

The Significance of Friendship

I. THE VALUE OF FRIENDSHIP

- A. The Holy Spirit highlighted ***friendship*** to me again recently.
- B. In the way that God created the human heart, one of the deepest needs and desires is ***friendship***. Even as believers who have the Holy Spirit as our companion, we need godly friends through whom God will encourage and speak to us.
- C. Loneliness is so painful and destructive. We desire a place of safety where we can be known.
- D. “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation.”—Henry David Thoreau
- E. Thus, it is not surprising that Jesus identified friendship as one of most effective means of evangelism. We are called to partner with the Trinity to rescue pain-filled hearts by showing kindness and interest in them.

³⁵“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
(Jn. 13:35)

- 1. People will know that the leadership of Jesus is real when we reach out in friendship to them because true friendship is rare on the earth.
- 2. Jesus wants to inspire us to partner with Him in restoring both believers and unbelievers’ lives. The devil exploits the pain of loneliness in people’s lives to communicate to them that they are abandoned by God.
- 3. God desires a family of friendship from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

⁹And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation... (Rev. 5:9)

II. TWO APPROACHES TO FRIENDSHIP

- A. We befriend people *who are like us*—they like what we like, and thus they like us.
- B. We befriend people *who are not like us* because we see God’s heart for them and their dignity in His eyes. We want to partner with Him in rescuing them from the pain and destruction of loneliness. If this were easy, then we would all be much better at it.

⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (Mt. 5:46)

III. BEING INTENTIONAL ABOUT FRIENDSHIP

- A. Be intentional about showing small acts of kindness to people who are lonely. People conclude that if no one is interested in them, then God must not be interested in them either. Therefore, when we are intentional about small acts of kindness, they have opportunity to receive the message that God is actually interested in them.

42And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward. (Mt. 10:42)

- B. Jesus rewards love shown towards strangers as love shown to Him.

34Then the King will say ...“Come, you blessed of My Father...35for I was hungry and you gave Me food...I was a stranger and you took Me in...37Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, “Lord...38when did we see You a stranger and take You in... 40And the King will answer and say to them, “Assuredly...inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.” (Mt. 25:34-40)

10For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (Heb. 6:10)

- C. One requirement of leadership in the church is to be intentional about hospitality. This is bigger than having someone over for dinner. It includes having a heart to be welcoming to those around us and hear their story.

2An elder must be...temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable... (1 Tim. 3:2)

- D. “Greet one another” is more than saying “Hello” to each other at the church service. It includes looking one another in the eye and really listening to one another. (Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; I Pet. 5:14)

14Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen. (I Pet. 5:14)