



Christian Life Fellowship
Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



The Value of Friendship
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Introduction:

THE GOLDEN COMPASS, a new movie targeted at children, will be released December 7, 2007. This movie is based on the first book of a trilogy by atheist Philip Pullman. In the final book a boy and girl kill God so they can do as they please. Pullman left little doubt about his intentions when he said in a 2003 interview, "My books are about killing God."

The movie is a watered down version of the first book and is designed to be very attractive in the hope unsuspecting parents will take their children to see the movie and that the children will want the books for Christmas. The movie has a well known cast, including Nicole Kidman, Kevin Bacon, and Sam Elliott. It will probably be advertised extensively, so it is crucial that we get the word out to warn parents to avoid this movie.

You can research this for yourself. Start with this article on Snopes.Com, and then go to Google.

Friendship

In our series called LIFE 360, this morning we are looking at friendship. How important are friends? Are we to befriend those who are not believers? Are friendships only for time or are they eternal relationships?

I would like to begin this morning by asking how you define a friend? What is a friend? Friends are people with whom you dare to be yourself. Your soul can be naked with them. They ask you to put on nothing, only to be what you are. They do not want you to be better or worse. When you are with them, you feel as a prisoner feels who has been declared innocent. You do not have to be on your guard. You can say what you think, as long as it is genuinely you. Friends understand those contradictions in your nature that lead others to misjudge you. With them you breathe freely. You can talk about your vanities and envies and hates and meanness and absurdities. When you open these things up to your friends, they are loyal and those things are dissolved once disclosed. They understand. You do not have to be careful. You can abuse them, neglect them, and tolerate them. Best of all, you can keep still with them. It matters not. They like you. They are like fire that purges to the bone. They understand. You can weep

with them, sing with them, laugh with them, and pray with them. Through it all--and underneath--they see, know, and love you. What is a friend? Just one, I repeat, with whom you dare to be yourself.

C. Raymond Beran, in *Bits & Pieces*, September 19, 1991, p. 3-4.

It is our joy as followers of Christ to be a friend. We should be a friend to those who have no friends. It is our joy to share with our friends the hope we have within us.

I. Jesus our example:

Luke 7:34 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." '

Jesus set us an example – to be a friend to those who were not like him. He went out of his way to be a friend, even to those who were not yet his followers. He was willing to love those who were not loved by others.

He befriended people who were publicans (tax collectors) and sinners. Zacchaeus was one such man. He was short of stature and probably had very few friends. Zacchaeus was a superintendent of customs, a chief tax gatherer at Jericho. His position was an important one, and would account for him being an extremely rich man. He had heard that Christ was on his way through town and since he was short, he got to a place where the multitude would be thronging Christ as he passed by. He climbed up a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus. When Christ reached the spot, he looked up and addressed him by name and told him to come down as he intended to stay at his house that day.

This led to a remarkable interview which is recorded in **Luke 19:8-9** **But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."**

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham."

We can see in this account that Jesus was more interested in winning a lost individual than anything else. The man was redeemable. Listen;

there is hope for that person you know that seems so unlikely to become a follower of Christ. Their physical limitations, their economic situation, their career, all these things, as important as they are, cannot keep Christ from working in their life. Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost. His purpose was to bring redemption, hope and forgiveness to those who were captured and enslaved by sin. Following His example, we must be people who offer God's love, forgiveness, hope and truth to those who need a friend.

Here is a step you can take in your faith journey this week. I challenge you to begin a friendship or a relationship with someone who is not a follower of Christ. Befriend someone with whom no one else wants to be friends. Then from that relationship, do what you can to influence them to follow Christ. Everyone needs a friend! Pastors need friends, physicians and nurses need friends, children and youth need friends, secretaries need friends, bankers, security officers, teachers, salesmen need friends, homemakers need friends, telemarketers need friends, etc. On and on I could go.

II. Influencing a friend for eternity

It is possible to develop a relationship here on earth that will continue eternally into heaven. In fact, I think those are the kind of relationships that God wants us to invest our time in here.

In a strange parable Jesus seems to indicate that the ultimate reward for developing friendships here is so that we can enjoy them in eternity. Who would want to live in a friendless heaven? Jesus made this statement about using our financial resources to gain friends.

Luke 16:9 Jesus said, “Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” His intent was not to encourage the commercialization of relationships (use your money to buy friendships), but to use your money to meet needs and the relationships springing from this will last for eternity. This is the very thing the rich man refused to do in the parable in [Luke 16:19-31](#).

It is through the relationship of friends that we have the opportunity to present people with truth and to introduce them to our eternal and most important friend – Jesus Christ.

You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you. [Dale Carnegie](#)

III. Making and keeping friends

Direct teaching on friendship is found in Proverbs, in which there is wisdom on how to make and keep friends:

1. Be trustworthy. - [Proverbs 11:12](#) **A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue.**
2. Be willing to forget offenses. - [Proverbs 17:9](#) **He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.**
3. Renounce conflict. - [Proverbs 25:8](#) **Do not bring hastily to court, for what will you do in the end if your neighbor puts you to shame?**
4. Cultivate openness. - [Proverbs 27:6](#) **Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.**

Friendship is a way of describing the Christian life. Friendship is an important addition to fellowship (koinoônia) in the church, for koinoônia includes all Christians and is based

solely on grace, our common share in the saving work of Christ and our common family experience in God. But too often people in a Christian fellowship rely solely on the bond of grace and neglect the challenge of developing the skills of friendship, skills of loyalty, caring, listening, celebrating and discretion that can greatly deepen the life of the Christian community.

IV. Being a friend to Jesus or God

James 2:23 **And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.**

Abraham was called God's friend. Why? Because Abraham responded in obedience and trusted God, his response was a credit of righteousness. Can you imagine being considered a friend of God? There is a contemporary song out by Phillips, Craig & Dean called – FRIEND OF GOD:

Who am I that You are mindful of me?
That You hear me when I call
Is it true that You are thinking of me?
How you Love me
It's Amazing

I am a friend of God
I am a friend of God
I am a friend of God
He calls me friend

God Almighty
Lord of Glory
You have called me friend

Abraham is a perfect example of that concept of trust when it comes to being a friend of God. You hear what a friend says; you believe it and act in response to what you are told.

In the Gospel of John Jesus said, “**No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends**” [John 15:15 RSV](#).

Ordinary friendship is not an adequate metaphor for friendship with Jesus, for it involves obedience to his commands (John 15:14). Friendship with Jesus is inseparable from the truth about Jesus, for Jesus himself is truth. So it is more than mere sentimentality; to disobey His commands is to deny His friendship.

Lewis Smedes underscores the truth that while most friendships either find or make equals, this friendship is different. We are not fellow travelers; he is leader and we are followers. We do not walk side by side; he is always before us. We are not equals; he is vastly superior. He is the sort of friend we could not long endure in ordinary life with ordinary people; few people

can remain friends for long with someone who accepts them by grace, "in spite of what they are" . . . yet, in those invisible bonds of moral consistency, kept commitment, gracious forgiveness, untiring listening, and ultimate sacrifice, he is the best friend one can ever have.

The purpose of developing friendships here on earth is to advance these friendships into eternity. At the same time, we must develop the most intimate and personal and powerful friendship with God, through obedience, surrender, trust, and prayer that could ever be forged. Finding the balance between the temporal and eternal has to be weighed and kept in mind.

Conclusion:

I close with this story about a friend and the impact of his friendly act.

Jackie Robinson was the first black man to play major league baseball. Breaking baseball's color barrier, he faced jeering crowds in every stadium. While playing one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. The fans began to ridicule him. He stood at second base, humiliated, while the fans jeered. Then, shortstop Pee Wee Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career. *Leadership.*

Whose career are you saving? Whose reputation are you saving? Whose marriage are you helping to preserve, who are you taking to heaven with you? Put that arm around someone this week and be the friend that stands against the crowd. Invest in a relationship that can last eternally.