

Friendship

The importance of friendship in Churches

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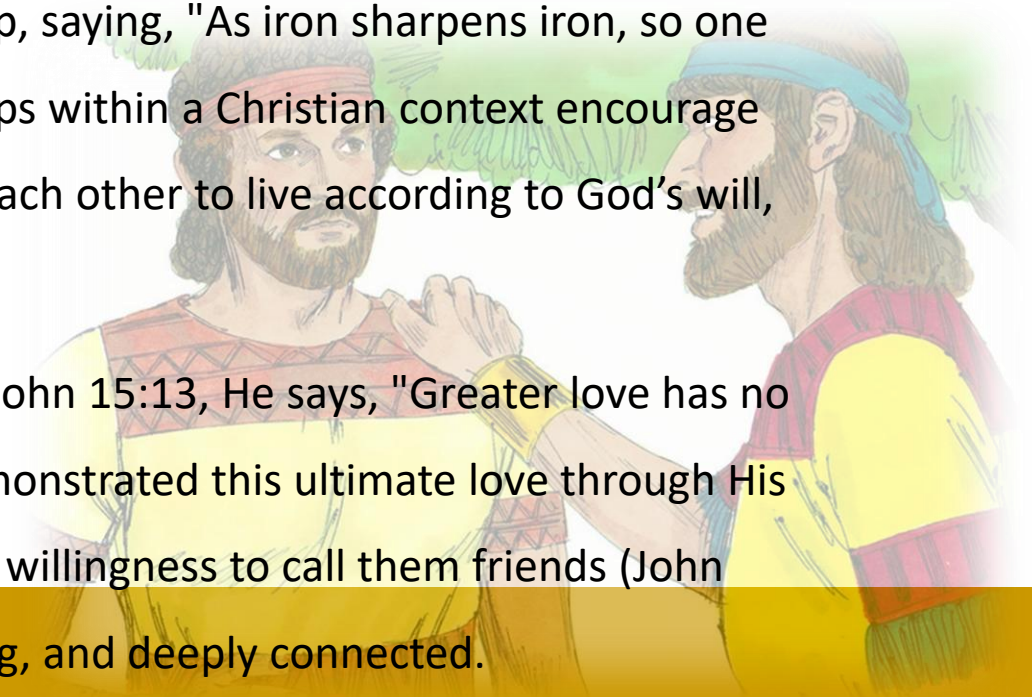
- We have so much information about leadership, training, etc, but we hear very little about the importance of friendship as a core principle to our Faith.
- Learning to be a good friend, and working on the friendships we have is crucial to us being good followers of Christ.
- Friendship is really important in the Christian faith, and we can see it clearly in the way Jesus lived and taught. In a church setting, friendships aren't just about having someone to hang out with—they help us grow in our faith, support one another, and show Christ's love in a real, personal way.
- When we have strong friendships, we're encouraged to live out our faith more honestly and openly. These relationships also strengthen the sense of community that makes the church feel like a family.
- On a deeper level, friendships can be a huge help when we're going through tough times. Having a friend to talk to can bring emotional and spiritual comfort, especially when they share your faith and can offer guidance rooted in God's Word.

Loneliness and friendship

- Loneliness is the pandemic of the century. We might wonder why people join a certain group, but sometimes it is as simple as being accepted into a group. This is how gangs, addictions and radical groups have followings. Because they have a group of 'friends', loyalty, and this gives them an identity.
- Why do young adults leave a Church? Lack of friendship
- Why do older people leave churches? Because of abusive friendship
- Men find it more difficult to make friends than women
- Women seem to find it easier to connect and understand the mechanics of networking, but men need friendship just as much

Biblical foundation of friendship

- David and Jonathan is a well-known example of friendship. Their bond is described as one of loyalty, selflessness, and love. In 1 Samuel 18:1, we read, "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." This shows that a true Christian friendship goes beyond surface-level interaction; it involves a deep connection that prioritizes the well-being of the other person.
- Proverbs 27:17 also highlights the sharpening effect of friendship, saying, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." This metaphor reflects how friendships within a Christian context encourage growth, accountability, and refinement. True friends challenge each other to live according to God's will, supporting each other through spiritual struggles and victories.
- The ultimate example of friendship is found in Jesus Himself. In John 15:13, He says, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." Jesus demonstrated this ultimate love through His sacrifice on the cross. His relationship with His disciples, and His willingness to call them friends (John 15:15), offers a model for Christian friendships—sacrificial, loving, and deeply connected.



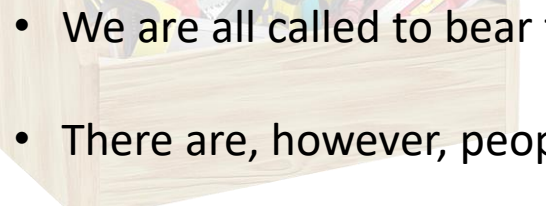
If you are not a naturally outgoing person, or 'good' with people, there are simple techniques which can be used to take the step out. You don't have to become the new diva, but just small connections make a big difference.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you say the right thing, to direct you to the person and give you the strength to be able to make a connection. As a part of the body of Christ, you have a responsibility to connect, and possibly even support someone else.

Reasons we avoid friendship at Church

- Fear of judgment or rejection
- Previous hurt or betrayal due to past negative experiences in a church
- Introversion or social anxiety making it difficult to interact
- Cliques or exclusivity groups will make people feel excluded or unwelcome.
- Fear of vulnerability: Sharing personal details or struggles may feel risky, leading to avoidance of deeper relationships.
- Time constraints or busyness: Busy schedules, family commitments, or work can leave little time to invest in building friendships.
- A lack of common ground, such as age, family status, or interests, may lead to difficulty connecting with others.
- Differences in background, ethnicity, or language creating challenges in communication and connection.
- Fear of conflict
- Misunderstanding of Christian fellowship - Some may view church primarily as a place for worship and not recognize the importance of building meaningful friendships within the church community

Friendship as a tool for counselling

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- A wooden toolbox filled with various tools like wrenches, screwdrivers, and pliers, positioned behind the first two bullet points.
- We are all called to bear the burdens of other people. Galatians 6:2
 - There are, however, people who can be toxic or destructive friends, and this will be dealt with in a separate section. Counselling means to share problems, struggles and hurts in a safe environment and friendship allows this burden-sharing to happen in a more intimate, personal way.
 - Proverbs 17:17 states, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity."
 - Christian friendships are also crucial for accountability. Friends who are rooted in Christ can offer loving correction, prayer, and encouragement as they help each other grow.
 - James 5:16 encourages believers to "confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." Through such vulnerability in friendship, individuals can find healing, growth, and restoration

Points to be aware of

- Cross-gender friendships. If there is a man standing on his own, and you are a married or 'taken' woman, rather mobilise another man to speak to him.
- Give side-ways hugs rather than front facing for someone of another gender.
- Be aware of body language, if someone keeps moving forward towards you, you can put a foot gently more forward and it makes you feel uncomfortable, but it is very possibly their eyesight or hearing.
- If they are moving backwards, then don't move forward, lean a bit more back.
- Be careful not to judge a book by its cover. Someone who doesn't have the same style as you, might be a really good friend

Practising friendship

- Be authentic, show genuine love and care: John 15:12
- Be loyal and trustworthy: Proverbs 17:17
- Listen: When the person is speaking, listen to what they are saying without interrupting or rushing to give advice James 1:19.
- Speak words that build up and inspire, providing positive reinforcement and spiritual encouragement 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Share the truth in love, even when it's hard, but do so with kindness and respect Ephesians 4:15
- Pray for your friends James 5:16
- Offer practical help Galatians 6:2
- Celebrate their successes Romans 12:15
- Forgive quickly Colossians 3:13
- Allow room for mistakes, growth, and the challenges of life, showing grace in your interactions Proverbs 19:11

Being wise and avoiding toxic friendships

- Toxic friendships that may hinder spiritual growth.
- The Bible offers guidance on the importance of choosing friends wisely, as the people we surround ourselves with influence our character and decisions.
- *Proverbs 13:20* warns, “Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.” What do you think this verse means?
- Toxic friendships often involve unhealthy dynamics, such as manipulation, gossip, or jealousy, which can erode trust and create emotional turmoil.
- *Proverbs 22:24-25* advises, "Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared."
- This passage reminds us that toxic traits can be contagious, drawing us into sinful patterns that damage our relationships and spiritual lives.



Being wise and avoiding toxic friendships

- *Read John 13:34* Jesus emphasized the need for purity in relationships, encouraging believers to love one another in a way that reflects His character. In John 13:34, Jesus emphasized the need for purity in relationships, encouraging believers to love one another in a way that reflects His character.
- However, love does not mean tolerating harmful behavior. Setting boundaries in a toxic friendship is necessary to protect one's emotional and spiritual health. 1 Corinthians 15:33 cautions, "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" Maintaining healthy friendships involves creating distance from those who consistently bring negativity or temptation into our lives.
- *Read: Proverbs 27:17* Ultimately, seeking friendships that are uplifting, Christ-centered, and marked by mutual respect and love enables believers to grow in wisdom and reflect Christ's love more fully. True friendships should encourage one another to live in righteousness and faithfulness to God's Word.

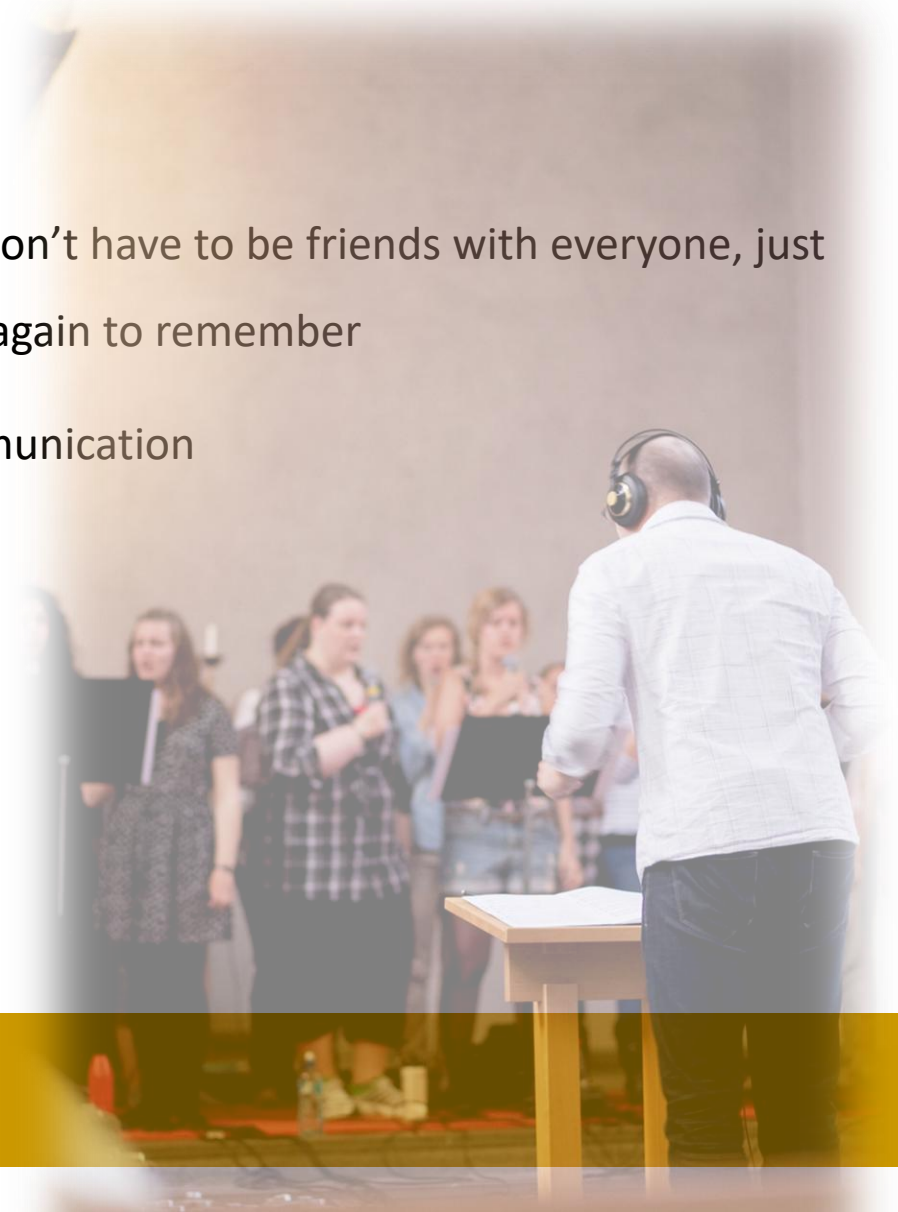


Good friendships

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- Maintaining healthy friendships involves creating distance from those who consistently bring negativity or temptation into our lives.
- Surround yourself seeking friendships that are uplifting, Christ-centered, and marked by mutual respect and love enables believers to grow in wisdom and reflect Christ's love more fully.
- True friendships should encourage one another to live in righteousness and faithfulness to God's Word:
Proverbs 27:17

Creating opportunities for making friends

- Create a small group at your home for Bible studies
- Greet someone new at the coffee station/ tea station. You don't have to be friends with everyone, just friendly. Link their name to a picture in your mind, or say it again to remember
- Join a ministry, creating common ground and opening communication



How to start an easy conversation

- How has your week been so far?
- Give a sincere compliment
- What brought you to this event/church today?
- Have you lived in this area for a long time?
- What do you enjoy doing in your free time?
- Ask them how they came to the Church, how long they have been here?
- Do you have any plans for the weekend?
- What's something you're passionate about or really enjoy?
- Have you travelled anywhere recently?
- Are you involved in any activities, hobbies, or groups you enjoy?
- How did you get involved in (mention a church group or activity they might attend)?
- Have you watched or read anything good lately?
- Did you see.....(sports game or event)

Conclusion

- We sacrifice friends and family for work, and when we are old one day, it is the friends and family we need!
- Friendship in a Christian environment is not just about companionship—it is a means of mutual growth, support, and reflection of Christ's love. As the Bible teaches, friendship is essential for sharpening one another in the faith, carrying each other's burdens, and providing guidance during difficult times. Through Christian friendship, counselling can be enriched, leading to deeper healing and spiritual development.
- Happy on your own? Don't need friends? The others need you
- The Scripture says we should not give up meeting together (Hebrews 10:25)
- Good friends keep us on the straight path, even if the Truth hurts. We need to be gentle and wise in when we speak the truth.
- Friends can be good for networking for business, events and ministry

