

Russell Kelfer

**The Kind
of Friend
He Is to Me**

1105-A

**Series: Why Do You Run When I'm Crying
(The Caring Church in a Hurting World)**



DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

I- YOU ARE MY FRIENDS

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.
(John 15:12-15, NKJV)

What power is locked up in that word of God to man. In one sweeping motion, the Living God has illustrated, in words we cannot help but understand, the epitome of friendship: the friendship of God to man. In so doing, He has elevated the concept of friendship to its highest place in human experience. He has created a whole new level of relationships which, properly developed, mirrors in many ways His relationship to us.

Friendship. What a word. It means so many things to so many people. To a little child, a friend is someone he is willing to share his favorite toy with. To a lonely mother, a friend is someone a phone call away who understands her frustrations. To a busy businessman, a friend is someone to share lunch and burdens with before moving back into the mainstream of the marketplace. To a senior citizen, a friend represents someone who has shared the years, the tears, and the fears of generations, someone miles away, but only minutes away when trouble strikes.

What is a friend? A friend is someone you don't have to apologize to for how you look. A friend is someone you can call in the middle of the night when you hurt, without hurting your friendship. A friend is someone who is willing to love you as you are, not as they wish you could be. A friend is one who will always encourage you when you are down, always remind you when you will listen, and always listen when you won't. A friend is that earthly anchor to help you when your ship seems to be drifting

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

aimlessly in the harbor. A friend is that quiet arm that wraps itself about you and says nothing when there is nothing to say.

A friend is the nature of God giving itself away to another. It is the reality of love demonstrated the way God intended it to work. It is the will of God for Christians to have friends. Friendship, in fact, is the invisible adhesive that binds together the Body of Christ into unbreakable pieces so that the onslaughts of the enemy do not catch us unawares.

As you have already no doubt surmised, friendship is the topic we are studying today as we near the completion of our investigation of The Caring Church in a Hurting World. We have been asking ourselves why the weeping people of our world so often look at us and ask, "Why do you run when I'm crying?" Today we will add that penetrating question, "Is it simply because you're not my friend?"

Our title for this lesson is: "The Kind of Friend He Is to me"

And our outline takes this form:

I- You Are My Friends

II- What is A Friend?

III- Except They Be Agreed

IV- When the Winds of Adversity Howl

V- The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

II- WHAT IS A FRIEND?

The question of friendships is one seemingly seldom addressed in pulpits but often addressed in Scripture. If we are going to look at the church's role in meeting the needs of hurting people, we simply cannot complete our task without looking at one of the most overlooked essentials in the Christian experience: the matter of right friendships.

We have to begin by asking ourselves: "What is a friend?" What do we mean, and more important, what does God mean, when He says, "Now you are my friend"?

The dictionary defines a friend this way:

Friend: a person whom one knows well and is fond of, an ally, supporter, or sympathizer.

So, even from the world's perspective, a friend is someone who knows you well, still loves you, sets as his or her goal to lift

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

you up, stand alongside you, and enter into your hurts with you. That's literally what that definition says. Scripturally, a friend is "someone who gives oneself to another the way God gives of Himself."

Jesus has just said to the disciples, "Now I have called you my friends." In other words, understand that your new relationship with Me, the God of eternity, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the one by whom and for whom and in whom all things exist, is one that spans the depths of the soul and goes beyond the relationship of an authoritative deity to one of a tender, compassionate friend.

Jesus is saying, "I know you well, far better than even you know yourself. I know your shortcomings, your hypocrisies, and your frailties. I know you. And yet, still I love you, and I will stand alongside you. I will lift you up when you are down. I will literally enter into your hurts with you so that no matter what happens you will never again be alone.

Now, at long last, Beloved, each and every one of us has the kind of friend we have always longed for, God. Because we have Him for a friend, now we can actually become the kind of friend to others that He is to us.

Interestingly enough, when the subject of friendship arises, most of us think in terms of what kind of friends God is going to give us to encourage us. Scripture, however, approaches the subject from the opposite perspective. Our concern ought to be: "Are we the kind of friend to others that God is to us?"

III- EXCEPT THEY BE AGREED

The Bible approaches friendship from a unique perspective. It teaches the Christian how to be a friend to all, but it demands of the Christian that real friendships, intimate friendships, only be developed with those who are of like mind, heart and spirit. So you are to befriend all those in need, but you are to become friends with a special kind of people, both for their benefit and for yours.

Please don't be offended, but Christianity is an exclusive relationship. It is not condescending, but exclusive. It is the nature of God giving itself away to whosoever will, but it is also the nature of God building His Body on earth, using only the building blocks of His born-again children. So incredibly transforming is

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

the new birth, that it does not reform man, it regenerates man. A regenerated man or woman has no fellowship that is intimate in oneness with those who do not possess God's Spirit. So the Bible makes one point painfully clear. There are three kinds of friendships: wrong friendships, no friendships, and right friendships. It also makes it painfully clear that no friendships are better than wrong friendships, and right friendships can only be developed when two people are one in Christ. Amos 3:3, NKJV, reminds us, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" They can't.

Now the Christian endeavoring to live in the world, but not of it, has a tough problem: how to befriend the lost, while only becoming intimate friends with those who are agreed. But the Bible is painfully clear. In I John 1 is a good verse to memorize, for it gives us the basis of all fellowship and friendships:

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (I John 1:7 NKJV)

Here God gives us the basis for fellowship: walking in the light. Psalm 119 adds:

I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts. (Psalm 119:63 NKJV)

We are told again and again in Scripture not to make friends with the wicked, with those who do not know God.

Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. (Proverbs 4:14 NKJV)

For their heart devises violence, and their lips talk of troublemaking. (Proverbs 24:2 NKJV)

So you may walk in the way of goodness, and keep to the paths of righteousness.

For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; (Proverbs 2:20,21 NKJV)

Add to that Paul's admonitions against unequal yoking, and Jehovah's demands of the children of Israel to withdraw themselves from the heathen in the land, and you have a picture book of how God feels about believer/non-believer friendships. "What fellowship can light have with darkness or the Body of Christ with the body of Satan?" That was Paul's summation. And two things come to light immediately from the realm of experience

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

that confirm this truth.

1- Christians must not allow their children the “luxury” of developing wrong friendships. It is not an option for some, it is a no-no for all. Proverbs 1 ought to be one of the first passages young people memorize when they come to Christ. It says:

My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

[When they say] cast in your lot among us, let us all have one purse”—

My son, do not walk in the way with them, keep your foot from their path; (Proverbs 1:10,14,15 NKJV)

The Bible is very clear that we will become like whoever our friends are. Children in their susceptible state, have a far greater pull to peer pressure than to the things of God. So it is not a question for psychological debate, it is a foredrawn conclusion. The believer monitors his or her children’s friendships and gives no slack. If the child is spiritually mature, he can befriend the lost, but no matter how mature he appears to be, he is not free to become intimate friends with unbelievers. Nor is he or she ever free to date unbelievers. Dating in Scripture is never an end in itself, it is always a first step to possible marriage, and possible marriage is never an option for Christians and non-Christians. If you are married to an unbeliever that is the permissive will of God for you. You are to remain in place. But your children are never to knowingly pursue that kind of relationship.

Not only are they not to become intimate friends with unbelievers, they are to look for certain character qualities in the Christian young people they align themselves with for close fellowship. Proverbs 22:24 warns against friendships with angry, short-tempered men. Proverbs 25:19 warns against friendships with unfaithful men. Proverbs 24:1-2 warns against even envying wicked men, or wanting to be like them, much less wanting to be with them. Proverbs 1 warns against fellowship with greedy or dishonorable men. We must choose our friendships carefully. We must teach our children both by example and by instruction to do the same. The perils of destruction lie in the pathway of the one who unites his spirit with the spirit of those bent on evil, or even those who appear to be honorable, but have not the Spirit of God. Monitor friendships daily, weekly, continually. As their friendships are, so they will become.

2- The second great truth that arises as you apply Scripture

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

to experience is that young Christians simply must realize that they don't turn for counsel or friendship to those whose hearts are not wise in the things of God. The tendency is to gravitate towards those who will say what we want to hear. So those with financial problems will gravitate towards unbelievers or other Christians whose finances are the same as theirs. The counsel they receive will lead them into bondage. It is particularly true in the realm of family problems. How often young believers whose marriages are shaky seek solace from either divorced unbelievers or other Christians with similar problems. Don't do it. If your marriage is in trouble, run from close fellowship with others who are contemplating divorce. Run as fast as you can to the shelter of someone whose marriage is of God and whose heart is glued to the principles of God. Which brings us to a cardinal concept of friendship, the principle of how God uses friends and why friendship is so important. For though wrong friendships are disastrous, having no friendships leaves the Christian ripe for the enemy's attack.

IV- WHEN THE WINDS OF ADVERSITY HOWL

For at least three reasons, the believer needs earthly friends. Those who think they can solo through life often find that when the winds of adversity howl, they need friends and they need them badly. The Scriptures explain why.

1- Right friendships are God's agents for counsel and accountability. By counsel, I mean someone to give direction when decisions are imminent. By accountability, I mean someone to monitor your steps who can be more objective than you can. Listen to Proverbs 27:

As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

As in water face reflects face, so a man's heart reveals the man. (Proverbs 27:17,19 NKJV)

2- Friendships are necessary for encouragement and protection, as well. Ecclesiastes 4 tells the whole story:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor.

For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone?

Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 NKJV)

When the winds of adversity blow, the believer is likely to fall if he has not another to help him up. “Woe to the one with no friends when he falls.” With no one to help him up, he is perfect prey for the vulture who swoops “to and fro seeking whom he may devour.”

3- Thirdly, friends meet our actual needs. Psalm 35 says:

But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart.

I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother.

(Psalm 35:13,14 NKJV)

The whole of our study on the caring church to date has dealt with this aspect of friendship. But it cannot be minimized. When the sky is falling we need more than counsel, accountability, encouragement, and protection. Sometimes we need food, or clothing, or a ride, or a job, or a place to stay. Sometimes we need something more tangible than words. A real friend, the kind of friend God is to us, doesn't simply say, “Go, be warmed and filled.” He does what must be done so that we indeed can be warmed and filled, or he is not a friend.

V- THE KIND OF FRIEND HE IS TO ME

Which brings us to the final part of our study. If we are going to be the kind of friends to others that God is to us, what must we do? What are the Scriptural criteria for being a godly friend? We will look at seven things, in closing, that the Bible says a friend should be or do. We will be reminded, I trust, in the process, that if we learn to demonstrate that level of friendship, we will have begun to become the kind of friend God is. Let's look at God's seven-fold call to friendship:

1- Want to be a friend? Develop a short memory. Proverbs 17 says it all. In The Living Bible, it reads this way:

Love forgets mistakes; nagging about them parts the best of friends.

(Proverbs 17:9 TLB)

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

God has a short memory. The minute we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us, and cast them behind His back, never to be remembered again. Oh, that we could be the kind of friend to others that God is to us. How often friendships dissolve because one person cannot forgive and forget. If you hang on to hurts, you'll never become the kind of friend God is to you.

2- Learn to keep confidences. The greatest breach of any friendship occurs when someone tells you something in confidence, expecting it to remain between the two of you, then hears it from somebody else. The minute you tell another, you cease to be a friend. The second half of verse 9 says:

...but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

(Proverbs 17:9 NIV)

Nothing you do will destroy close friendships quicker than not keeping confidences. What you tell God He keeps between Himself and you. Learn to be the kind of friend He is.

3- Learn to rejoice in your friends' good fortunes, rather than envying their success. John the Baptist gives us the perfect portrait of friendship in John 3 He said this:

The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.

He must become greater, I must become less.

(John 3:29,30 NIV)

Our friends can tell when we are becoming jealous of their success, and can no longer enjoy it as though it were our own. Unless our joy is as full as theirs when they succeed, we are not friends, at least we are not the kind of friend God is to us.

4- A real friend knows when to appear and when to leave you alone. God does. He doesn't badger us when we're not ready to listen. He doesn't pursue us when we want to be alone. He waits patiently for us to return and desire His friendship. Proverbs 25 reminds us:

Don't visit your neighbor too often, or you will outwear your welcome.

(Proverbs 25:17 TLB)

In other words, too much of a good thing spoils a friendship. Learn when you're welcome and when one phone call more is too

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

many. Sometimes the greatest mark of a friend is the capacity to know when enough is enough, and when real friendship involves quietly leaving that friend alone.

5- In the same manner, a real friend knows when to talk, and when to listen; when to shout, and when to whisper. Proverbs 27 says this:

If you shout a pleasant greeting to a friend too early in the morning, he will count it as a curse!

(Proverbs 27:14 TLB)

Oh, the sensitivity of a real friend. Sometimes he'll talk; sometimes he'll listen. Sometimes he'll rebuke; sometimes he'll encourage. But, oh, Beloved, a real friend is so tuned into God that He knows which to do when. That is perhaps the best mark of a mature friend. He doesn't barge in and correct you when you're too far down to take it. He waits until he has lifted you up, and built up your spirit then he helps to redirect your paths. That's how God demonstrates His friendship to us! Oh, that we could become the kind of friend He is!

6- A true friend learns to give himself away. Proverbs 18 gives us the key principle to developing friendships. It is this:

A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

(Proverbs 18:24 NKJV)

There really is such a thing as a friend that is closer than family. But the thing that makes him such a friend is the fact that he is the initiator of the friendship. He doesn't sit back and pray, "Lord send me a friend." He prays, "Lord, make me a friend." Then he does whatever he needs to do to become the kind of friend to others that God is to him.

7- A real friend never stops loving no matter what, as we see in Proverbs 17:

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

(Proverbs 17:17 NKJV)

You say, "At all times, Lord?" "Yes, my child," He answers, "at all times, just the way I love you. I love you when you're gracious and I love you when you're not. I love you when you're faithful and I love you when you're not. I love you when you're lovable and I love you when you're not. If you are going to be the kind of friend to others that I am to you, then you are going to have

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

to stop putting parameters on your love.” A friend, God’s kind of friend, never stops loving, ever.

So if you want friends, real friends, then stop berating God for not sending them to you. Do what He did. He came to us, to where we were, to where we were hurting. He stooped down, took off His robes of righteousness and met our needs. In fact, such great love had He that He died to meet the deepest need we had. Greater love has no man than that! Now He is saying to us, “If you want to have friends, be one. And more than that, be the kind of friend to others that I have been to you. Learn to forgive and forget. Learn to keep confidences. Learn to rejoice in the success of others. Learn when to come and when to go. Learn when to talk and when to listen. Learn to give yourself away. Learn that God’s kind of friendship never stops loving, no matter what.

Once you become that kind of friend, you won’t have to wonder why you have none. You will have an ocean of friends, because you will have become the kind of friend He is to you.

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

Oh, to be the kind of friend
That Jesus is to me.
Oh, to give myself away
To set another free.

Oh, to learn that quietness
That knows another’s heart,
That knows those precious moments when
It’s best to be apart.

That knows when words are welcome
Or better left unspoken,
That knows that confidences unkept
Result in hearts left broken.

Oh, to be that kind of friend
That’s what I want to be...
I want to be the kind of friend
That Jesus is to me.

The Kind of Friend He Is to Me

Assignment on Friendship

1- What did Jesus mean when He said, “You are my friends if you do whatever I have command you”? How did Jesus define the difference between servanthood and friendship? Can you make a practical application of this principle?

2- Who is the best earthly friend you have? Do they know how much their friendship means to you? Why not call them or write them and tell them? What specific things about their life or their response to you sets them apart? Are you that kind of friend to them? to others?

3- Should our children become close friends with unsaved children in order to lead them to Christ? If not, why not? How can you define “friendship” for your children in such a way that they will understand the importance of making only godly friendships? Why must it be a continual educational process?

4- Why do so many Christians today accept the issue of dating unbelievers as unimportant? What lie has Satan sold the church to confuse this issue?

5- How do you decide who to go to for counsel if your marriage or your life is in trouble? How would the world decide?

6- Make a list of the seven things Scripture says a friend must do or be. Now rate yourself on your faithfulness to those seven principles:

- 1) Learn to Forgive
- 2) Learn to keep confidences
- 3) Learn to rejoice in their successes
- 4) Learn when to appear and when to leave them alone
- 5) Learn when to talk and when to listen
- 6) Learn to give yourself away
- 7) Learn to never stop loving, no matter what.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer