!