

How to be a good friend

Last week we covered two distinct definitions of friendship. Both how the world and our natural man views friendships, that is the people who are like you, who you naturally gravitate towards because they're comfortable, familiar, understandable, relatable. Vs how the Bible defines friendships in the context of their intended purpose: that a good friend is a helper given by God to partner with as you work for and obey our Creator.

These two definitions aren't mutually exclusive but they certainly aren't equal or the same. People like you absolutely can keep you from the God given intention of good friendships and difficult people unlike you absolutely can press you forward into greater works and obedience.

So be careful.

Over the next two weeks as we lead up to camp week we'll be looking first today at how to be a good friend and next how to find, build, cultivate, "make" a friend.

My first point this morning is that this distinction isn't artificial. We tend to view friendship singularly, as a two way a street, a back and forth. The world views friendship this way. Once it get's weird, once it become draining, once it's a sacrifice get out, it's not longer a friendship. The idea of mutually beneficial friendships isn't part of the Biblical mo of friendship. There are really two types of friendships. Those whom you love and those who love you. Friendship revolves around love, and not just any love, a rich, biblical, sacrificial love.

So when it comes to the idea of being a good friend you'll need to understand, appreciate and embrace the often one way street of sacrificial love.



A good friend loves reliably, sacrificially with and through the love of God

First point on your metaphorical outlines this morning:

Good Friends Love Reliably



Proverbs 17:17

17 A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.

The overarching defining characteristic or container of a Good Friend is that they are Loving but to that outline we need to add color. Love how? Love when? There are many characteristics, facets of Biblical love and for friends a critically important one is that a good friend loves reliably. A good friend is there, available, they aren't "too busy". The requires investment, interest, care, concern, closeness into the life of the friend.

In the context of being a good friend this are the people that have *you* on speed dial. The people who know you're there for them. I hope there are people in your life who you've invested and cared for in such a way that they're comfortable just

blasting into your life with their problems and concerns because you just love them at all times. There's never an "off time" for your love for them.

My son is this way, to a fault, morning, noon or 2am at night. If he's got a problem you better believe he'll be calling out my name for help and you better believe I'll be there for him. He's my friend, my son, I care for him at all times. My son shouldn't be the only person in my life who can rely on me in this way though, I need to be investing into other people in this church in such a way that I'm becoming a reliable mainstay contact for them to reach out to because they know I love them, I always love them.

We'll get into a bit more in our last lesson on losing or limiting friendships the fact that this level of intense interest and exposure will absolutely bring with it a limiting factor that you can't be friends like this with everyone, but nevertheless there should be people in your life who have you on speed dial because they know you'll answer and help them because you love them, because they are your friend.

We tend to flip this though do we not? You know the people in your life who are always hitting you up, always trying to get closer, the people who want to be friends with you. Biblically speaking this is turned on its head. We should be viewing the people leaning on us as our friends, the people given by God to us to love, reliably, the people who need us, look to us, it's less that they view us as their friends and more that God through Scripture is calling, commanding us to view those people as our friends. To make ourselves available and reliable to them. They may not be like us, they may take more than they give, but they absolutely can be helpers given by God to partner with us as we work for and obey our Creator.

So Good Friends Love Reliably

Next:

Good Friends Love Sacrificially



John 15:12-14

12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

The next essential component in the "a good friend loves" box is sacrificial love. Sacrificial love is a taking of your own resources and spending them for the benefit and blessing of another. Foregoing your own good for the good of another. For you to love your friends sacrificially you will need to actively, intentionally and consistently serve them. How can you take what you have and use it to bless those around you.

It's looking at the people you care for and bettering them and their experiences and purposes through your resources. Sacrificial love doesn't keep a balance sheet, in reality or mentally. Friends who love sacrificially view themselves and their resources as really belonging to another, able and available to be used wherever and whenever there is need.

Sacrificial love doesn't wait to be asked though, withdrawing itself and only disbursing it to those who plead and beg. Sacrificial loves seeks out the opportunity to be spent for the betterment of others.

Christ, our perfect example, did it this way:



Romans 5:6-8

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

And in case you view that as an unattainable ideal:



1 John 3:16

16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Your friends need you to love them sacrificially first. This is not the world's friendship. This is not natural. This is something only Christians can do. To both love expecting nothing in return and to express that kind of love without being asked, and worse to express that kind of love when it is very much not deserved or ever reciprocated. This is a love which would drain the natural man immediately. This kind of love is what inspires the concept that you cannot care for others if you aren't first caring for yourself. This kind of love is terrifying.

My son has an RC car he got as a reward for learning how to poop in the toilet. It's very fast and I have definitely used it more than he has. If you run it flat out the battery will die pretty quick. It's a blast for those 5 minutes or so, but invariably it slows down, dies, and you have to recharge it. This tends to running the car more slowly so we get more play out of the thing. This is how we tend to view our friendships. Find people who fill you. Pour out, but don't pour too much too quickly without ensuring you have people, activities, pleasure that also fills you. We forget all too easily the source of our love. The true filler of our "love tanks", God himself. We are still human, we need rest, but we need to be filled with the love of God or we will never love sacrificially as we are commanded to, like Christ, with our lives laid down, poured out, spent, for the betterment of our friends.

Good Friends Love Like God



1 John 4:7–11

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Now I guess I could have started and ended here but it's important to know the impossible standard we're to attain to so that we don't attempt good Christian friendship within our own strength, ability or worldly definitions. We'll fail. See the impossible standard. Despair of your own strength and then turn to God to engulf your inability with his own strength and love that His love for your friends can then flow through you.

God loves people through the hands and feet of reliable sacrificial people. People like you that get tired and selfish. By his spirit he changes them and they begin to love differently, better, actual love, towards real friends, in the way God wants because this is how he loves.

Good friends are overwhelmed with the friendship of God towards them. They see and are holy spirit inspired and empowered to go and love like that. To find the weak and weary and adopt them as their friends and pour out love on the underserving but desperately needing.

True Biblical friendship is not first or primarily a two way street. It's beautiful when it is, but it is first you loving others reliably and sacrificially just like God in Christ has done for you.



1 Corinthians 13:4–8

4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,
5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,
6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
8 Love never fails;

You've heard it said:

"To have a friend you must be a friend."

That's unhelpful, worldly and self centered.

Friendship is something you choose to place on someone else. To love that person reliably, sacrificially as God loves them. Friendship isn't something you look to get, it's something you strive by God's power to give.

Better "Be the friend you wish you had." or better yet

"Be the friend that God has been to you."

This room is filled with people who need your friendship aimed at them. Your reliable, sacrificial, love. By God's grace may we do that and strive to grow and get better in it.



Hebrews 3:13

13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

This is what friends do. Pushing each other away from sin and towards the hope of heaven making the most of each day.



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

Let's be that for each other.

Pray for your friends

Brings the power of God to bear vs your own experience or worldly wisdom

Invest, cultivate, value

Levels of friendship

Close vs further friends

Give love vs get love

If you were another person would you want to be a friend of yours?