

# God's Design for our Friendships

## **1. Friendships: A look at Jesus' example**

"Jesus calls you 'friend' . . . By being friends with you he forges a common foundation for your other relationships, while simultaneously showing you the purpose of those friendships. The result is that you don't overload your present relationships by expecting more of them than they can supply and you extend yourself to people you ordinarily wouldn't."

"But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you."

**John 15:15**

"Your relationships with the people around you can transcend the surface similarities and differences by prizing instead a shared friendship with Jesus. Rely on that shared passion for him more than your shared interests to bond you with people. . . . But remember that God often calls you beyond what comes easily."

## **2. I pursue relationships, but God decides my friendships**

"God reserves the right to put you in relationships that he thinks will best serve the cause of his glory. Your job is to humbly value and appreciate the people he sends your way."

### **3. Friendships are not about me**

“God sovereignly chooses to put you with coworkers and neighbors and in churches where you don’t get to choose the personalities around you. He does that because he believes those combinations of people will help shape his kingdom in the way he wants, which in turn will help shape you. Your job is to ask how you and they fit into the overall scope of what he is doing.”

**Sympathizing Love:** “Our friends need to see our tears over the broken parts of their lives. Part of love is letting them know that their pain matters deeply to us.”

**Struggling Love:** “Friendships in which people feel free to share their difficulties give them permission to drop their guard and ask for help as they grow into the fullness of Christ. But if you want to have those kinds of relationships, you have to take the lead in sharing your difficulties. Look for these opportunities and intentionally offer yourself to others.”

**Forgiving Love:** “As surprising as it sounds, you can learn to look at being sinned against as an opportunity to build closer friendships. As those around you come to believe that you are characterized by forgiveness, you will see them feel more safe with you and confident that their failings don’t spell the death of your friendship.”

“Jesus was willing to be the rejected Son so that our families would know reconciliation. Jesus was willing to become the forsaken friend so that we could have loving friendships. Jesus was willing to be the rejected Lord so that we could live in loving submission to one another. Jesus was willing to be the forsaken brother so that we could have godly relationships. Jesus was willing to be the crucified King so that our communities would experience peace.”

Lane & Tripp, *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*

**Longsuffering Love:** “Living kindly and graciously with the people around you while they grow more mature in their faith is messy and time-consuming. You find things you didn’t expect, things that make you shake your head and wonder if it’s all worth it. It regularly takes more effort than you thought it would. It’s not glamorous work, and it doesn’t draw big headlines or attention. On top of that, many times it doesn’t look like you’re accomplishing much.

#### **4. Friendships focus on giving instead of taking**

**Welcoming Friendships**-You give others the sense they are always welcomed into your life

**Romans 15:7**-"Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

"When you greet people, you indicate to them how worthwhile you think they are."

"You have not met any ordinary people today-only eternal creatures created in God's image."

**Humility in Friendships**-You submit yourself to bend for the needs of others

**Philippians 2:3**-"In humility count others more significant than yourself. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

"Jesus invites you to learn the joy of humbling yourself for others' sake by following his example. Now you get to live with others in a way that thinks about their needs more than you think of your own. You're allowed to have your own interests, but they are not to rule your life. Instead, you are to reshape your world for the sake of someone else."

**Joyful Friendships**-You eagerly celebrate the happiness and success of others

**James 1:17**-"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

"Whether I get the gift or you get the gift, we both have the opportunity to see our God more clearly because of it. Remembering that upward focus moves my eyes off you and me. I rejoice with you as I contemplate how he expressed his relationship with you. I concentrate on how he gave you exactly what you needed, how careful he was in choosing it, and how his timing was just right for you."

**Peaceful Friendships**-You are quick to overlook weaknesses, faults, and offenses in others

**John 14:27**- "Jesus said to his disciples, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.'"

"Weak, immature love insists that we can be peaceful only when we have complete agreement with each other. More mature love has learned how to agree to disagree because it knows that disagreeing doesn't have to divide."

**Kindness in Friendships**-You show hospitality, without grumbling.

**2 Corinthians 8:9**- "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."

"There are times when loving others as Jesus loves us means we choose to let their needs break into our lives, disrupting our schedules and comforts. We honor them by deciding that their needs trump whatever else we had planned, even if they can never pay us back. Being generously interruptible is a necessary component of your relationships that comes from the heart of how Christ relates to you."

Ex. **Luke 11:5-8**-Parable of the man who went at midnight to borrow food from a friend.

\*All quotes, unless otherwise noted, are from the book *Loving Well (Even If You Haven't Been)* by William P. Smith

## Biblical Friendships

### Questions for Reflection

“Paul grounds our unity in the unity of the Trinity, not in our ability to get along. We get along because Father, Son, and Spirit have allowed us to do so. We can give grace because we have been given grace. Jesus humbled himself. The Father gently and patiently works out our salvation. The Holy Spirit forbears and abides with us even in the face of our sin, convicting and correcting us but never condemning. Father, Son, and Spirit were torn apart so that we might be united with them and with each other.”

Lane & Tripp, ***Relationships: A Mess Worth Making***

1. Discuss how our friendships may differ from what Jesus models for us in the Bible. In what ways do you see Jesus' example shaping your friendships?
2. Are you making time in your schedule for the pursuit of relationships? What things prevent this?
3. Are you actively pursuing opportunities to connect more deeply with others? Do you interact with them in a way that will invite them deeper into your life?
4. What are some ways we typically respond to the sins of others? What opportunities are created by sin in our relationships?
5. Consider if you have fallen into the trap of believing that compatibility is the most important value determining how you interact with others. Do you find yourself shying away from people because they don't fit into the mold of who you want to be with?
6. What truths about Biblical friendships that were shared today stood out to you the most? In which areas would you most like to see growth in your own life?

## **Ephesians 4- Unity in the Body of Christ**

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”

(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

## Recommended Resources

***Loving Well (Even if you Haven't Been)*** by William P. Smith

***Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*** by Ted Lane and Paul Tripp

**Sermon** by Pastor Mark Mullery of Sovereign Grace Church, Fairfax, Virginia.

<http://www.sovgracefairfax.org/gospel-centered-caregroups-relationships>

**Sermon** by Pastor Daniel Baker of Sovereign Grace Church, Apex, North Carolina.

[http://sovgracenc.org/teachings/?sermon\\_id=516](http://sovgracenc.org/teachings/?sermon_id=516)

“If you are a Christian, you automatically are in relationship with other Christians. You are united to one another because you are united to Christ. Because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, you already share a deep bond that has been given to you by grace. Therefore, these relationships are gifts to be managed with great care. I am either being a good or a bad steward of these gifts.”

Lane & Tripp, ***Relationships: A Mess Worth Making***