

What is True Christian Friendship? Part 2 | friends versus enemies

I. Who are your real friends?

- Proverbs 17:17; John 15:13-14
- A friend — all true friends — love. They truly, biblically love. If they love you, they are your friend. If they don't, they're your enemy. And the same is true for the people you love or hate.
- Because biblical love is at the root of biblical friendship, you won't be able to understand what a *good* friend is until you can agree with God about what *love* is. And — on the flip side — the better we understand biblical love, the easier it will be to see our friendships for what they really are.
- The love of God we are commanded to have for Him, our neighbors, and our enemies is an unconditional love that wants and works towards God's best interest in a person's life whether they want it or not.
- Anyone who influences you to live righteously or whose influence encourages biblical thinking, that person is your friend. That would be loving behavior. Anyone who engages in biblical one-anothering, a person who speaks the truth of God in the love of God, a person who is part of your discipleship, a person who takes you back to God's Word when you have questions, a person who isn't afraid to reprove and rebuke you with the Scriptures when necessary . . . that person is a friend.
- Do you have true, biblical friends in your life? Can you identify those people by name? If someone has been investing in your life and influencing you in the things of God, those are the relationships you need and should want to have flourish.

II. Does biblical friendship have to be reciprocal?

- Romans 13:8
- No. The perfect example is that God is the best friend any of us will ever have, but many people hate Him or don't believe in Him or are angry with Him. Does that mean He's not their friend? No. He loves all mankind. He wants the best for everyone.
- God expects you to love *everyone*, therefore, God expects you to be a friend to *everyone*. There's no one for whom you shouldn't want God's best for their lives. There's no one you shouldn't introduce to Him. There's no one you shouldn't point to Him, encourage in Him, admonish in Him, and edify in Him. You have been tasked by God to be everyone's *best* friend.
- That doesn't mean that everyone will be your friend. In fact, most people will *not* want to be a biblical friend to you. In fact, the sad reality is that if you truly love people and speak truth to them and want God's best interest for their lives, there will be many who will hate you for it and consider you an enemy. Just keep in mind that their delusion shouldn't affect how you relate to them. Just keep being their friend, and praise God when you find people who will love you back.

III. What do you call someone who hurts you or encourages you to do things that hurt you?

- If someone tried to kill you or encouraged you to kill yourself, you would rightly say that they're not a friend. And you would be right. What about someone who encourages you to steal, do drugs, or lie?
- Technically speaking, they're enemies. Only enemies seek your destruction.
- But what about someone whose life is a subtle negative influence? Some might say, "They're a 'bad friend.'" But you can no more have a "bad friend" than you have a "good enemy."

- The problem is that Satan is conniving enough to know that the *best* enemies call themselves friends. No doubt, Eve would have considered the serpent to be very friendly. Spies and double-agents do their jobs well by convincing you that they're not your enemy.
- There are some people who will actively act friendly but set out to encourage you to do things that are harmful because they don't like you and they want the worst for you. But what makes them any different from the ones who actively encourage you to sin, but who actually like hanging out with you? In the end, they both are influencing you to do that which will displease the Lord.
- But it's these people who "like" us but who are a bad influence on us that I like to call a confused double-agent.
- People who like hanging out with you because they think you're just so cool, but who encourage you to approach life in unbiblical ways are *not* friends. It doesn't really matter that you play so well together on the same community soccer team. It doesn't matter that *most* of their interactions with you are benign. When someone encourages you to sin against God — either deliberately or by example — that person is acting like an enemy.
- In fact, the problem grows as the influence becomes more subtle. People who constantly complain aren't friends. People who are defined by selfishness aren't friends. People with bad attitudes, people who speak unkind words, people who are lazy, and disinterested in the things of God aren't good friends. (James 3:3-12)

IV. Does being enemies have to be reciprocal?

- Romans 12:19-21
- No. There is great freedom in realizing that you don't have to be an enemy just because someone is your enemy.
- God expects us to be friends to those who would be our enemy. That does not mean that we put ourselves in a situation to be influenced by them, but we put ourselves into a situation to influence them.

V. Is it ever okay to be someone's enemy?

- No. God commands us to love those who are enemies to us and do good to those who hurt us.
- Just remember that you do *not* need to hang out with a bad influence simply because God commands you to love them.
- There are some people with whom it would not be wise for you to interact on a casual basis from day to day.
- The most loving thing you can do is not casually hang out with an enemy. We need to love God first and foremost. This is why God commands us not to walk, stand, and sit with people who reject Him and His truth.
- In fact, the New Testament tells us that though we're not to *fellowship* with people like that, we should have a relationship that allows us to share the Gospel. This is called evangelism. Any opportunity you have to share Christ with that enemy is fantastic, but that doesn't mean you hang out with them more than you do your true, biblical friends.
- You can invite those people to interact with you and your Christ-honoring friends. You can be a good testimony and share God's Truth and love without giving them the opportunity to have a significant negative influence on you.