

The Value of Godly Friendships

I. GOD IS RELATIONAL

- A. As we look at the stories of Jesus and the way He invested time into connecting with people, it's obvious that He values building relationships. This gives us a clear picture of what God is like; He is relational.

¹⁵No 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. (Jn. 15:15)

²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice... (Jn. 3:29)

- B. As an expression of our love for God, we are to love one another. One way we do this is by doing what Jesus did and building friendships where we pour our love. He's called us to be relational.

¹²This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. (Jn. 15:12)

³⁴A new commandment I give to you that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (Jn. 13:34-35)

- C. ***Love one another.*** Jesus was directly speaking to His disciples, all twelve of them. This was Jesus' small group, His friendship group. They were a mixed group, from different backgrounds, families with all sorts of different personalities and interests. And Jesus' command was simple: love and serve one another. This would be a sure sign of the kingdom of God and of love for Jesus their Savior.

¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you... ¹⁷If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (Jn. 13:14-17)

- D. One of our goals as a spiritual family is to mobilize 242 small Groups, which will provide the context for us to grow in sincere, godly friendships. *We want to be a family of friends— with God, each other, and the lost.* As we are mobilized and develop genuine friendships, with affection for one another, our love and service to our region will be more effective. Our light will be brighter (Mt. 5:14, Prov. 4:18).

⁴²And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship... ⁴³Then fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴Now all who believed were together [united in spirit and love with a clear mission] ⁴⁷...having favor with all people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved [the fruit of a clear mission to be a "city that is set on a hilltop" Mt. 5:14]. (Acts 2:42-47)

II. KEYS TO BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS

¹⁰Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality... ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. (Rom. 12: 10-15)

A. **Be kindly affectionate to one another:** I'm amazed with how much favor is drawn to someone simply because they are kind. Being kind is a choice. We can all choose to smile and be kind. We look for ways to show kindness, even when it costs us something.

³Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴So you will find favor and good reputation in the sight of God and man. (Prov. 3:3-4 NAS)

1. Don't miss an opportunity to be nice. We can be in too much of a hurry and rush by so many opportunities to show kindness to others. We need to slow down and be nice. The proverb is true; you will find favor with people.

B. **In honor giving preference to one another:** Here are two simple ways to honor someone:

1. Our words: we use our words to speak blessing and affirm the godly virtues we see growing in each other. We prophesy over each other as we seek to encourage one another. To prophesy is to thrust courage into the heart of our friends.

³...who prophesies speaks **edification...exhortation and comfort to men** (1 Cor. 14:3)

2. Our ears: listening to people is a powerful way to honor others. Make eye contact, put away your phone, and engage with them at the heart level. Everyone wants to be known. People feel honored and strengthened when we listen to their story.

a. We value people by taking time to hear their stories and asking them questions. Work on asking questions. Have 3-5 questions that you can access quickly, and you will have far more relational success. Resist the temptation to shift the story on to you.

C. **Distributing to the needs of the saints:** Look for ways to fill a need. Be eager to do good works (Mt. 5:16, 6:1). Find the time. We're not too busy. This is a worthy investment, and fruitful relationships are part of the reward. (Examples: watch someone's kids to give a married couple a date night, help build a deck, offer your car or money, find out what they like and look for it.)

D. **Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep:** As we take time to hear each other's stories and stay up to date with events our friends' lives, we offer ourselves to mourn with each other during tough times and rejoice with each other during victorious times. This is one of the clearest signs of godly friendship.

E. **Godly fellowship:** "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another." (1 Jn. 1:7)