PERSONAL REFLECTION

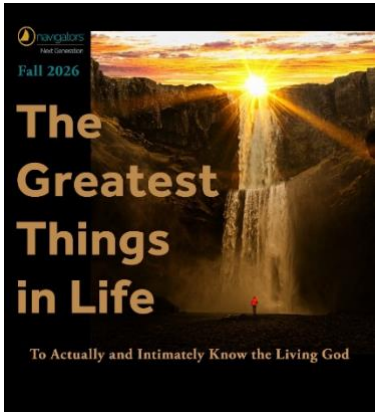
Taking honest stock of your relationship with Jesus, how would you currently describe it?

What is one thing you want to do this week to invest in your friendship with Jesus?

Remember that this isn't an intellectual exercise, but one that is fundamentally relational. Spend time in prayer with Jesus about these reflections and intentions.

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The Greatest Friend!

As we continue discussion this semester about the greatest things in life, we must give attention to how we've been designed to live relationally. This is something God demonstrates in His nature, and a way that He created us to likewise reflect His image. He uses our experiences of meaningful friendships to reveal His character. Simultaneously, He reveals that our longing for deep relationship is ultimately fulfilled in Himself.

FRIENDSHIP

What are characteristics of a great friendship? Below are a few ideas of what makes up a meaningful and impactful relationship. How do we see Jesus epitomizing these things? What do you see as your role in also being a friend?

Which characteristic do you most desire? Look up the associated verses.

Mutual delight – **Zephaniah 3:17, Isaiah 61:10**

Communal sharing – **Hebrews 2:17-18, Philippians 3:7-11**

Deep knowing – **Psalms 139:1-4, 2 Corinthians 2:10-12**

Selfless consideration – **Romans 8:32, Romans 12:1**

Growth promotion – **Hebrews 7:24-25, Philippians 1:20**

Committed investment – **Philippians 1:6, Joshua 1:9, Matthew 28:18-20**

Thoughts?

Like our horizontal friendships, nurturing our relationship with Jesus involves investing time and energy into building that connection with Him. How often do we view Jesus' friendship with us primarily through the lens of what benefit that is to us? Yet all relationships hinge upon a two-way dynamic. A couple of the tools we are given to connect with Jesus are Worship and Prayer. Let's explore a little deeper how each of those can function.

WORSHIP

Worship is a way of practicing seeing who Jesus is and responding to that. This can look like gratitude, like proclamation of truths, and like obedience and sacrifice that is responding in love to His personhood and His own movements of love.

What do you observe about worship from these passages? How do they inform your understanding of worship?

Psalms 29:2

Revelation 11:16-18

John 4:23-24

PRAYER

Prayer is another avenue for connection with Jesus, not to talk "at" Him, but to have dialogue with Him. It's meant to be a context for us to come to Jesus with our thoughts, our questions, our emotions, our fears, our hopes, our needs, our successes, our failures—everything and anything in life. Likewise, it's meant to be a space for us to hear Jesus' response to us.

What do you observe about prayer from these passages? How do they inform your understanding of prayer?

John 16:24

Matthew 6:6-8

James 5:13-16

TRANSFORMATIVE RELATIONSHIP

There's another characteristic about a great friendship—it should leave you profoundly changed. As you spend significant time in someone's presence, to learn one another, to give and to receive, you naturally start to shift in becoming more like that person or, at least, being able to take on that person's perspective. While these changes can sometimes be difficult, requiring the laying down of one's personal agendas and preferences at times, the motivation in this friendship dynamic is that of love, in a context of deep acceptance.

Let's look at how Jesus speaks to that in **John 15:9-17.**