

Copyright February 14, 2021. Geist Christian Church. All Rights Received.

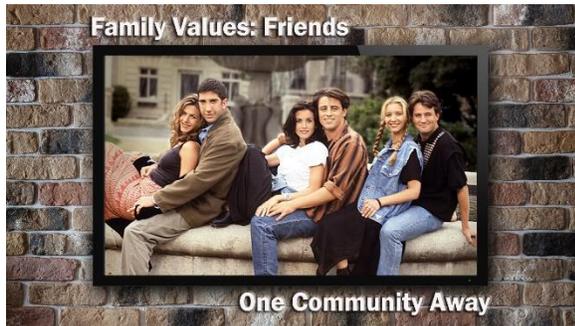
**Title:** Family Values: Friends – One Community Away

**Preaching:** Danny Gulden, Lead Pastor, Promise Road Campu

**Text:** [Acts 2:42-47](#)

**E-mail:** [Danny Gulden](#)

[Watch the Service.](#)



The television show Friends aired from 1994 until 2004 and was one of the most-watched tv shows of that timeframe. The show focused on a group of six friends living close to one another in New York City. Chandler, Ross, Joey, Rachel, Monica, and Phoebe became household names and must-see tv on Thursday nights. The Central

Perk café, a coffee shop where many communal scenes take place, was a leader in Americans making coffee shops a central meeting place, a third space where people gather. The show helped people learned the English language. A 2012 poll by the Kaplan International English Colleges found that more than a quarter of students cited watching the show as the best way for them to improve their English. It also led to a rise in the idea that one can construct families of choice through friends' groups. According to a pop culture expert at the University of Buffalo, Friends is *"one of those rare shows that marked a change in American culture." The images of youth and the roles they portray are better defined and represent a lifestyle that centers around creating and sustaining relationships between friends running their own lives and seeking help from each other."*

Today we are concluding a series called Family Values, where we have been looking at the intersection of some favorite tv families and theology and looking at the values they teach us when it comes to relationships both within our families and outside of our families. In preparing for this series, I was drawn to the show Friends not because of any particular scene or story, but because of the concept of the series. A group of friends who are more than just friends, rather they are a community. They are a group of individuals, flawed as we all are, who overcome whatever brokenness they may experience individually, to become a community together. In short, they are stronger together than they are apart from one another. The show highlights an eternal truth about us as human beings. Although we may be flawed as human beings, we need one another. We need safe places and safe people for us to confide in, celebrate with, and do life together.

The mark of the earliest followers of Jesus was community. The way the earliest Christian communities set themselves apart from the world was the way they conducted their life together. You could tell groups of Jesus followers by the way they lived.

This text from the book of Acts shares a snapshot of what constituted a community.

*"The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity."* Acts 2:42-46 (CEB)

A couple of weeks ago, we were going through some things, doing some early spring cleaning. I came across my high school yearbook from my senior year at Brookwood High School in Snellville, Ga. I took a few moments to look through it and look back. The yearbook described in pictures and some words what was going on in that community at that time.

Some call the book of Acts "the yearbook of the church." It tells us how some of the earliest Christian communities organized themselves and what it meant to them to live as followers of Jesus Christ. We learn what it looked like for them to affirm Christ as a redeemer.

I believe that it holds such powerful insights for us today because it is a *descriptive* book rather than a *prescriptive* book

It does not necessarily prescribe what should be done, rather it describes and reflects what is being done, how a group of people is living, and what is going on in the community.

Here is what we learn: Mutual Commitment shapes and maintains community.

We believe that these are largely people who are new to the Jesus movement and have never heard Jesus' teachings

We are told they:

Are devoted to one another

Shared meals

They pray together

They shared everything  
They care for another's needs through money  
They were glad  
They lived simply

All of these are markers of their commitment to God through Jesus and their commitment to one another.

Here is what happened because they lived in this way, here is what others noticed about them and the way they lived together. We know this way of living works, especially when it comes to the fullness of life for all.

*They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved. Acts 2:47 (CEB)*

Others took a look at how these followers of Jesus lived and said, "I want to be a part of that."

God's Spirit, in and through us, performs signs and wonders on earth

Friends made such a mark and it still popular today in reruns because it shows us glimpses of what our friendships and our larger communities can be, the role they play in our lives, and the roles we can play in others lives. We need people who have our back, who will both comfort and advocate for us. People we can be vulnerable with and from whom we can receive grace. The famous theme song by The Rembrandts contains these words: feel free to sing along at home.

*I'll be there for you  
(When the rain starts to pour)  
I'll be there for you  
(Like I've been there before)  
I'll be there for you  
(Cause you're there for me too)*

In many areas of life, people are trying to figure out post-pandemic trends. There are numbers of people thinking about and writing about how life is going to change, what might stay the same, what will we not go back to doing, all of those types of questions.

The church is thinking about those questions as well. Regular conversations with colleagues around what is church going to look like post-pandemic. There will be things about church that change, some that stay the same. What does the church need to look like post-pandemic?

I think each of us in our own lives is reassessing how we spend our time, what we give our energy to, what people and places are really important to us. We are assessing what communities' matter

We've learned during this time that some things that we give our lives to aren't as important as we once believed they were.

Other things that we haven't given our lives to are MORE important than we thought they were.

What is really important for the fullness of life?

I think that is why the show Friends was so popular when it first aired and is still popular to this day We enjoy watching authentic community and authentic relationships because we crave that in our own lives. We are hungry for people and places where we can be vulnerable, accepted just as we are, and receive the gift of grace when we need it the most.

In our Tuesday night group on Zoom, we talked about what we look for in communities. Some of the answers included:

People who support you and have your back

Shared experiences

You can be authentic

Welcoming

Shared interests and values

Trust

Eat Together

Acceptance

Accountability

Life-giving values:

As we think about what the church community looks like, some of the earliest followers of Jesus provide us a glimpse into what God calls us to be like. Those who were part of the early church didn't realize it at the time, but they were only one community away from being the people God created them to be and creating the world God intends.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of God, that glimpse is ours today. One community away from being the people God has created each of us to be and together creating the world God intends.

Let's Pray Together

