

What are good friends?

So normally Rob and I trade off teaching every two weeks. However Rob got really sick on a recent vacation and is now in recovery mode which means you're stuck with me for the month of June. As I considered having a bit more time to teach I thought it might be helpful to take a brief break away from Acts to consider something specific and relevant to this Uth group.

Over the few years I've had the privilege of teaching a lot of common topics have surfaced. Being heavenly minded, boldness and persistence in evangelism, suffering with purpose and others. We've had the opportunity to learn a lot and dive deeply into some of Scriptures most precious and fundamental concepts. There was one topic though that I've harped on a lot more recently but realized I haven't yet spent sufficient time considering more deeply. Friendship. We know we're supposed to live in relationship with others, to make and be good friends, but how? What does that entail? What is a good friend? What exactly is friendship? What is a bad friend? How do you navigate and grow in friendship?

Over the next four weeks we'll dive into Friendship. School is ending, camp is coming, Summer is soon to be in full swing, it's a good time to consider friendship.

This week we'll spend our time defining Friendship, understanding what it is and what exactly we're dealing with.

Friendship Defined

| φίλος (philos)

- a congenial associate
 - pleasant because of a personality, qualities, or interests that are similar to one's own.
 - someone you like because they're like you
- originally was an adjective meaning "dear" or "valuable," but eventually became the standard noun for "friend" or "relative."

We don't need to spend too much time here right? You know who your friends are. If I told you to circle up your posse you know who'd be in your circle right? These are the people you like. The people you want where you're at. They're fun, smart, pretty, fast, cool, just like you. You know what a friend is. Right? Or do you? Is how you define, find and build friends and friendships how God does? Wherever there are thoughts and actions there's a need to inform them according to Scripture to ensure we are thinking and acting rightly in the way that's most actually beneficial.

So how does God define a good friend? Good question. Before we can answer that however we need to understand the origins of friendship and the subsequent purpose behind it. The world and the things contained within it were all a part of an intentional purpose of God when he originally designed. There was a time before time where there were no friends, no people and no world. As God spoke it all into existence it was with purpose and intentionality.

For our discussion on friends we're talking about human relationships so going back to the origins of humans would be wise.



Genesis 2:7–8

7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

8 The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

God makes man and places him in paradise, but not to just sit there stuffing his face with tasty fruits and veggies, but to work and obey.



Genesis 2:15–18

15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

Immediately following the commission of the only human on the face of the planet to work and obey he adds an "s" to human because there's something not good about singular humanity. Eve is created as the first friend. A helper. The chief form of friendship in the context of a marriage between just Adam and Eve. The implications though for all human relationships are simple yet profound. It's not good to be alone. In our heavenly commission to work and obey we won't do well alone.

Friendship too then is not an objective but resource. We don't look to our friends to fulfill us, but to push us, to help us, in our actual objectives of serving the Lord. That's a really important point in ensuring we view friendship well. Too often we view friendships selfishly or as a goal and thus build or seek out friendships which will satisfy some other objective than that which God actually intends, as a means of help in our pursuit of obedience to the Lord.

With an accurate biblically informed view of the purpose of friendship we can begin to move into a more focused view of evaluating our individual relationships to ensure we're achieving the greater goals of life through the minutia of everyday life.

We'll get into being a good friend and finding good friends in later weeks but to kick it off let's briefly look at what Scripture has to say about friendships and the good of good friends and bad of bad friends.

The Good of Good Friends



Proverbs 27:6

6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

This flies in the face of the way so many of us default to viewing friendships. Friends are supposed to have your back, to defend you and be there, thick or thin, wrong or right. Friends don't take the other side or ask you to change, they just love you the way you are. That kind of friend isn't a friend friends, that kind of friend is about as useful as a bag of boulders tied to your ankle as you jump into the ocean. A true friend values the mission of life more than the friendship. They would rather wound to keep you on course than kindly see you slip off the cliff. Be so careful of letting go of the good friends who've hurt you.

It is no easy task saying hard things to those you love but it is so much worse to say nothing and watch them perish.

On the flip side of this my young friends be on guard against flattery and deception. Watch out that your circle of friends is not in reality a ring of enemies, fools, intent on ensuring you waste your life and feel good about it all the way till the end.

There is a higher purpose to life than living and good friends is how we find it and stick with it and bad friends are the fast track to emptiness.

The Bad of Bad Friends



Proverbs 13:20

20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

We've been reading through Proverbs in the mornings for family devotions and it's always striking to me in the early chapters of Proverbs the contrast between wisdom and foolishness, righteousness and unrighteousness. So many of these proverbs are addressed to young people, children, youth, and the assumed temptation is that "hey kids, it's going to be hard to be righteous, to pursue holiness, you're going to want to be and have foolish companions. It'll look more fun, it will seem to be the better way but I'm warning you be aware, wisdom, discretion, boring is better. There's harm, a pit, death itself lying in wait for fools who turn a deaf ear to the wisdom of the good friends.

Summary

So to end where we began how does God define a good friend?



A good friend is a helper given by God to partner with as you work for and obey our Creator.

- Take stock of your squad.
 - How are you all doing in fulfilling this purpose statement?
 - Are you surrounded by people benefiting you in serving God?
 - Are you this type of person?
 - Do you view your relationship with others in these terms?