

Love Reaches!

Part 6: "Being the Friend That Helps Others Follow Jesus More Closely!"

The essence of being a friend is "will you help me follow Jesus more closely?"

So far... We've reached up to God for resource... For our reach side to side... Reaching first to the far edge where our peers are hard to deal with... To learn some of life's most important lessons. Reaching next to the other edge where it's hard to deal with the people we love most!

Reaching side to side gives us an image of what it takes to reach out! "If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Having reached out to the extremes on both sides we can now begin reaching to the field closest to us!

Help, To Follow More Closely! "Simon, a religious leader, asked Jesus to come and eat with him. When He sat down a woman approached, weeping, she began to wash His feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair, she kissed His feet and anointed them with ointment. Now when Simon saw this he *thought to himself*, if He was a prophet He would have known this woman is a sinner! *And Jesus answered him*, saying, "Simon I have something to say to you!" So he said, "Say on!" "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred and the other fifty. And when they couldn't repay, he forgave them both. Tell Me, which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I came in you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss, but she has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." **L7.36-47**

Healthy Friendships...

Honesty... "I have something to say to you..." **First rule: only speak up from honest concern/genuine love!** Even if you're "wrong"/can be forgiven! **Second: open a conversation on an "observation..."** *Not someone else's complaint!* "The one who meddles in strife that doesn't belong to him is like the man who grabs a dog by the ears!" **Pr 26.17** Open a conversation on an "observation... And without condemnation!" The goal is always redemption and restoration! **Third: before you speak you listen...** To God... "Yes or no?" To the person... May have a line of reasoning in the way! Ask questions! **Fourth, wait for an open "effectual" (operative) door to open... do not "break in!"** God will make a way! Wait!

Healthy Friendships...

"Venture into a confrontation with a legitimate connection and the right motivation and the end will almost always be redemption!" This is the purpose of "FRIENDS!" A real, relevant, and redemptive relationship!

Healthy Connections... A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. **Pr 17.17** *Not only to meet rivals, but for the "narrow" places of life!* Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. **27.6** *In what cases do friends wound us that prove to be faithful? And when are "kisses" deceitful?* Like ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so does the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. **27.9** *"the pleasantness of vital advice."* Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. **Pr 27.17** *We "sharpen and brighten" those we love!*

Receptivity... "Say on..." Simon's problem was that he had been in the kingdom for some time/respectable! Thought he knew all he needed to know! Completely wrong... But open... And that needs to be our attitude... "Speak, for your servant hears!"

No matter who you are, how long you've been doing this... be open! Not done yet!

Listen to these words spoken to people who thought they were “done,” had “arrived!”

“I have somewhat against you for leaving your first love, remember the depths from where you have come and repent... Or else I will come and remove your lamp.” **REV 2.4,5** “I have some things against you for holding a doctrine of idolatry and for causing others to stumble...” **2.14** “I have a few things against you... That you tolerate false teachings that lead people into fornication and idolatry...” **2.20ff** “I know your reputation... but that you are dead. Strengthen the things that remain in you but are about to die off. Remember what you have received and heard and hold tight and repent...” **3.1** “I know that you are neither hot nor cold... I wish you were one or the other. You say you are rich and prosperous and you boast that you have need of nothing but you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor, blind and naked... Remember, as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be hot to repent! I am standing at the door of your heart – open up and I will come in!”

3.15-20

These were all people living on a “plateau” who forgot about the “mountain” of God! These were people who “might need some tweaking from time to time” but not from simpler people/peers! These were people who forgot the love and ways of God to hone His kids in interactive relationships!

An understanding of *Propinquity*... a nearness, proximity, closeness, near distance, affiliation, relationship, affinity, proximity... The natural law that two bodies in near proximity will create their own gravitational pull... As great and necessary as interactive relationships are... There are **GUIDELINES OF SAFETY!** And “Only puppies are not afraid of tigers!” “Only a fool sees danger ahead and proceeds on his way...”

Ever been going thru tough times... Separation, divorce, death, miscarriage, bankruptcy, empty nest, love for God grown cold, career change, promotion... Very vulnerable moments! And someone appears to comfort and console? Could be God, or a strategy for demise! Open wounds accept “grafts!”

It’s very important at those points that you reach for the right person! It’s very important at those points that you are the right person! At those points a helper can become a hero, a friend can become a god, and a god can become a lover... AND THAT IS AN EPIC FAIL THAT DESTROYS MANY LIVES!

Friends... Are those who help us follow Jesus more closely... Should be our mates, where married! Where propinquity functions right! **Then “BFF’s” (Forever safe)!** Always in our business, always loving, seeing, speaking...

Greatest friends in your history will be those who sharpened and brightened you in your walk with Jesus!