

# Are You a Good Relationship Builder?

*Jesus is the ultimate friend*

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[18] For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' [19] The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a **friend** of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds."

*Matthew 11:18-19 NIV*

Jesus was known, even to people who didn't like him, as a **friend**. It didn't matter who you were, Jesus would befriend you. He noticed the unnoticeable, touched the untouchable, and loved the unlovable. He didn't spend time with people to get something out of them, but to give something to them and simply because he enjoyed their company.

Are you this kind of friend? When we say we are Christians, we are saying that we are going to do everything we can to become more and more like Jesus. This includes being known by everyone as a friend. What are you known for? For us to be a friend like Jesus was, we need to look at how he embodied the qualities we all hope for in a friend.

## Bible Study

### A Friend Sacrifices

I demand that you love each other as much as I love you. [13] And here is how to measure it—the greatest love is shown when a person lays down his life for his friends;

*John 15:12-13 TLB*

The way we measure our love for each other is by how willing we are to lay down our lives for our friends. Jesus not only did this by literally dying for us, but he lived his entire life sacrificing for other people. He sacrificed his time, his comfort, his wants, and his needs all for his friends.

Do you love your friends like that? Sometimes we think we love our friends because we enjoy hanging out with them, we know what they like, or even do things for them. But the only way to measure if you truly love someone is by how willing you are to sacrifice for them.

We loved you dearly—so dearly that we gave you not only God's message, but our own lives too.

### *1 Thessalonians 2:8 TLB*

With a mother's love and *affectionate attachment* to you, we were very happy to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our lives—because you had become so dear to us.

### *1 Thessalonians 2:8 TPT*

This is how Jesus loves us. As the scripture says, he could have just told us God's message and left; but instead he chose to attach to us, care for us, and share not just God's message but his whole life. He is willing to open himself up to us, knowing we could hurt and reject him. He knew we wouldn't give as much back to him as he gave to us, but that was a sacrifice he was willing to make, because he loves us.

- Do you only sacrifice for friends you know would give back to you? When was the last time you gave to and loved someone you knew couldn't or wouldn't give anything back?

## **A Friend Knows and is Known**

[6] "What is the value of your soul to God? Could your worth be defined by an amount of money? God doesn't abandon or forget even the small sparrow he has made. How then could he forget or abandon you? What about the seemingly minor issues of your life? Do they matter to God? **Of course they do!** So you never need to worry, for you are more valuable to God than anything else in this world.

### *Luke 12:6 TPT*

Jesus is a friend who cares enough to know who we are. He takes notice of even the smallest details of our lives, the seemingly minor issues that you think no one would take the time to care about. The insecurity about how you look, the disappointment when you didn't get the class you wanted, that thing you said that you shouldn't have said that you keep replaying over and over in your head. No matter how small it is, God and Jesus want to know every part of us.

- Are you this kind of friend?
- Do you take the time to slow down so that you can know what your friends are going through?
- Do your friends feel like they can rely on you and confide in you, or do you criticize them, not have time for them?

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." [37] He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. Grief and anguish came over him, [38] and he said to them, "The sorrow in my heart is so great that *it almost crushes me*. Stay here and keep watch with me."

### *Matthew 26:36-38 GNT*

Jesus was not only willing to know his friends, but he was also willing to be known by them. He took them with him in his lowest and most vulnerable moments, because he cared about them enough to open up to let them know him. He didn't care how they responded, he just wanted to be known by his friends.

- Do you care about your friends enough to let them know you? Or do you hide and protect parts of yourself?
- Choose 2 friends that you will reveal every part of yourself to.

## A Friend Reaches Out

Then a man suffering from a dreaded skin disease came to him, knelt down before him, and said, “Sir, if you want to, you can make me clean.” [3] Jesus **reached out** and touched him. “I do want to,” he answered. “Be clean!” At once the man was healed of his disease.

*Matthew 8:2-3 GNT*

During Jesus’ time, leprosy was an extremely contagious skin disease. It was so dangerously contagious in fact, that they would tie bells around lepers’ necks so that people would know they were coming and could steer clear.

This was the man that Jesus decided to reach out and touch. He didn’t need to touch him in order to heal him, but he knew that the man needed more healing than just his skin. So he reached out because, as he said, he wanted to. Jesus does the same for each of us. He looks past our flaws, our weaknesses, the disgusting and ugly parts of ourselves that we wish would go away, and he reaches out to each of us. Not because he has to, but because he wants to.

- How has God been trying to reach out to you?
- Are you letting him reach out and heal you, or are you too busy trying to hide the things that make you feel weak?
- Pray today through the weaknesses and flaws that you have been trying to hide so that you can see how God is trying to reach out to you.



My spiritual brothers and sisters, if one of our faithful has fallen into a trap and is snared by sin, don’t stand idle and watch his demise. Gently restore him, being careful not to step into your own snare. [2] Shoulder each other’s burdens, and then you will live as the law of the Anointed teaches us. [3] Don’t take this opportunity to think you are better than those who slip because you aren’t; then you become the fool and deceive even yourself. [5] Each person has his or her own burden to bear and story to write.

*Galatians 6:1-3,5 Voice*

We all either have or will end up in a place where we need a friend to reach out and help us shoulder our burdens. Maybe we made a mistake that feels irreversible, maybe we can’t handle the pain of a hard circumstance. In these moments, we need a friend to be gentle with us, understand what we are going through, and reach out with love.

Is that how you love your friends who are going through a hard time, or who have a lot of guilt and shame? Or do you look down on them and criticize them for making that mistake? If Jesus didn't even think he was better than us and too important to get on our level, then we certainly don't have the right to. As the scripture says, each of us has a burden we bear and a story to write. If we want to be good friends to each other, we need to be willing to make those burdens just a little bit lighter, and those stories just a little bit better. Because that is what Jesus did for us.

- Do you criticize your friends, or do you reach out to help them?
- Who can you be a friend to today, and what burden do they need your help shouldering?

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