

INTRODUCTION

1. There has been a statement circulating lately around our church that has to do with “relationships.”
2. Some have said they don't have any relationships in our church while others say, “Our church doesn't have intimate relationships.”
3. Those are two opposite statements.
4. One accuses of having NO relationships while the other says we have them they're just not intimate.
5. I believe those are serious issues for every church but they are also personal.
6. Our church seeks to provide an atmosphere where true relationships can happen and also where they can grow deeper but because they are personal it depends on each individual as to how deep they go.
7. To have a deep meaningful relationship with someone it takes time and effort from each party.
8. But it also takes understanding what true relationships are.
9. The Bible talks about relationships both by definition and example.

10. I want to begin our study tonight first by defining our terms.
11. To do that, I want to be bit more specific than just referring to them as “relationships.”
12. I want to replace that word with the word “friendships.”
13. To be even more specific than that, I want to ask first, “What is a friend?”
14. It is true that you cannot have a group of people meet week after week without any relationships.
15. What we should be asking is “What kind of relationship do I have with one another?”
16. The Bible answers that with one word, “body.”
17. As believers we are “the body” of Christ and “individually members of one another” (Rom.12:5).
18. So our commonality is salvation.
19. So the Bible has much to say about our commonality in Jesus Christ and our responsibility in the Body of Christ to one another.

I. What is a Friend?

First, the word “friend” is used in its singular and plural forms 124 times in the Bible.

Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary says a friend is “one attached to another by affection or esteem” (11th Edition).

The Visual Thesaurus adds more by saying a friend is “a person you know well and regard with affection and trust.”

It adds the word “well” and “trust” which are necessary words in any friendship.

To go beyond an acquaintance, I must know the person “well.” I must also have “affection” for them and “trust them.”

Probably the hardest part in that definition is the last word “trust.”

But to have close friends we have to trust them. But before we can trust them they must demonstrate that they are people who can be trusted.

The Bible speaks of friendships in two ways: Those who are *true* friends and those who are *false*.

Notice first...

A. False Friends

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1. The Chief Cupbearer to Joseph – Genesis 40:1-23
2. David to Uriah – 2 Samuel 11
3. Ahithophel to David – 2 Samuel 15:12, 31
4. Judas Iscariot to Jesus
 - a) Matthew 26:48-50 says, “Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him.”⁴⁹ Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, “Hail, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. ⁵⁰ And Jesus said to him, “***Friend***, do what you have come for.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.”
 - b) Psalms 41:9 says, “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.”
 - c) Psalms 55:12-14 says, “For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, Then I could bear *it*; Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, Then I could hide myself from him. ¹³ But it is you, ***a man my equal, My companion and my familiar friend***; ¹⁴ We who had sweet fellowship together Walked in the house of God in the throng.”
5. The disciples to Jesus – Matthew 26:56

“But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.’ **Then all the disciples left Him and fled.**”

What are the characteristics of a false friend?

They lack loyalty to their friends.

They use their friends for their own gain or advantage.

They incite others against their friends.

They betray their friends.

What can we learn about...

B. True Friends

1. They are loyal

a) Proverbs 18:24 says, “A man of *too many friends comes* to ruin, **But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.**”

b) Proverbs 27:10 says, “**Do not forsake your own friend** or your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity; Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away.”

2. They are dependable

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- a) Acts 24:23 says, "Then he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet have *some* freedom, and **not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.**"
- b) Acts 27:3 says, "The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and **allowed him to go to his friends and receive care.**"

3. They are truthful

- a) Proverbs 27:5-6 says, "Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. **Faithful are the wounds of a friend,** But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy."
- b) Proverbs 27:9 continues by saying, "Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so **a man's counsel is sweet to his friend.**"

4. They are forgiving – Luke 24:36-53

Jesus forgave His disciples for deserting Him.

- 5. They are sacrificial – John 15:13 says, "Greater love has no one than this, that **one lay down his life for his friends.**"

II. What Are Some Examples of True Friendships?

- A. Abraham and Lot – Genesis 14:1-16
- B. Ruth and Naomi – Ruth 1:1-18
- C. David and Jonathan

- 1. 1 Samuel 18:1-4
- 2. 2 Samuel 1:17-27
- 3. 2 Samuel 9:1

- D. Job and His Three Friends

Job 2:11-13 says, “Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him. ¹²When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. ¹³Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that *his* pain was very great.”

- E. Jesus and His Disciples – John 15:13-15 ¹³“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴“You are My friends if you do what I

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command you. ¹⁵ "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

F. Paul and Pricilla and Aquilla – Romans 16:3-4 ³ Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles."

G. Paul and Timothy

Philippians 2:19-22 says, "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. ²⁰ For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. ²¹ For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. ²² But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serv*ing his father."

H. Paul and Epaphroditus – Philippians 2:25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need."

All 5 characteristics of true friends are found in the examples we have just looked at. They were loyal, dependable, truthful, forgiving, and sacrificial.

Let's ask a final question...

III. What Destroys Friendships?

A. Gossip

Proverbs 17:9 says, "He who conceals a transgression seeks love, **But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.**"

B. Anger

Proverbs 22:24 Do not associate with a man *given to anger*; or go with a hot-tempered man.

The ESV says, "Make no **friendship** with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man."

C. Betrayal of Trust

Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 24:10 that during the time of the Antichrist "many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another."

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With that in mind, it's important you know who your true friends are. Because a true friend will not give you up. They will not betray your trust. They will stick with you to the end.

It's clear that Judas didn't consider Jesus a friend because he was willing to betray Him. He said to the Chief Priest in Matthew 26:15, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?"

CONCLUSION

1. If you are one who has had a friend who has gossiped about you, expressed unrighteous anger toward you, or betrayed your trust, you need to forgive them.
2. I realize that your friendship has now been violated and the relationship will never be the same but you need to forgive them for Christ's sake and your own.
3. Friendships can be hard to find. That is, true friendships.
4. There will always be those who attach themselves to others for what they can get.
5. But to find one who is loyal, dependable, truthful, forgiving, and sacrificial takes time and work.

6. Can I also say that Jesus is all of those things to you right now as a believer.
7. He will never leave you nor forsake you!
8. He proved His love for you by laying down His life to meet your greatest need.

The hymn writer wrote, "What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer. Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer! In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

~Written by Joseph Medlicott Scriven, 1855~

9. As you embark to make friends, you need to remember a few things.
10. First, to have friends you must show yourself to be friendly.

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11. Proverbs 18:24 in the KJV says, "A man *that hath* friends must shew himself friendly."
12. Second, you need to choose your friends wisely because 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'"
13. And third, in the body of Christ, you are obligated or commanded to deepen your relationships towards one another because you are part of Christ's body.
14. So you are to be devoted to one another (Rom.12:10), give preference to one another (Rom.12:10), be of the same mind toward one another (Rom.12:16), love one another (Rom.13:8), admonish one another (Rom.15:14), have the same care for one another (1 Cor.12:25), serve one another (Gal.5:13), bear one another's burdens (Gal.6:2), be kind to one another (Eph.4:32), forgive one another (Eph.4:32), submit to one another (Eph.5:21), comfort one another (1 Thess.4:18), edify one another (1 Thess.5:11), stimulate one another to love and good works (Heb.10:25), exhort one another (Heb.10:25), confess your trespasses to one another (Jas.5:16), pray for one another (Jas.5:16), have compassion for one another (1 Pet.3:8), be hospitable to one another (1 Pet.4:9), and minister your gifts to one another (1 Pet.4:10).
15. With all these one another's, I say that we have a lot of work to do because we fail in so many of these areas.

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16. These are the kinds of relationships or friendships we are to have.
17. Will we have some of these relationships outside of our church? Yes but we need to have them here too!
18. Ask yourself, "Am I this kind of person toward others?"
19. "What area in your life needs reforming?"
20. Let's pray.
21. Lord's Supper.