

Friendship

Introduction: Two weeks ago we talked about the Bible's teaching on sex. focusing on Chastity -The need for faithfulness to be celibate (complete sexual purity)if we are single and faithful and self-controlled if we are married (especially sexual faithfulness). Then last week we talked about singleness as a good way to live life, and serve Jesus.

So that brings us here.. and I'm afraid that the thinking of some is that - if I'm single, and according to the Bible that singleness is to be lived in complete chastity (sexual purity) that means that I may never experience true intimacy.

Sex equals intimacy. That's what our culture tells us. So we naturally think: If I don't have sex, I'll never have intimacy with another human being.

As humans we do need intimacy, but the lie that our culture tells us is that intimacy is found only in sexual intimacy. We do need love and human touch as human beings. God himself speaks clearly of this need in Genesis 2:18. He said, **"It is not good that man should be alone, I will make him a helpmate"**.

Kate Wharton, Author of the book, *Single-Minded*", comments on this: "Ever since God declared that it was "not good" for Adam to be alone, human beings have been living alongside one another, sharing life together. I need other people in my life. I need them to offload to after a bad day; I need them to work alongside me in ministry; I need them to share a bottle of wine with me as we put the world to rights; I need them to point out to me the parts of my character that need working on; I need them to celebrate with me when good things happen; I need them to spend my days off and holidays with; I need them to give me a hug and tell me everything's going to be ok."

Kate is making the much ignored point that God's answer to the problem of human loneliness is not just the sexual intimacy of marriage, but everything that first marriage made possible. From that first marriage came more people and the possibility of life in community. In denying us a sexual partner, God is not denying us intimate relationships - he provides them in countless other ways.

It is actually not God who denies us from having intimate relationships. Instead it is often closed off to us by our society and sexualized culture. The world in which we live cannot cope with intimate relationships that aren't sexual - it makes no sense; it's just not possible. (Remember Freud's theory about every relationship having a sexual drive behind it..)
Sadly our response to the sexual revolution going on outside the church is to promote sexual intimacy in the context of Christian marriage, promising that this is all the intimacy that we've ever wanted or will ever need...

'The Christian churches, which once..held out the virtue of friendship as equal to the benefit of conjugal love, are our culture's primary and obsessive propagandists for the marital unit and it's capacity to resolve all human ills and satisfy all human needs.'" - Andrew Sullivan

If our churches spent as much time as we do encouraging friendship as we do marriage, life would be much easier for singles and those struggling with same sex attraction..

"Families and marriages fail too often because they are trying to answer too many human needs. A spouse is required to be a lover, a friend, a mother, a father, a soul mate, a co-worker, and so on. Few people can be all these things for one person. And when demands are set too high, disappointment can only follow. If husbands and wives have deeper and stronger friendships outside the marital unit, the marriage has more space to breathe and fewer burdens to bear."- Andrew Sullivan

(obviously, these outside friendships must be ones that truly care for and build up the marriage rather than take away from it..)

If we read our Bibles correctly we will see that there are many passages to promote and protect marriage (Proverbs 5; 7; 21:9), but we will also see that there are a surprising number of passages urging us to protect friendships too.

1. Friendship - why you need it.

1. Friendship is a huge theme of the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is one of the major pieces we have of what we call the Bible's Wisdom literature. Wisdom isn't just knowledge, and it isn't simply knowledge applied; Wisdom is what we need to make the right choice when the moral rules don't apply. And this is something that the Lord desires to

- give to his people through the gift of his Holy Spirit dwelling in you and also through the teaching of his word.
2. And what the book of Proverbs says is that you are not going to be a wise person or live a wise life, or better put - you will ship wreck, mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually without true friendship. Unless you are great at making, keeping, and forging terrific friendships you will not make it in life.
 3. **“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. -Proverbs 18:24**
 4. The claim of this Proverb is that a friend can be better than a sibling.
 1. **“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” -Proverbs 17:17**
 1. **Of course a good family will stand by you in adversity, a brother or a sister will love you and support you through things and hard seasons... but they may not like you, they might not want to hang out with you, or go out with you..**
 2. A friend is unique because a friend chooses you. A friend “sticks closer than a brother.” The word sticks is the Hebrew word cleave. And cleave meant... A commitment out of a passionate love.
 3. There is a unique necessity to friendship. Friendship gives you something that family can't give you, romance can't give you..that your neighbor can't give you, it's irreplaceable.
 1. “I have no duty to be anyone's Friend and no man in the world has a duty to be mine. No claims, no shadow of necessity. Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art, like the universe itself (for God did not need to create). It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things which give value to survival.” — C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves
 4. We need to remember the goodness and uniqueness of friendship because Every culture tends to put Friendship on the back burner.. Western culture says erotic love, sexual love, romantic love, first!
 1. Think about all the songs written about friendship compared to the songs written about sex and romance...
 2. The Lord of the Rings is the only blockbuster trilogy not about romance, not about family but about friendship..It's main theme is the beauty of friendship seen especially in Sam and Frodo and yet when Hollywood makes the movie they have to bring

the romance of Aragorn and Arwen to front and center..in The Lord of the Rings books it's in the appendix.. Culturally we prefer romantic love above all loves...

1. In a liberal individualistic culture romance is the most important relationship.
2. In a traditional conservative culture family is the most important..father, mother, sister
3. In a socialistic humanitarian culture it is your neighbors who is most important
3. But every culture will put friendship on the back burner..every culture makes it second
4. Why? because Friendship is not a biological and sociological necessity. It's the only love that is absolutely deliberate.. it will not push or force itself on you..
 1. "Friendship is in a sense not at all derogatory to it the least natural of loves; the least instinctive, organic, biological, gregarious and necessary. It has least commerce with our nerves; there is nothing throaty about it; nothing that quickens the pulse or turns you red and pale. It is essentially between individuals; the moment two men are friends they have in some degree drawn apart together from the herd. Without Eros (sex) none of us would have been begotten and without Affection (family) none of us would have been reared; but we can live and breed without Friendship. The species, biologically considered, has no need of it." -C.S Lewis
 2. Proverbs is telling us that we won't survive without friendship love, that friendship is better than siblings in many ways bringing things into your life things that a sibling can't...Some might say, Oh I don't really need friends. Fool's perish either for a lack of friends or poorly chosen friends....We think and act as though we are self made individuals. No, you're not. Your parents and your family have reared you and Your friends now shape you. That is who you are. It is your community that shapes you and the book of Proverbs says you perish for a lack of or poorly chosen friends (community)...

2. Friendship - How to find it.

1. True friendship is unique. you can have lots of acquaintances but you can really only have a few friends.
2. **"Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel. - Proverbs 27:9**
 1. This scripture was written before they had sugar or anything like it. If something was sweet it was so naturally or because you added honey to it. Honey, oil, perfume were unique like friendship and that's why they were so pleasant.
 2. Friendship requires a foundation. An affinity. A common love, a common vision that can't be created, but can only be discovered.
 3. Ralph Waldo Emerson– Friendship does not ask, "Do you love me," so much as, "Do you see the same truth?" Are you passionate about the same thing.
 4. C.S. Lewis–The Four Loves"The typical expression of opening friendship would be something like, "You too? I thought I was the only one."
 5. Friends hardly ever talk about their friendship. They are side by side, moment by moment, absorbed in common interest...."The very condition of having Friends is that we should want something else besides Friends. Where the truthful answer to the question "Do you see the same truth?" would be "I see nothing and I don't care about the truth; I only want a Friend," no Friendship can arise - though Affection of course may. There would be nothing for the Friendship to be about; and Friendship must be about something, even if it were only an enthusiasm for dominoes or white mice. Those who have nothing can share nothing; those who are going nowhere can have no fellow-travellers." -C.S. Lewis
1. A friendship is not forced it is discovered, but once it is discovered it must be forged.

3. Friendship - the power to make and forge real friendship

1. Four things you must do to forge a true friendship:
2. **Constancy -**
 1. **"A friend loves at all times"** - good times, bad times, through routine and mundane. Being there when the chips are down... a friend will not let you go to ruin. Most of our relationships are due to what others can do for us; based on their usefulness. A

friend loves you not as a means to an end but as an end in itself.

3. Carefulness

1. **“Whoever sings songs (a song of Joy) to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on soda.”**
2. This Proverb describes Emotional disconnection. If I can be happy when you're sad, I'm not really your friend. Friends are emotionally connected. In friendship you give the gift of emotional connection voluntarily. You can't sing songs....when their heart is heavy. That's a true friend. They weep with you, rejoice with you, they enter into your pain...

4. Candor - Truth telling.

1. **“Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” - Proverbs 27:5-6**
2. This speaks of hard words, truth that your friend needs to hear for their good even though it will be painful for them...
3. If you can't tell your friend the truth (about themselves, about their desires, character flaws, etc) Then you are not truly a friend. “I love someone too much to tell them the truth.” No, you love yourself too much to go through something painful like that...” But it is a necessary pain, necessary to the person's health and good, necessary pain for the health of the friendship. If you really love someone you tell them the truth, but with gentleness, empathy and humility.
4. Oscar Wilde said, “A true friend stabs you in the front.”
5. **Proverbs 29:5 -A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.**
6. If we don't tell our friends the truth we are in fact setting a trap for them..
7. American Idol example: A girl or guy takes the stage claiming they are going to blow the minds of the judges only to hear what sounds like a tortured animal.... How could this person be so deluded?? The answer is revealed when they leave the room to be comforted by friends and family, who all assure them that their voice is wonderful and that they have a brilliant future in front of them, whatever the judges have said. They

think they are being loving, but they are destroying this individual with their lies...

1. Candor says, I'm telling the truth, but carefulness says I do it gently and graciously.

5. Counsel - secrets -to confide in someone.

1. **As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. - Proverbs 27:17**

2. Pleasant, reassuring, affirming and challenging.

1. "There is a certain 'niceness' to a friendship where I can be, as they say, myself. But what I really need are relationships in which I will be encouraged to become better than myself. Myself needs to grow a little each day. I don't want to be the myself I was yesterday. I want to be the myself that is developing each day to be a more Christlike person" - Gordon MacDonald

2. More often than not, we just need friends who will point us to what we already know well, but find hard to truly accept and live by. That will mean frequent reminders of the amazing grace of God revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That amazing truth that, "We are more flawed and sinful than we ever dared believe, yet we are more loved and accepted than we ever dared hope at the same time."

3. But in a true friendship there must be balanced mutual sharpening going on. If its one sided then it is exploitative.

6. We can describe a true friendship this way -A true friend always lets you in and never lets you down.

4. The Power to be a Friend

1. A reflection on true friendship makes us both long for true friendship but also burdens us to be true friends...True friendship is hard.
2. The reason we don't have great friends is because we aren't great friends..
3. How are you at being there unconditionally for a person no matter the cost?
4. **Where do we get the power to be the friends we need to be so we can have the friends we need to have?**
5. Jesus - We can only get the Power to be a true friend from the truest friend.

6. Why? The Biblical God is a Trinitarian God. A community in it's self. Eternally existing in mutual love, praise and deference.
7. God has created us in his image - which means that we need friendship. God used to walk with Adam and Eve in the garden, walking and talking with them in the cool of the day.. Walking with someone is a Hebrew metaphor for friendship. This pictures the friendship that God created us to have with him and with others. But this was lost through their betrayal. We turned from God. What happens when you betray a friend? Usually that friend turns on you, he betrays you.
8. Jesus on the night he was betrayed (by his friend), the night before his crucifixion said these words - “
9. **“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! 12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. 13 There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. 16 You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.**
10. Jesus is the ultimate friend who loves at all times. He is the ultimate brother who was born for adversity. He is the ultimate friend who sticks with us through thick and thin. He is the ultimate friend who’s wounds are love because rather than inflicting them , he takes them. He takes the punishment we deserve so we could have what only he deserves. Jesus lost friendship/fellowship with God so we could have friendship/fellowship with God.
1. **Jesus is the true friend who always lets you in and never lets you down.**

2. If you know that - you have the knowledge and the power to be the friend you need to be. You have the true friendship that your heart longs for, now you are free to be the friend you should.

Conclusion: "In friendship...we think we have chosen our peers. In reality a few years' difference in the dates of our births, a few more miles between certain houses, the choice of one university instead of another...the accident of a topic being raised or not raised at a first meeting--any of these chances might have kept us apart. But, for a Christian, there are, strictly speaking, no chances. A secret Master of the Ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to the disciples "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," can truly say to every group of Christian friends "You have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another." The Friendship is not a reward for our discrimination and good taste in finding one another out. It is the instrument by which God reveals to each the beauties of all the others. They are no greater than the beauties of a thousand other men; by Friendship God opens our eyes to them. They are, like all beauties, derived from Him through the Friendship itself, so that it is His instrument for creating as well as for revealing. At this feast it is He who has spread the board and it is He who has chosen the guests. It is He, we may dare to hope, who sometimes does, and always should, preside. Let us not reckon without our Host." -C.S. Lewis