

**“Friends’ Love”
John 15:12 – 17**

Big Idea – A real friend is someone whose love for you is always there no matter what happens.

The California Dept. of Mental Health found that if you isolate yourself from other people, you are two or three times more likely to die any early death, even if you take good care of yourself by exercising or refraining from smoking. If you isolate yourself from others you are more likely to contract terminal cancer.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “Friendship is one of the sweetest joys of life. Many might have failed beneath the bitterness of their trial had they not found a friend.”

What are the traits of a real friend?

1. Someone who knows you

A friend has been described as “somebody that knows all about you and loves you anyway.”

One man said a friend is “the one who steps in when the whole world steps out.”

Someone else said, “A Friend is one who never gets in the way, except when we are on the way down.”

2. A friend is someone who will sacrifice for you

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

Today that means giving up your time, your relaxation, to help a friend.

True love never counts the cost of service.

When we truly love someone, no cost is too great in expressing that love. If we measure the cost of serving Jesus, when we love him passionately, we will serve him sacrificially. And we will love those he loves.

3. A friend protects you

Jonathan protected his friend David from his father King Saul

1 Samuel 23:16 says: “And Saul’s son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.”

Here we see a man, Jonathan, who was so committed to his friend, David, that in the deepest, darkest time of his life to that point he went to find him and when things were tough and looking grim with the sole intention of helping David find his strength in God.

4. A friend is enjoyable to be around

Prov. 27:9 “Ointment and perfume delight the heart, And the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.”

Paul had a friend named Onesiphorus _

2 Tim. 1:16 “May the Lord show special kindness to Onesiphorus and all his family because he often visited and encouraged me. He was never ashamed of me because I was in prison.”

5. A friend helps when you are in trouble

“In prosperity our friends know us; in adversity, we know who are friends are.”

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K. C. Jones, Former Boston Celtics coach said, as quoted by former Celtics player Kevin McHale, "After you've made the winning basket, you've got 15,000 people cheering for you, TV stations coming at you, and everybody giving you high-fives. You don't need me then. When you need a real friend is when you feel that nobody likes you."

6. A friend is loyal

Prov. 27:10 "Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend, Nor go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity; Better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away."

C.D. Prentice said, "People who have warm friends are healthier and happier than those who have none. A single real friend is a treasure worth more than gold or precious stones. Money can buy many things, good and evil. All the wealth of the world could not buy you a friend or pay you for the loss of one."

7. A friend brings out the best in you

Prov. 27:17 "As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend."

Richard Exley said, "A true friend is one who hears and understands when you share your deepest feelings. He supports you when you are struggling; he corrects you, gently and with love, when you err; and he forgives you when you fail. A true friend prods you to personal growth, stretches you for your full potential, and most amazing of all, he celebrates your successes as if they were his own."

8. A friend cares about your spiritual well-being

Barnabas & Saul after he first got saved

Acts 9:26 When Saul went to Jerusalem, he tried to join the group of followers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he was really a follower.

27 But Barnabas accepted Saul and took him to the apostles. Barnabas explained to them that Saul had seen the Lord on the road and the Lord had spoken to Saul. Then he told them how boldly Saul had preached in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

Acts 11:24 Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And many people were brought to the Lord.

25 Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul.

26 When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people, (believers were called Christians first in Antioch)

How does one get friends like this?

1. Be a friend – be friendly

Proverbs 18:24 A man who has friends must himself be friendly, and there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

2. Value your friends highly

My father always used to say that when you die, if you've got five real friends, then you've had a great life.--Lee Iacocca, Former CEO of Chrysler

3. Be a true loyal friend, all the time

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves you all the time, and a brother helps in time of trouble.

A real friend is someone who is coming in, when everyone else is going out!

We need to seek out people to establish friendships with whom we know are going to help us find strength in God.

A pastor went to the hospital to visit a man in the church who had just had a heart attack. This man, the one who had the heart attack, had made a commitment to establish life-long, meaningful friendships with others so he joined a small group Bible study at the church. Through this Bible study this man had made some pretty good friends; friends who were honest and who loved and accepted him for who he was. The pastor said that when he arrived at the hospital he could not even get into the man's room because this man's entire small group was there visiting him and praying with him.

Just like Jonathan, these true friends were there in that man's hospital room during one of the most dark and grim periods of his life helping him find strength in God. The pastor telling this story closes it by saying that one of the man's friends came out to him and said, "You can go home if you'd like. We've got this covered." He said that at first he was taken back that someone would say that to him, after all, visiting church members in the hospital was part of his job. But then he realized how great it was that this man had so many genuine friends in the church that were committed to his friendship.

Hebrews 10:24, 25 "Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.

Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near."