

Trials of the Christian Life

The Struggle is Real



April 12, 2023

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Friends: Sparks or Sharpening?

Our friends are an important part of our life. We enjoy their company. We share similar interests and views on matters of life. We help each other in times of need. We laugh, cry, pray, play, travel, vacation, eat, talk, share personal matters and burdens, encourage, teach, evangelize, and share how God is working in our lives with each other. It may be a friend who led you to the Lord. Godly friends give good and godly counsel. A friend will be open and honest even when it hurts, but always from the perspective of love. Friends are never perfect. They can be hurtful at times, but a true friend will always stick "closer than a brother" (Pro. 18:24).

Consider Job. He has just experienced the worst losses of his life. His help meet has not been very helpful. Job needs his friends now more than ever. Likely what are his 3 closest friends arrive to mourn with him and help comfort him. For **7 days and nights** they sit with him on the ash heap without saying a word – Job 2:11-13! Imagine that scene. Imagine the grief, tension, sadness, and despair as they looked upon Job. Imagine how Job felt as his friends saw him at the rock bottom of his life. Unfortunately for him, his "friends" would not stay quiet...

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

A. Eliphaz the Temanite

- His name means "God is his strength".
- He is the "voice of _____" (though it works mostly against him) – Job 4:7-8, 5:3. He puts a lot of emphasis on a "spiritual experience" he once had – Job 4:12-17.
- His main issue was that God's judgment and punishment in this world are perfect and certain and that Job's suffering must be a proof of previous sin - Job 4, 5, 15, 22. The right way to judge – James 4:11-12; Romans 2:1-3; Pro. 4:5-7.

B. Bildad the Shuhite

- His name means "son of contention".
- He is the "voice of tradition." "We have always done it this way" – Job 8:8-10.
- This often breeds _____ – Job 8:3-6, 20; 18:21.

C. Zophar the Naamathite

- His name means "sparrow."
- He is the "voice of legalism" and is very dogmatic (letter of law and no spirit) – Job 11:5-6, 20:1-5. No love, sympathy, or kindness but only cruelty.

The result of Job's friends and their "counsel":

Job 16:20 - *My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.*

Job 19:14 - *My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me.*

Job 19:19 - *All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me.*

Job 16:2 - *I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all.*

WHAT KIND OF FRIEND ARE YOU?

- A. A friend loves at ALL times – Prov. 17:17.
- Jesus loved Judas even at his _____ – Matt. 26:50.
 - Jonathan loved David despite his father Saul's desire to kill him – 1 Sam. 18.
 - Job's friends failed when he needed them the most. Were they simply friends of **convenience**?
- B. A friend provides aid without _____ – Luke 10:30-36.
- A friend is compassionate – 1 Peter 3:8-9; 1 John 3:17.
 - A friend is merciful – Luke 6:36.
 - Sometimes friends arise out of the most unlikely circumstances. Be wise in your own judgment!
 - Job's friends believed he had sinned and, therefore, passed judgment upon him instead of attempting to comfort or restore him – Zech. 7:9-10.
- C. A friend will inconvenience themselves to help – Luke 11:5-9.
- Importunity means an urgent request made with troubling frequency.
 - Don't be afraid to ask for help from your friends!
 - Friendship, like our Christian service, is to be sacrificial whenever necessary – John 15:12-15.
- D. A friend "_____" and never makes you dull – Prov. 27:17.
- Are my friends encouraged in their walk by me? Do my actions, words, and time with them draw them closer to God?
- E. A friend may "cut" but does not "bludgeon" – Prov. 27:6.
- A friend is not afraid to be honest – 2 Samuel 12:1-13.
 - A friend doesn't "cut" to hurt, but to heal – 2 Cor. 2:1-11.

SHOW YOURSELF FRIENDLY – Pro.18:24

- A. It takes _____ – Gal. 6:10; Phil. 2:3-5.
- B. Love unselfishly – John 15:12.
- C. Acknowledge and appreciate – John 15:15; Prov. 3:27.
- D. Assure and empathize – Rom. 12:15.

EXAMPLES TO LEARN FROM

- A. Jonathan & David – 1 Samuel 20
 - Loyalties and promises were kept despite circumstances – 2 Samuel 9.
- B. Elijah & Elisha – 2 Kings 2:1-11
 - A friend sticks by you no matter what.
- C. Paul & Timothy – 1 Cor. 4:17
 - It is important for us to have friends we mentor and other friends who mentor us.
- D. Ruth & Naomi – Ruth 1
 - Friends cling to each other in times of need.
- E. Paul & Mark – 2 Tim. 4:11
 - Friends forgive the past and see the value of a person's present & future.
- F. Paul, Philemon, & Onesimus – Philemon 1
 - A friend encourages you to do what is right.
 - A friend will act as a mediator.
- G. Jesus Christ & YOU