

Active and Growing...Friends!

Ecclesiastes 4:7-12

February 17, 2019

I am going to describe someone and I want you to come up with who that person is in your life.

They accept you for who you are but are not satisfied leaving you there.

They love you unconditionally.

They forgive you and give to you.

They encourage you.

They love Jesus.

They are more than a "befriend" on Facebook.

They are someone you can call at 2 in the morning and they will listen....they are a good listener.

They are straight up honest with you by speaking the truth in love.

They care.

They have a good sense of humor and enjoy a fun laugh.

They don't gossip or stab others in the back.

They are themselves with you...no masks.

They are there for you in the sunshine and the rainstorms of life.

They know you and not just about you!

They make time to connect with you regularly.

Do you have that person in your life in mind?

Who are they?

They are someone you consider to be your good friend.

A good friend can start instantly over a similar interest, common aim or experience.

But for a good friendship to become great it is to be active and growing.

We were not made to be alone! We were created to be in community.

We were wired to have friends. When we talk about friends we are not talking about acquaintances or how many friends you have on Facebook.

This is more than a "Befriend" on Facebook. This is a face to face, living life together, friend.

The writer of the book of Ecclesiastes shared the dismal experience of loneliness. He worked hard and yet no one noticed or cared.

He had no one to share life with. If you fall down in life without a friend no one is there to pick you up. If life makes you cold, who is going to help you stay warm and get you back up to living life? By yourself no one has your back.

You are on your own to face the struggles, the worse of life!
(Ecclesiastes 4:7-12)

God designed our lives to be in relationships with others. We are designed not for isolation but for intimacy. Some people don't play well with others, get along with others, always want and not give and so they choose the life of loneliness and isolation. Often these folks are people who simply can't trust or choose not to trust someone else.

We are not here to only serve the person we see in the mirror. Life is bigger than you or me. We are not here to be served, but to serve and connect with other like-minded people. Don't go solo! Seek friends to go with you through life.

Through out the bible we see examples of friendships that developed and endured. One that I want to highlight today is the one of David and Jonathan. David was the guy who took down the giant with a slingshot. Jonathan was the son of King Saul. David came to work for Saul. Jonathan and David hit it off as friends.

The story of their friendship is shared through the Old Testament book of I Samuel beginning at chapter 18:1-4. David had just slain the Philistine giant.

King Saul had David brought to him to find out who was David's father. David spoke and Jonathan heard his story. That started their friendship that would last for years till Jonathan's death in battle.

Their friendship was based on their commitment to God and not just to themselves.

They did not let anything come between them, not even their career or family problems. David's life was threatened by Saul. David confided in Jonathan. Jonathan told David he would do for him what it took to keep him safe. (I Sam. 20:4)

They drew close together when their friendship was tested. They just didn't stand by but also suffered with each other. Jonathan should have been next in line for king but instead David was anointed by God to serve as king. Jonathan didn't get envious or rebellious. Instead, he was willing to be second to David...his right hand friend. This didn't weaken their friendship. (I Sam. 23:17)

They remained close friends even to the end. When Jonathan was killed in battle David fulfilled his promise and took care of Jonathan's handicap son. (II Samuel 9:1-7)

Do you have a "Jonathan kind of friend" in your life?

If you want a friend you need to be a friend.

If you desire a Jonathan kind of friend you need to be a David kind of friend!

Having a friend is half of the equation...being a friend is the other half.

I want to highlight four statements of wisdom from the book of Proverbs that speak to being and having a friend.

The first wisdom promise on friendship talks about if you want a friend then you need to be a friend.

"Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family."

(Proverbs 18:24 Message bible)

Be the true friend you desire of others.

Loneliness is all around us. There are people in a crowd who are lonely. I would imagine there are people in this sanctuary who are lonely and hungering for a friend who will stick with them. If you are wanting a friend be a friend.

We all need friends who will stick close by, listen, care, and offer help when it is needed. Need a friend like that? Be a friend like that! There are people who need your friendship. Ask God to guide you to them. Then take the challenge to be the friend you desire.

The next wisdom promise of friendship deals with the weather report.

"Friends love through all kinds of weather, and families stick together in all kinds of trouble." (Proverbs 17:17

Message bible)

The last thing any of us desire is a fair-weathered friend. We want a friend who will stick with us not only on the sunny days of spring but also during the howling winds of a hurricane in life.

What kind of friend are you? Fair-weathered or an even in the storms of life friend?

The greatest evidence of genuine friendship is loyalty which simply means loving at all times in all kinds of weather or conditions in life.

Too many people are "fair-weathered" friends. As long as the friendship doesn't ask too much of them they are there. They stick around as long as the friendship benefits them. But as soon as they have to give back to the friendship they leave. Think of your friendships. Who will or has walked through the storms with you? Who are you a "stick through no matter what" kind of friend to?

The third friend wisdom nugget we discover is one that most of us as parents have given to our kids, especially as they became teenagers.

"Don't hang out with angry people; don't keep company with hotheads.

Bad temper is contagious---don't get infected." (Proverbs 22:24-25)

What is that word of wisdom we shared with our kids: "Choose your friends wisely!"

If you hang out with the wrong crowd you will get caught up in their ways.

If you hang with dogs you are bound to get fleas.

The bad influence bad.

"Bad company corrupts good character." (I Corinthians 15:33 NIV)

We tend to become like those we hang out with. Even the negative attitudes and actions can infect us and become a part of us.

We need to be wise in choosing our friends. Choose those who display the attitudes and aptitudes of life you desire.

Choose friends who have the characteristics you want to infect your life.

"A sweet friendship refreshes the soul." (Proverbs 27:9 Message)

How sweet of a friend are you to others?

Whose soul are you refreshing?

The last friend wisdom to discover is about having "sharp" friends.

"You use steel to sharpen steel, and one friend sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)

As iron sharpens iron so we should have and be a sharpening friend.

This is a mental, emotional and spiritual sharpness that comes from being around good people.

I love it when I'm talking to someone about a person I just met and they share that descriptive phrase, *"Them are good people!"*

Good people are people who will make you a "good people."

They will see you for who you are and will challenge you to grow and be who God has called you to be. They are willing to listen and then challenge with love areas of growth in your life. They speak the truth in love. They know how to attack the wrong in you without attacking you.

They are tuned to the same inner convictions you have in Jesus. They hold you accountable to that relationship of holiness with God.

How sharp of a friend are you?

How sharp are the friends you hang with?

Are your friends "good people?"

Sharp friends not only share my interests but challenge me in meaningful ways by informing my thinking. They cause me to think outside of myself. They help expand my world, my interests...they help me climb out of the rut. They help balance my weaknesses by probing me to rely on the strength of Jesus. My sharp friends desire for me to be active in my faith and to grow to be more like Jesus. They see Jesus in me and challenge me to see Jesus in others.

I am going to describe for you someone and I want you to see if that person is in your life and if you are that person in someone else's life:

They base their friendship on their commitment to God and not just to someone else.

They let nothing come between them and their friend, not even career or family.

They are closer than family when times are tough.

They are a true friend to the end.

Their friendship refreshes your soul.

They will walk with you in the sunny days and stand by you in the storms of life.

They make you a better person by simply being in their company.

They sharpen your relationship with Jesus with honesty spoken in love.

Who is that person for you?

Who are you that person for?

Who is that friend for you?

Who are you that friend for?

The challenge is to thank them this week for being that person, that friend for you.

Friendship!

Be a friend!

Keep that friendship active and growing each new day!