

Relationships
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Read John 15:12-17.

What comes to your mind when you hear the word “relationships”? Some think of people, others of God, some of church, some of family, some of a grandparent. Did you think of your character or being the right person? Do you think of spirituality? Actually, eternal life consists of a relationship experientially known with God and true spirituality is relational, or as Leroy Lawson says, “Spirituality is social” [p. 11, *Friends Under Construction*]. We can’t be rightly related to the Lord if we are not loving one another. An old farmer was working along the road when an unfamiliar family stopped to ask him what the people were like in the town nearby. They insisted he tell them, so he asked them what the people were like in the town they had just lived in. They said, “Small brained,” “rude,” and other negative adjectives about those people. He said, “That is exactly the kind of people you will find in this town.” Where do good human relationships start? By finding the right kind of people to have as your friends? No! They start at two other points.

I. Right relationships start with God’s friendship.

In the book *Quality Friendship*, Gary Inrig uses the friendship of Jonathan and David as a demonstration of our relationship with God, the basis for good human friends.

- A. All of our human family’s backgrounds are not perfect. People use “dysfunctional family” to describe families with sinful relating habits.
1. Jonathan’s dad, King Saul, was self-centered.
 - a. He was a provoker to anger (I Samuel 20:33-34).
 - b. He was disobedient to God’s Word (I Samuel 15:1-27).
 - c. He was cowardly in fighting the enemy (I Samuel 14 and 17).
 - d. He did not honor Jonathan’s mother (I Samuel 20:30-32).
 2. David’s family was not perfect.
 - a. His father didn’t see his potential for leadership (I Samuel 16:7-11).
 - b. His elder brother didn’t appreciate him (I Samuel 15:28).
 3. Both Jonathan and David had a critical factor that made them good friends.
 - a. Inrig calls it the transforming factor. It is really a confidence of God working in us. “He realized that the issue was not that he could work for the Lord, but that the lord would work for him” [Inrig, *Quality Friendship*, p. 38].
 - b. David demonstrated this same confidence when facing the attack of Goliath upon Israel and Jehovah (I Samuel 17:37, 45-47). Faith in God’s work and goodness is foundational to good friendships.
 - c. When we are fearful, insecure, and protecting ourselves we will not make enjoyable intimate friends. Only the security of God’s unconditional acceptance, love, and forgiveness give us sufficiency to become vulnerable and giving friends.
- B. A relationship with a perfect God does not preclude need for human relationships.
1. “It is not good that the man should be alone,” said God when Adam and He had perfect fellowship.
 2. God made man to depend upon human companionship and help while fellowshiping with God. We do not operate well as “Lone Rangers” [p. 17, *Q.F.*].

3. What are some of the benefits we can receive from friendship? It is not wrong to use friendship and fellowship interchangeably; although fellowship tends to sound more spiritual to us Christians.
 - a. A help meet (Genesis 2:18).
 - b. Encouragement (I Samuel 23:16).
 - c. Counsel and advice (Proverbs).
 - d. Provoking to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24-25).
 - e. Rebuke (Galatians 2:10-15).
 - f. Restoring (Galatians 6:1-3).
 - g. Intercessory prayer (I Thessalonians 5:24-25).
 - h. Praise (Proverbs 31:28-29).
 - i. Comfort (I Thessalonians 4:18).
- II. What Jesus said friendship involves. Finding the right person is not the answer for our friendship but being the right person as a friend (John 15:12-17).
- A. Intervention by sacrificing and comprehending (vs. 11-12). Jesus comprehended we needed His death and He gave unconditionally. [Illustrated by husband's wife after her double mastectomy]
 - B. Influence by serving and changing (John 15:13-14). Submitting to Christ leads to mutual submission. Christ's command, "*Love one another*" leads us to want to change and change others in love.
 - C. Intimacy by sharing and transparency (John 15:15). Jesus shared His secrets with His disciples.
 1. Accessibility.
 2. Vulnerability.
 3. Accountability.

10 % of U.S. male population has a true friend. Men build relationships around activity and women around sharing, but men can add sharing to activity and vice versa.
 - D. Initiative by seeking and choosing (John 15:16).
 1. Jesus seeks those who are lost.
 2. Jonathan stepped up to develop a relationship with David (I Samuel 17:54 – 18:4).
 3. Jesus chose His disciples. Friendship chooses and takes initiative.
 - E. Impact of success and competency (John 15:16b).
 1. Jesus made His friends fruitful.
 2. Jesus made His friends permanently fruitful.

Jesus was a friend of sinners and of saints. He had 70, 12, and the inner three. Note Him calling Judas "friend" after the betrayal kiss and note His laying His life down for the disciples.

Bibliography

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- Inrig, Gary. *Quality Friendship*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1981.
- Lawson, Leroy. *Friends Under Construction*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing, 1990.