

## **FRIENDSHIP**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Last week I spoke about “Belongingness” and how important it is to belong. We have a God-given need to belong which will drive our behaviour and also even our health. God has blessed us by giving us our family and our church and He gave also us the right to belong to His family and His household.

This morning, we look at another of our inherent, built-in needs, our need for friendship.

During this season of struggle my sister has been through preceding her passing, we as a family have taken much strain. To be honest, regardless of our faith and the fact that we understand and know that our days are written in the Lord’s book, and regardless of the fact that we understand that for a Christian, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and that to live is Christ and to die is gain, we have still been through a traumatic experience.

Praise God for His ever-present Holy Spirit, who helps and comforts us, and for His amazing Word that does the same.

Praise God too for texts, WhatsApp messages, emails and phone calls from those of you and others who prayed for us and sent us messages of encouragement and condolence during this difficult time.

But as I was working through this difficult, traumatic time, and even as I am still doing so, I realised we need something more. We need good friends too, friends who can draw near and support us at a time like this. We don’t only need friends for times of crises, we need them all the time.

This morning we will look at what the Bible says about friendship and we will see that there are many good examples that we can apply to our own lives and our own friend-relationships and which will enrich our life on this earth and even into eternity.

### **MESSAGE**

What is friendship?

True friendships are rare, but when they exist, they should be treasured and guarded because of their great value.

Some friendships can be detrimental. In Deuteronomy 13:6-7 we read that a friend who is as close as your own soul has the power to entice away from God. Psalm 55:12-13 says its unbearable when a friend turns against you, and 1 Corinthians 15:33 warns that bad company corrupts good morals.

## **JESUS IS A FRIEND LIKE NO OTHER**

**John 15:15** (NKJV) No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

There is no better friend than Jesus. How amazing that the King of Kings calls us friend! The old song says: *"what a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grieves to bear"*. It's so true, we can run to Him with our every burden and trouble.

**John 15:13** (NKJV) Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Jesus demonstrated His friendship in the most powerful way. By spreading out His hands on the cross, he was saying, "I love you this much". Today we can run to Jesus, the friend like no other.

**Sing: What a friend we have in Jesus**

***How is your relationship with Jesus – Is he truly your friend? Are you living as His friend? Are you willing to lay down your life for Him and pick up your cross to follow Him?***

## **WE NEED GOOD FRIENDS, NOT NECESSARILY MANY FRIENDS**

In Jesus, we have the best of friends, but God also gives us people to comfort, support and console us.

**Proverbs 18:24 (AMPC)** The man of many friends [a friend of all the world] will prove himself a bad friend, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Many people have a lot of friends, but the friendship is not necessarily deep and meaningful. A true friend is closer than a brother. They can be confided in, trusted to help in crises and they are a true comfort in times of struggle.

**Job 2:11a** (NLT) When three of Job's friends heard of the tragedy he had suffered, they got together and travelled from their homes to comfort and console him.

***Do you need such a friend today? Ask God and He will send you one. What if the Lord is calling you to be a friend to someone in need? Be obedient and do it, you may just change your friend's life forever.***

## **TRUE FRIENDS ARE HAPPY TO “JUST BE THERE”**

**Job 2:13 (NLT)** Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. No one said a word to Job, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words.

When Job’s three friends heard of all his loss and suffering, they came to be with him, then they did something very significant. They just sat there with him.

**Proverbs 10:19 (NLT)** Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut.

Sometimes when our friends are in need, we say too much, or offer advice and inadvertently cause more pain. Sometimes it’s good to simply be there for them. That’s what the Holy Spirit does, when we need help, He draws near and His presence is a great comfort.

***Sometimes we are guilty of saying too much. Is that possibly what we are doing? Have we been truly sensitive to the needs of our friends. Let us ask the Lord to teach us to just be there.***

## **MEANINGFUL TOUCH**

In conjunction with “just being there, humans need a meaningful touch. I picked this up on **KHCA.Org**

*Physical contact distinguishes humans from other animals. From a warm handshake or sympathetic hug to a congratulatory pat on the back, we have developed complex languages, cultures, and emotional expression through physical contact. But in a tech-saturated world, non-sexual human touch is in danger of becoming rare, if not obsolete.*

*Despite the benefits of digital advancement, it is vital to preserve human touch in order for us truly to thrive. Humans become nearly unrecognizable in the absence of touch. Two hundred years ago, French scientists spotted a creature resembling a human running through the forests. Once captured, they determined he was 11 years old and had run wild in the forests for much of his childhood. Originally the child, "Victor," was determined to be an idiot; French physicians and psychiatrists eventually concluded he had been deprived of human physical touch, which had retarded his social and developmental capacities.*

I want to encourage you to not only encourage on digital media, but also to pick up the phone sometimes, or physically hug someone or put your arm around them. It means so much more. **(Speak about work e-mails).**

## **FRIENDS FORGIVE!**

**Job 42:8b** (NLT) "...My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer on your behalf. I will not treat you as you deserve, for you have not spoken accurately about me, as my servant Job has."

Job's friends after starting so well and sitting silently supporting him, got it wrong and said that Job must have sinned and therefore God was punishing him. Effectively they accused both God, and Job wrongfully!

Job could have been highly offended and sent them away in a fit of unforgiveness, but when God told Job to pray for his friends, that's exactly what he did.

**Job 42:10-11** (NLT) When Job prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes. In fact, the Lord gave him twice as much as before! 11 Then all his brothers, sisters, and former friends came and feasted with him in his home. And they consoled him and comforted him because of all the trials the Lord had brought against him. And each of them brought him a gift of money and a gold ring.

Relationships are always messy. Someone will always say or do the wrong thing. How we react will determine not only the outcome for our friends, but also for us. Let us choose to forgive our friends and loved ones and pray for them when they offend us. The result may well be restoration in our own lives!

***How about you? Are you still mad at your friend? Be like Job, pray for them, forgive them, it's beneficial to both of you!***

## **FRIENDSHIP MAKES US STRONG!**

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** (NKJV) Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labour. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Picture moving to a new house without help, it's an unpleasant thought. But when we have one or two friends helping, it not only makes the move more efficient, but we feel better at the same time. Then there are times when we just need someone to stand up for us and speak up on our behalf, that's what good friends do.

Sometimes the test of true friendships lays right here... Is your friend willing to help you when you need help. Someone who is willing to watch you struggle along on your own is not a true friend!

**Matthew 18:20** (NKJV) For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Christian friendships are even more powerful, because in the sweet unity of Christian fellowship, Jesus is also present. When God is present in our relationships, nothing can stop us!

***Are we willing to go out of our way for our friends? Are we willing to make sacrifices for them and help them? Or do we sometimes just stand by and watch as our friend struggles?***

### **FRIENDSHIP IS BENEFICIAL TO BOTH PARTIES**

**Ruth 1:16-17** (NKJV) But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me."

Naomi and Ruth had an amazing mother/daughter-in law relationship. The truth is that Ruth displayed true friendship by pulling her needs aside and committing herself to go with her mother-in-law. As a result, she found a kinsman redeemer in Boaz and became his wife.

True friendship is NEVER one-sided. As we honour God through our friendships, He will honour us!

**Hebrews 13:5b** (NKJV) For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Jesus calls us His friends. Just as Ruth said she would never leave Naomi and then found a kinsman redeemer in Boaz, Jesus has promised to never leave us nor forsake us, and He Himself has become our King and our Redeemer.

***Ruth and Boaz are a beautiful picture of the church and our relationship with Jesus Christ. When we accept Jesus as our friend, Redemption comes with it! Are you friends with The Redeemer?***

## **CONCLUSION**

- Are you a friend with the greatest friend of all, Jesus Christ? Today you can re-commit to that friendship.
- Are you a true friend to the special people God has brought into your life? Does your friendship bear resemblance to the Biblical pattern we have seen in this message? Ask the Lord today to enable you to be a true friend.
- Do you need a friend today? Know you are never alone, in Jesus Christ you have a friend and a family, but if you ask Him, He will send people into your life that will be true friends.