



## What Does True Friendship Look Like?

**Proverbs 18:24:** (NASB) *A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*



"BFF." Best Friends Forever. These three words conjure up an image of connectedness and loyalty that any one of us would want to be a part of. Sadly, it is an image that for many will only ever remain a thought and never become a tangible reality. Why is that? Why are so many of us on the outside looking in when it comes to true and profound friendship? At least one set of problems may begin with the way our social environment is structured. Social media actually teaches us to be acquainted at a distance, to be engaged without actual interaction and to be friends by clicking, posting, following or sharing - all done as we gaze into that little electronic screen. True friendship requires so much more, and true friendship returns so much more. Let's look

at some ways we can give and receive friendship - the old-fashioned way - person to person. It just might make your life better.



**Introduction, *Frientimacy: The 3 Requirements of All Healthy Friendships*, Shasta Nelson, TEDx talk**

- Our world is fractured by an epidemic of loneliness. And I am not so worried about the stereotypical recluses and hermits that we kind of tend to picture when we think of that word. I am more worried about the vast majority of us in this room who are lonely and don't acknowledge it, who may not even recognize it in our lives. You know we often think: I can't be lonely - I know more people than I can keep in touch with, and yet we report feeling largely unknown. We know more people than any time in history, and yet we feel very much like we have nobody to confide in. Our social networks just keep growing, and growing, and growing, and yet so, too, do our doubts about whether we actually have a safety net and who would be in it should we need it. Modern day loneliness is not because we need to interact more, it's because we need more intimacy.*



Do you have intimacy in your friendships?

***It is only the great hearted who can be true friends. The mean and cowardly can never know what true friendship means. — Charles Kingsley***



When I first read this subject, the first thing that came to my mind was my wife, Jewel. She is my best friend and my gift from God. I am so grateful for her. I see the love she has for me and also her trust, strength, support, forgiveness, kindness and her many sacrifices. She believes in me and encourages me. I don't know what I would do without her. She is a true, loyal friend.



## Friendship can come in some unlikely forms:

**2 Chronicles 20:5-7:** (NASB) <sup>5</sup>Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court, <sup>6</sup>and he said, O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You. <sup>7</sup>Did You not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it to the descendants of Abraham Your **friend <7453>** forever?

Jehoshaphat called Abraham "God's friend."

**Friend:** Strong's # 157; to have affection for (sexually or otherwise): be loved, like, friend

Note: The wrong word for friend was inadvertently focused on during the podcast.

Greek English Lexicon: 1) friend, companion, fellow, another person;  
1a) friend, intimate; 1b) fellow, fellow-citizen, another person

God and Abraham had frequent communication. Abraham was willing to do anything for God because he knew God would overrule on his behalf for his best benefit.

Friendship can come in unlikely forms. How do we get on friendly terms with God?

Abraham's friendship with God was not only mentioned in the Old Testament, but it was revered in the New Testament.


**James 2:23:** (NASB) *and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, and he was called the **friend <5384>** of God.*

Abraham had a valuable and unique connection with God.

**Friend:** Strong's #5384 philos (fee'-los); properly, dear, i.e. a friend; actively, fond, i.e. friendly (still as a noun, an associate, neighbor, etc.)

How many friends do you really have? Not Facebook friends or associates, but true, intimate friends.

How do we attract intimate friendship?

 **Three common things, Frientimacy: The 3 Requirements of All Healthy Friendships, Shasta Nelson, TEDx talk**

- *The vast majority of us have never taken a class on how to build relationships and so I went and I compiled - like when you would look at all the social scientists and what they're studying when they look at what bonds any two people, who we confide in, what makes two people best friends, how to make for a healthy marriage, what builds trust. Three common denominators emerge, and it's like a formula, you have to have all three. You can't just have two of them. And so, I want to unpack all three of these, and I use what I call a frientimacy triangle, so we can see how they all fit together.*

**Brothers:** Strong's #5360 philadelphia, #5361 philadelphos: brotherly love - fraternal affection, fondness

This is the most common expression of love among mankind. Families have it, teams have it, those who serve in the military have it, gangs even have it. It is

common to all, for it is a form of give and take, protect and be protected. It is expressed in the "I got your back" sense of loyalty.

Friendship finds its strength and roots in philadelphia (brotherly) love.

There is another higher form of love - agape love - benevolent love. Philadelphia love is different and necessary. We cannot be benevolent with the higher form of love unless Philadelphia love exists first.

1 Peter 3:8-9: (NKJV) *<sup>8</sup>Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; **love as brothers <5361>**, be tenderhearted, be courteous; <sup>9</sup>not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.*

Rick and Jonathan go way back and have a loyalty that has been built on years of experiences, triumphs, failures, growth and mutual encouragement. This is a true friendship.

The first radio broadcast in 1998 was scary, but it was much easier because they were there together, helping each other.



**Godliness** is always the best place to start  
when developing true friends.

**If God extends friendliness to those who follow Him,  
then what does that do for our relationship with Jesus?**

Real friendship comes on many different levels depending upon the role we are in. Jesus' role with his disciples was unique because he was in many ways above them - perfect and the son of God. Jesus was also like them - being tested for absolute fidelity to the will and ways of God Himself.

Proverbs 17:17: (NASB) A **friend <7453>** loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

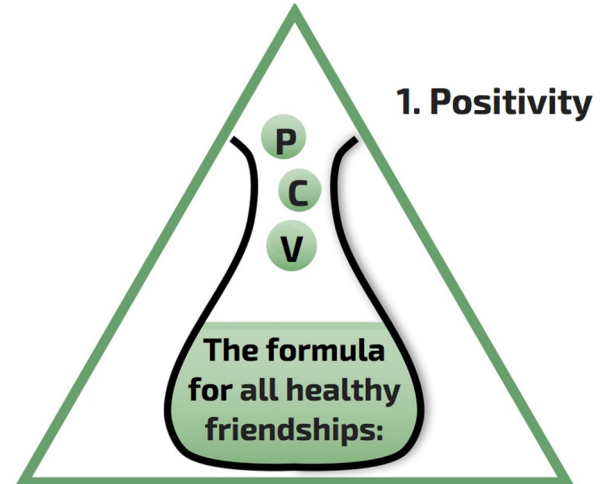


My brother is one of the most loyal and finest individuals you could ever meet. That type of loyalty and friendship takes development.



**Positivity, Frientimacy: The 3 Requirements of All Healthy Friendships, Shasta Nelson, TEDx talk**

- *And at the beginning of all of our relationships the first requirement is the letter 'P' and that is positivity. Because how many of you woke up this morning and thought, "I wish I had just a few more cranky, whiney, manipulative people in my life that made me feel like I was never doing enough." When we want friendship, we want the reward. We want joy, we want to feel good. This comes from smiles, and laughter, and kindness, and acts of service, and empathy, and validation, gratitude, affirmation, all those things that leave us feeling accepted. And let's be clear, this does not mean we have to be Pollyanna. We still get to cry on each other's shoulders, and we still get to vent and complain, but social science is telling us that every relationship to stay healthy has to have a ratio of five positive interactions for every negative interaction. So that means for every withdrawal you're making from your whining and complaining you have to be making five deposits of joy and reward.*



Positivity is the first requirement for any intimate friendship.

*I have learned that friendship isn't about who you've known the longest, it's about who came and never left your side. — Yolanda Hadid*

That is loyalty.



For more on loyalty, please see August 20, 2018, CQ Episode 1035: "What is the Meaning of True Loyalty?"

The Pharisees looked for ways to make Jesus look bad and trip him up. They wanted to make him look as though he was not a spiritually-minded individual. The Pharisees were taking who Jesus was and what Jesus was doing out of context.

**Jesus' response to the Pharisees:**

Luke 7:31-34: (NASB) <sup>31</sup>To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? <sup>32</sup>They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep. <sup>33</sup>For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, He has a demon! <sup>34</sup>The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!

They couldn't win in the eyes of the Pharisees because the Pharisees had decided Jesus and John were their enemies. Jesus said, "You call me a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" The beautiful thing is Jesus WAS a friend to tax collectors and sinners. His friendship was for the purpose of giving them hope. The friendship Jesus brings is one of hope, opportunity, direction and growth.





Jesus brought positivity to EVERYONE who would accept it! He also brought so much more.

Jesus IS the bridge over troubled water.



"Bridge Over Troubled Water," (Verse one) John Legend, North Sea Jazz

When you're weary  
And feeling small  
When tears are in your eyes  
I will dry them all  
I'm on your side  
Oh when times get rough  
And friends just can't be found  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down

Hebrews 4:15-16: (NASB) <sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup>Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus provides life-altering positivity! He gives us the ability to go to the throne of grace - before God Almighty.



.....  
Jesus extended "Good News" friendship  
to any and all who would accept it.  
There is no better way to establish a  
positive basis than with his  
Father's everlasting plan.

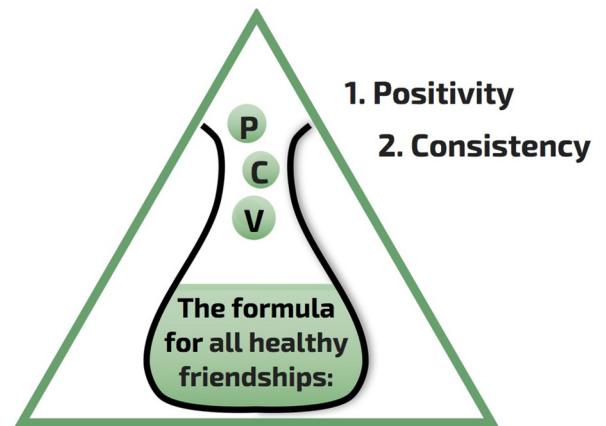


Consistency, Frientimacy: The 3 Requirements of All Healthy Friendships, Shasta Nelson, TEDx talk

- The second requirement, the letter "C" - is consistency, because we've all met people we enjoy and are positive and have fun being around, but if we never saw them again, that wasn't a friendship. Consistency is the hours logged, it's the history we build, it's the time we spend together. This is where we make rituals and we create patterns. We increase our interactions. This is where we get to know each other. As we put consistent time in together this is actually how we build, how we start to know what consistent behavior looks



*like. This is where trust happens. When we say we want to trust someone we don't ever want to feel like we are walking on egg shells -meaning we don't know how to predict how you're going to respond. We feel safe when we can predict. We can predict when we create a pattern and we spend more time with each other. This is actually the one that made friendship feel automatic when we were kids because school was consistent. And this is the one we still end up building relationships - at work, at school, at church, and associations because our consistency is automatic. You wouldn't pick those people to be your friends if you had a lineup of 20 other options. You are friends with them because you have consistency with them, and you end up building the other two components in.*



When you have consistency with someone, it creates that common ground. The positivity is the *drawing factor* and the consistency is the *staying factor*.

It is important to have consistency with true intimate friendship. The reason some of us are lonely is because intimacy is missing in our friendships.

**Jesus showed us on the world stage what a true friend is and does:**

John 15:12-15: (NASB) <sup>12</sup>This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his **friends <5384>**. <sup>14</sup>You are my **friends <5384>** if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you **friends <5384>**, for all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

Jesus shared God's words with his friends. There is an intimacy he presented to those around him.

Laying down his life was not just the sacrifice at Calvary - it was his everyday obedience to God.

Hebrews 5:8: (NASB) *Although he was a son, he learned obedience from the things which he suffered.*



**"Bridge Over Troubled Water," (Verse two) John Legend, North Sea Jazz**

When you're down and out  
When you're on the street  
When evening falls so hard  
I will comfort you  
I'll take your part  
When darkness comes  
And pain is all around  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down

John 15:16: (NASB) *<sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in my name He may give to you.*

A true friend gives you opportunity to grow and become better and to have a better relationship with God. Any friendship that brings us closer to God is a valuable friendship.

**He not only showed us what and how, he clearly commanded us to follow his example:**

Hebrews 12:2: (NASB) *...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Do not take this friendship with Jesus for granted. Cherish it.



There is NO greater consistency example than Jesus. Our lives will be magnetic to others when we stand for the positive plan of God and live it with daily consistency.

**How do we apply the ancient "friending" of Jesus on our behalf towards others who follow him?**

Here is where the seeking and securing of true, deep friendship takes on a stronger and more profound meaning. With Jesus' own positivity and consistency in place, we now drill down to another level. This is the level that solidifies friendship. Without this level, there will always be doubt. When there is doubt, the intimacy of friendship is in jeopardy.



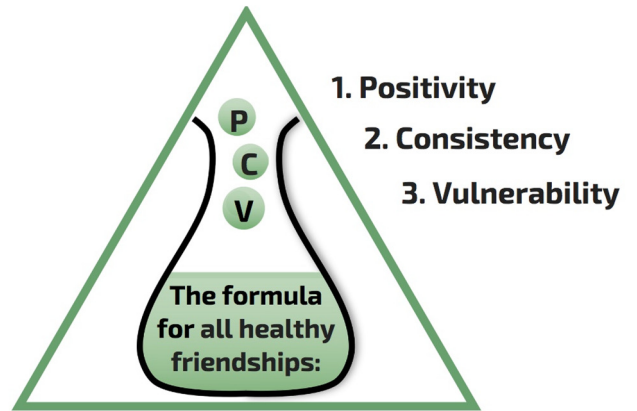
Proverbs 18:24: (NASB) *A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

Intimacy is a word that we need to start applying to friendship, instead of just to a romantic relationship. It is critical to our well-being as humans and as Christians.



**Vulnerability, Frientimacy: The 3 Requirements of All Healthy Friendships, Shasta Nelson, TEDx talk**

- A lot of us have relationships that we enjoy, the positivity, and that we do things on a regular basis, but without the third requirement it's not a healthy friendship and the third requirement is vulnerability. Vulnerability is where we share, where we reveal, where we let people in, and let more of us be seen. I teach five different types of vulnerability in my book but suffice it to say it's not just sharing the skeletons in your closet, the insecurities and the shame, it's also talking about what's going well and your successes and risk bragging to your friends. It's also sharing our history, our dreams. It's being able to articulate what we're feeling and ask for what we need from somebody else. That is tremendous - vulnerability. Because at the end of the day for us, we want to feel loved, and we only feel loved if we feel known, and we can only feel known if we actually share ourselves. Do these three make sense? These are the basis of every single relationship. You have never built a healthy relationship without these three things.*



***A true friend never gets in your way unless you happen to be going down.***

*— Arnold H. Glasow*



Trish and I celebrated our 38th wedding anniversary this past week. We were sitting in a restaurant and the waitress came by and we mentioned it was our anniversary and told her it was 38 years. Her response was, "Wow, write down your secret." I thought about it through dinner and on the back of the bill, I wrote down three of the secrets: 1. Have faith in God. 2. Live with great integrity. 3. Listen as though your life depends on it. I gave her the bill and said, "On the back are three of the secrets." She read it and said, "I am going to keep this with me so when I find my husband (she wasn't married yet) I will have a basis." It was a great opportunity to give something that I've been given. Jonathan, you talked about your wife earlier as being your best friend, and for me, Trish is my best friend. I'm not one to become easily vulnerable, except with my wife. She will always be there to put the pieces back together.

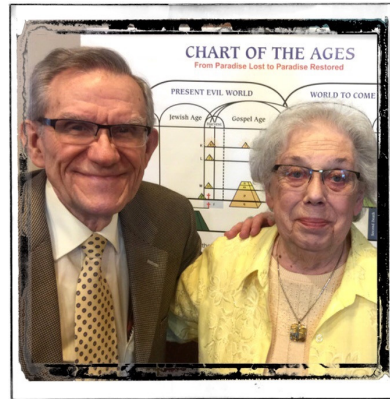
**Jesus loved Saul of Tarsus and "got in his way" to convert him. Saul then lived in vulnerable service:**

**1 Corinthians 15:9-10:** (NASB) <sup>9</sup>*For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* <sup>10</sup>*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.*

**"The grace of God labored more *with* me." Paul needed the grace of God to bring him to a level where he could serve well.**



**Fellowlaborers:** Strongs #4904 soon-er-gos'; a co-laborer, i.e. coadjutor: companion in labor, (fellow-) helper (laborer, worker), laborer together with, workfellow



There is a special level of fellowship when we get shoulder to shoulder and work together, especially in our work for the gospel.

Why did Paul so often in his letters call out certain names to be remembered?

Romans 16:3, 9, 21: (KJV) <sup>3</sup>Greet Priscilla and Aquila my **helpers** <4904> in Christ Jesus... <sup>9</sup>Salute Urbane, our **helper** <4904> in Christ, and Stachys my beloved... <sup>21</sup>Timotheus my **workfellow** <4904>, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. (Co-laboring by definition is being vulnerable.)

When you co-labor with someone, you are vulnerable. Fellowship is working side by side, sharing and getting through the difficulties and victories together.



"You've Got a Friend in Me," (Verse one) Live by four-year-old Claire Ryann and Dad

You've got a friend in me  
You've got a friend in me

When the road looks rough ahead  
And you're miles and miles from your nice warm bed  
You just remember what your old pal said

Yeah, you've got a friend in me  
Girl, you've got a friend in me

You've got a friend in me  
You've got a friend in me

You've got troubles, I got 'em too  
There isn't anything I wouldn't do for you  
We stick together and see it through

'Cause you got a friend in me  
Yeah, you got a friend in me

(Source: U.S. News & World Report: The Loneliness Effect on Public Health, by Barbara Sabick) Feeling sad, lonely and useless is more than just an emotional quagmire for millions of Americans. Researchers now contend that social isolation and loneliness may represent a greater public health hazard than obesity or a near pack-a-day smoking habit. And the problem is growing. An AARP loneliness study published in 2010 and now being updated reported that approximately 42.6 million U.S. adults ages 45 and older were suffering from loneliness. A 2018 Cigna survey indicates that Generation Z, adults between ages 18 and 22, may be the loneliest group of Americans. Additionally, census data reveal that more than one-fourth of Americans live alone and more than half are unmarried, with marriage rates and the number of children per household steadily declining.



## What are some practical ways we can be appropriately vulnerable to each other?



Well Rick, let me share a personal experience on how I found a true friend because of *his* vulnerability. It was the first time we met! We were in Upstate New York at a Bible seminar which I was attending for the first time. I didn't know anyone at the campground other than the two brothers in my Delaware Bible study group who brought me to the seminar. Rick, you came up to me and introduced yourself and told me of the experience you just came from. It was a family matter that was overwhelming and difficult. You told me how you had to be strong and supportive and how it was hard. Really hard! I was blown away how after just meeting me, you were so open and vulnerable, and I felt an instant bond with you and our friendship has grown from there.



I was the director of the seminar and had a lot of responsibility. I had never met Jonathan before, but when I looked in his eyes, there was something powerful I wanted to know. I was very comfortable telling him something that was incredibly difficult.

### A true friend is selfless in his joy and support for his friend. John the Baptist - John the co-laborer and very vulnerable friend:

John 3:26-30: (NASB) <sup>26</sup>And they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, he who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, he is baptizing and all are coming to him. <sup>27</sup>John answered and said, A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. <sup>28</sup>You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, I am not the Christ, but, I have been sent ahead of him. <sup>29</sup>He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the **friend <5384>** of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So, this joy of mine has been made full. <sup>30</sup>He must increase, but I must decrease.

John had been *positive* (Messiah was here, repent). He had been *consistent* (Behold the Lamb of God) and he was *vulnerable* (he knew his role: "I must decrease").



"You've Got a Friend in Me," (Last Verse) Live by four-year-old Claire Ryann and Dad

Some other folks might be  
A little bit smarter than I am  
Bigger and stronger too  
But none of them will ever love you  
The way I do it's me and you, girl  
And as the years go by  
Our friendship will never die  
You're gonna see it's our destiny  
You've got a friend in me  
You've got a friend in me  
Yeah, you've got a friend in me

### Co-laboring and vulnerability are all tied up together - Paul and Silas:

Acts 16:22-25: (NASB) <sup>22</sup>...and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup>When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; <sup>24</sup>and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. <sup>25</sup>But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

# FRIENDSHIP'S FOUNDATIONS

Willingness to be vulnerable is a willingness to be ridiculed as well as a willingness to be joined with others in co-laboring beyond our individual capacities.

Co-laboring makes us better, more vulnerable and more valuable friends. How far do we go with this?

How far do we go for our true friends? Do we really believe what Jesus said about the greatest love we can have is to lay down our lives for our friends? Let's look at a practical application of taking friendship to the next level of loyalty. This will only happen when positivity, consistency and vulnerability are truly in place.

Proverbs 27:17: (NASB) *Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*

 **Loneliness, Frientimacy: The 3 Requirements of All Healthy Friendships, Shasta Nelson, TEDx talk**

- When we are lonely it is not because we need to add more people to the triangle. While some of us may not be in that situation, most of us when we are lonely it's not for needing to add more people, it's for actually needing to move some people up. Because remember friendship is not something we discover. So, I can't sit there and say, "Oh, I have an opening at the top of my triangle. Let me put out a little job hiring sign and audition you, and oh you have two kids, I only have three." And we play all these games and do a little tap dance. Oh, she was funny, I like her, yeah, we're going to be best friends. We don't get to, like, put people in there based on whether we like them. This triangle is not about how much we like somebody. This triangle is about how much we practice the three requirements of friendship with somebody. And the only way we get somebody to the top of this triangle is by developing those relationships by practicing these three things.

To overcome loneliness, we need to be vulnerable, consistent and positive.

*The strong bond of friendship is not always a balanced equation; friendship is not always about giving and taking in equal shares. Instead, friendship is grounded in a feeling that you know exactly who will be there for you when you need something, no matter what or when. — Simon Sinek*



A friend in need is a friend indeed! 2 Samuel 15:13-15 recounts when Absalom rebelled against David.

**He was forced to run for his life, so he and his household did:**

2 Samuel 15:30-34: (NASB) <sup>30</sup>And David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went, and his head was covered, and he walked barefoot... <sup>31</sup>Now someone told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray, make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness. <sup>32</sup>...as David was coming to the summit...behold, Hushai... met him with his coat torn and dust on his head. <sup>33</sup>David said to him... <sup>34</sup>...you return to the city, and say to Absalom, I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant in time past, so I will now be your servant, then you can thwart the counsel of Ahithophel for me.

Hushai was a close friend of David's and mourned with him. David asked his friend, Hushai, to go into his betrayer Ahithophel's camp and become a trusted advisor in the camp to thwart the advice of Ahithophel's counsel. This was a life-threatening mission. Hushai was a true friend.



**"You've Got a Friend," (Verse one) Carole King, Celine Dion, Shania Twain, Gloria Estefan**

When you're down and troubled  
And you need some love and care  
And nothing, nothing is going right  
Close your eyes and think of me  
And soon I will be there  
To brighten up even your darkest night

You just call out my name  
And you know wherever I am  
I'll come running, to see you again  
Winter, spring, summer or fall  
All you got to do is call  
And I'll be there  
You've got a friend



What are some practical ways we can appropriately lay down our lives for each other?

Be there for each other. We should listen intently and be willing to change plans at the drop of a hat. Give of our time and talents. Pray for them and pray with them. Study with them when they have a concern. We need to be honest, sincere and genuine. Share with others if they are in need. Be willing to step out of our comfort zone when called upon. It doesn't feel like a sacrifice when it is for a friend, because it is a privilege to lay down our lives for each other. When someone gives of themselves to us, it is a blessing and a comfort and is greatly appreciated.

**Absalom meets with Ahithophel to plot against David. Hushai shows up and professes loyalty and Absalom responds:**

2 Samuel 16:17-20: (NASB) <sup>17</sup>Absalom said to Hushai, Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend? (Absalom is immediately suspicious.) <sup>18</sup>Then Hushai said to Absalom, No! For whom the LORD, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain. <sup>19</sup>Besides, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence



of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so I will be in your presence. <sup>20</sup>Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, Give your advice. What shall we do? (Ahithophel responds with immoral council as Hushai listens. Hushai wins their trust. He is there to protect the anointed of God.)



"You've Got a Friend," (Chorus) Carole King, Céline Dion, Shania Twain, Gloria Estefan

You just call out my name  
And you know wherever I am  
I'll come running, running, yeah, yeah, to see you again  
Winter, spring, summer or fall  
All you got to do is call  
And I'll be there, yes, I will

Now, ain't it good to know that you've got a friend  
When people can be so cold?  
They'll hurt you, yes, and desert you  
And take your soul if you let them, oh, but don't you let them

2 Samuel 17:7,14: (NASB, condensed) (Ahithophel further asks for 12,000 men to go and hunt David down that very night. Absalom and the elders liked the plan but Hushai spoke convincingly against it.) <sup>7</sup>So Hushai said to Absalom, This time the advice that Ahithophel has given is not good. (Hushai lays out another plan that better feeds the ego of Absalom and also protects the Lord's anointed.) <sup>14</sup>Then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring calamity on Absalom. (David's life was spared.)

What a wonderful story of a friend putting his life on the line for his friend.



.....

We can in many ways  
lay down our lives for one another,  
and in the case of Hushai,  
it was for the purpose of protecting his friend,  
the Lord's anointed.

Be a friend, then see what it is like to have a friend.

What is the bottom line? How can we develop the strongest, longest lasting friendships of our lives?

The bottom line here is a thrilling one. There is a way to develop friendships that have eternal value. If our positivity is based upon things that are eternal, then our consistency will have better reason to be in place and our vulnerability will always be for good, growth-oriented reasons. Develop friends and fellowship that have that eternal potential and value.



**Ecclesiastes 4:9-10,12:** (NASB) <sup>9</sup>Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. <sup>10</sup>For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. <sup>12</sup>And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart - the third strand in this equation is God. Godly friendships have the ability to last.

 **Guarantee, Frientimacy: The 3 Requirements of All Healthy Friendships, Shasta Nelson, TEDx talk**

- I can guarantee you that any relationship in your life that is not fulfilling, it is because at least one of these three requirements is lacking. You can look at any relationship in your life and identify - "Oh yeah, that one, we hardly ever see each other. It always feels good when we've got the positivity, but we don't have the consistency." We can quickly start identifying exactly which one of these would make the biggest difference from moving your relationships. Your vast network of so many people, it is not that you are lonely from lack of people, it's you're lonely for intimacy, for frientimacy. We have the power to move those relationships up. That loneliness is your body saying, "I want more connection." And that is one of the most beautiful messages you could ever receive.

Loneliness is our body telling us we need more connection and the intimacy of true friendship.

*Things are never quite as scary when you've got a best friend. — Bill Watterson*

This is why Jesus sent out the Apostles and disciples two by two.

The vine and the branches - the secret to (literally) everlasting friendship.



**John 15:1-9:** This takes place the night before Jesus' crucifixion when he was on his way to Gethsemane where he would be betrayed. It is a very intimate time with Jesus and his disciples.

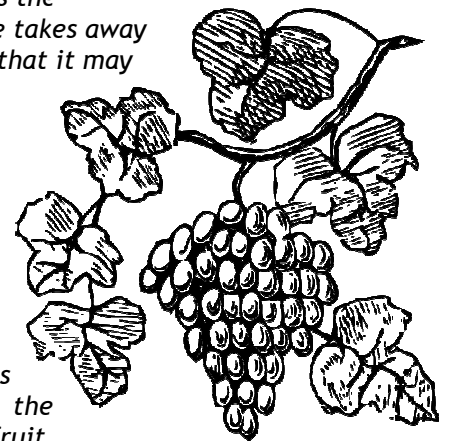
### **Spiritual Positivity and Vulnerability:**

**John 15:1-9:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away (lifts up); and every branch that bears fruit, he prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

You are the branches - you are connected to me and God takes care of us.

### **Spiritual Consistency: (How many times does it say abide?)**

<sup>4</sup>Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me (stay with me). <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit.



"Abiding" is a picture of consistency.

### **Spiritual Vulnerability:**

.... for apart from me you can do nothing. (KNOW where you live!)



### "More Than You'll Ever Know," (Verse One) Watermark

Something brought you to my mind today  
I thought about the funny ways you make me laugh  
And yet I feel like it's okay to cry with you  
Something about just being with you  
When I leave I feel like I've been with God  
And that's the way it ought to be, yeah  
'Cause you've been more than a friend to me  
Fight off my enemies  
'Cause you've spoken the truth over my life  
And you'll never know what it means to me  
Just to know you've been on your knees for me  
Oh, you have blessed my life  
More than you'll ever know, yeah, yeah, yeah  
More than you'll ever know, yeah, yeah, yeah

All three requirements repeated in verses 6-9:

**Vulnerability:** <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

**Consistency:** <sup>7</sup>If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

**Positivity:** <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup>Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; abide in my love.



### "More Than You'll Ever Know," (Verse Two) Watermark

You had faith, when I had none  
You prayed God would bring me a brand-new song  
When I didn't think I could find the strength to sing  
And all the while I'm hoping that I'll  
Do the kind of praying for you that you've done for me  
And that's the way it ought to be  
'Cause you've been more than a friend to me  
Fight off my enemies  
'Cause you've spoken the truth over my life  
And you'll never know what it means to me  
Just to know you've been on your knees for me  
Oh, you have blessed my life  
More than you'll ever know, yeah, yeah, yeah  
More than you'll ever know, yeah, yeah, yeah

Each one of the three requirements for a healthy friendship is mentioned three times in John 15:1-9. It shows a growth with each one.



**Positivity on three levels:** As *one who is young*, we live in the right place, as *one who is growing*, we are cared for by the right vine dresser, and as *one who is mature*, we bring God glory.

**Consistency on three levels:** As *one who is young*, fruit-bearing is possible, as *one who is growing*, bearing much fruit is possible, and as *one who is mature*, God's will becomes our will.



**Vulnerability on three levels:** *As one who is young*, weakness and worldliness are confronted, *as one who is growing*, deeper focus is encouraged and developed, and *as one who is seriously falling*, there can be failure, but not because our care was lacking.

Galatians 6:2-3: (NASB) <sup>2</sup>*Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*  
<sup>3</sup>*For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*



The best friendship is a **co-laboring fellowship** in Christ, for its basis is eternally positive, its consistency is found in spiritual growth, and its vulnerability is all for good.

It is important for us to be a friend to others - to be the kind of friend that will be there and be willing to stand and sacrifice ourselves because that is what Jesus did for us. Let's live up to Jesus' example and look for true intimacy in our friendships.

*So, what does true friendship look like?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on September 17 , 2018:  
Ep. #1039: "Have You Lost Faith in  
Your Spiritual Leaders?"





## Bonus Material

*Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light. — Helen Keller*

*It is one of the blessings of old friends that you can afford to be stupid with them.*

*— Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*A true friend freely, advises justly, assists readily, adventures boldly, takes all patiently, defends courageously, and continues a friend unchangeably. — William Penn*

### A few more important "friend" Scriptures:

Exodus 33:11: (KJV) *And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend <7453>. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.*

2 Corinthians 8:23-24: (NASB) <sup>23</sup>As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ. <sup>24</sup>Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

Hebrews 2:11-12: (NASB) <sup>11</sup>For both he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren, <sup>12</sup>saying, I will proclaim your name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.

### A reminder that all friends do not remain so - betrayal happens:

Psalms 41:9: (KJV) *Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.*

Matthew 26:50: (KJV) *And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.*

Deuteronomy 13:6: (KJV) *If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend <7453>, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers;*

### Another text reminding us of misplaced friendship:

James 4:4: (KJV) *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

### Some word studies on fellowship and co-laboring and brotherhood:

**Fellowlaborers**: Strong's #4904 sunergov soon-er-gos'; a co-laborer, i.e. coadjutor: companion in labor, (fellow-)helper (-laborer, -worker), laborer together with, workfellow

Romans 16:3: (KJV) *Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers <4904> in Christ Jesus.*

Romans 16:9: (KJV) *Salute Urbane, our helper <4904> in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.*

Romans 16:21: (KJV) *Timotheus my workfellow <4904>, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.*

1 Corinthians 3:9: (KJV) *For we are laborers together <4904> with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*

2 Corinthians 1:24: (KJV) *Not for that we have dominion over your faith but are helpers <4904> of your joy: for by faith ye stand.*

2 Corinthians 8:23: (KJV) *Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and **fellowhelper <4904>** concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.*

Philippians 2:25: (KJV) *Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in **labor <4904>**, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.*

Philippians 4:3: (KJV) *And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my **fellowlaborers <4904>**, whose names are in the book of life.*

Colossians 4:11: (KJV) *And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my **fellowworkers <4904>** unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.*

1 Thessalonians 3:2: (KJV) *And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our **fellowlaborer <4904>** in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith.*

Philemon 1:1: (KJV) *Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and **fellowlabrer <4904>**.*

Philemon 1:24: (KJV) *Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my **fellowlaborers <4904>**.*

3 John 1:8: (KJV) *We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be **fellowhelpers <4904>** to the truth.*

**Brotherhood:** Strong's #81 adelphothv, adelphotos; brotherhood (properly, the feeling of brotherliness), i.e. the (Christian) fraternity: —brethren, brotherhood.

1 Peter 2:17: (KJV) *Honour all men. Love the **brotherhood <81>**. Fear God. Honour the king.*

1 Peter 5:9: (KJV) *Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your **brethren <81>** that are in the world.*

**Fellowservant:** Strong's # 4889. sundoulov sundoulos soon'-doo-los; a co-slave, i.e. servitor or ministrant of the same master (human or divine), fellowservant

Greek English Lexicon: 1) a fellow servant, one who serves the same master with another;  
1a) the associate of a servant (or slave)

1b) one who with others serves (ministers to) a king

1c) a colleague of one who is Christ's servant in publishing the gospel

1d) one who with others acknowledges the same Lord, Jesus, and obeys his commands

1e) one who with others is subject to the same divine authority in the Messianic economy

1e1) of angels as the fellow servants of Christians

Matthew 18:28: (KJV) *But the same servant went out, and found one of his **fellowservants <4889>**, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.*

Matthew 18:29: (KJV) *And his **fellowservant <4889>** fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*

Matthew 18:31: (KJV) *So when his **fellowservants <4889>** saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.*

Matthew 18:33: (KJV) *Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy **fellowservant <4889>**, even as I had pity on thee?*

Matthew 24:49: (KJV) *And shall begin to smite his **fellowservants <4889>**, and to eat and drink with the drunken.*

Colossians 1:7: (KJV) *As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear **fellowservant <4889>**, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.*

Colossians 4:7: (KJV) *All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and **fellowservant <4889>** in the Lord.*

Revelation 6:11: (KJV) *And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their **fellowservants <4889>** also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

Revelation 19:10: (KJV) *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy **fellowservant <4889>**, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

Revelation 22:9: (KJV) *Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy **fellowservant <4889>**, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*

