

“Bromance and Womance”: Encouragement through Friendship
Trinity Cambridge Church 2026

“This world is full of sorrow because it is full of sin. It is a dark place. It is a lonely place. It is a disappointing place. The brightest sunbeam in it is a friend. Friendship halves our troubles and doubles our joys.”

J.C. Ryle

I. INTRODUCTION – A MODERN PROBLEM

- The trivialization of the word “friendship”
- The “Loneliness Epidemic” – Historical decline of close friendships
- **Drew Hunter, *Made for Friendship***

Three aspects of modern culture that create obstacles to building deep friendships:¹

- 1. Busyness:** Actual busyness (children, work hours, unique life stage challenges), distracted busyness (doom-scrolling, binge-watching, procrastinating), perceived busyness (“looking busy”)
- 2. Technology:** Depersonalizing communication, disengaging from real communion, disembodies conversations, creating dependence on detached ways of addressing personal issues (i.e., confessing sin)
- 3. Increased Mobility:** Transience can breed a “why bother?” mentality. Friendships take time to cultivate, but the easy access of moving from one place to another has eroded those roots significantly, and often leaves jadedness in trying to build friendships.

These obstacles are at play even in the Church - we are not immune to the loneliness epidemic.

However, as friends and followers of Jesus, we also have the unique reality of having an Eternal Friend in him, and through Jesus we are able to cultivate close friendships with one another.

¹ Drew Hunter, *Made for Friendship: The Relationship that Halves Our Sorrows and Doubles Our Joys* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), Ch. 1.

Thesis: Friendship reveals God's own heart for us, strengthens our relationship with Him, and deepens our fellowship with one another.

II. A THEOLOGY OF FRIENDSHIP

1. Friendship Is a Gift from God

- Friendship and relationship were divine reality before human reality, through the Trinity.
 - **Genesis 1:1-2:** In the beginning, **God** created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, And the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters.
 - **John 1:1-2:** In the beginning was the **Word**, and the Word was **with God**, and the **Word was God**. He was in the beginning **with God**.
- God designed humans to be relational; He invites humans into fellowship with Himself and with one another!
- A remarkable example of God's *relationship to* and *fellowship with* us:
 - **Genesis 3:8-9:** And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden...
 - **Leviticus 26:12:** "And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people."
- Relationship with one another:
 - **Genesis 2:18:** Then the LORD God said, "It is **not good** that the man should be alone..."
 - Once God creates Eve as a companion and friend to Adam, God's assessment of His creation on the sixth day culminates to **very good**.
- We were made to desire friendship and companionship, because our God is a relational God.

2. Friendship Has Been Marred by the Fall

- **Proverbs 16:28:** A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.
 - Satan whispered deceit to separate the very first friendships (Genesis 3)
- Adam and Eve distrusted God, and rejected His friendship by rebelling against His law.

- Sin isolates and separates man from God, and man from his own.
 - **Genesis 3:12:** “The woman **whom you gave to be with me**, she gave me the fruit of the tree, and I ate.”
- Sin turned us from friends to adversaries, enemies to God and one another. (**Titus 3:3**)
- Death, spiritual and physical, became the curse to eternally separate us and isolate us into loneliness.

3. Friendship Redeemed by the Gospel

- Throughout the OT, God’s people are not good friends to Him.
- God’s plan of redemption – not only to rescue humanity from sin, but to **restore our friendship with God and with one another!**
- Through the Gospel, Jesus calls us into divine friendship.
 - **John 15:13-15:** “Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”
 - **John 17:26:** “I have made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”
- Friendship restored by sacrificial love, through the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*:
 “It is in this thoroughly human love of Jesus for his friends that the divine love for the world takes human form.”²
- Restoration of vertical relationship with God *and* horizontal relationship with one another.
 - **John 15:12:** “This is my commandment, that you love one another **as I have loved you.**”
- Jesus fulfills the law of “love your neighbor as yourselves”. We are now called to love one another sacrificially and generously, just as Jesus did for us by dying on the cross.

² Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, pg. 69.

- Our redeemed friendships should seek to magnify Jesus, serve his purposes and serve his people.

4. Friendships United in Christ

- Friendships are formed based on common interests.
- C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*:
 “That is why those pathetic people who simply ‘want friends’ can never make any... 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... 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-travelers.”³
- We as Christians share the most important thing in our lives with one another: Jesus. We find supreme commonality and unity in Jesus, and through that are able to become friends.
- **Acts 4: Peter and John are interrogated and threatened by the priests and Sadducees.**
 - **Acts 4:23:** They went to their **friends**.
 - Their friends’ response: They lifted their voices together to God (v. 24)
 Peter and John’s friends prayed for/with them for Gospel boldness. And as they prayed, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and empowered and emboldened to speak the Word of God.
 - **Acts 4:43:** Now the full number of those who believed were of **one heart and soul**, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had **everything in common**.
- Unity, *of one heart and soul*, in Christ □ Joyful and sacrificial care for one another, so that they had *everything in common*.

³ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, Ch.4, “Friendship”.

- Augustine, *Confessions*:
“No friends are true friends, unless you, my God, bind them fast to one another through that love which is sown in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.”⁴

5. Friendship Grows Us in Christ

- Friendships are a **means of grace** for drawing closer to God and growing to be more like Christ in our sanctification.
- Pursuing true Christian friendship means we also pursue godliness and conformity to Christ.
 - **Hebrews 3:12-13:** *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But **exhort one another** every day, as long as it is called “today”, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
 - **Hebrews 10:24-25:** *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*
 - **1 Peter 4:8-10:** *Above all, keep **loving one another** earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.*

III. OUR GREATEST AND TRUEST FRIEND

- Our relationship with Christ will often dictate our relationship with others.
- “How is Jesus leading me to love this person?”
- **Our friendship with Jesus will help to cultivate and enjoy deep friendships with others.**
 - Jesus’ unconditional love for us empowers us to love others in the same way.
 - Jesus’ all-sufficient love enables us to love others generously, not selfishly or fearfully.
 - The sanctification of the Holy Spirit transforms us to be people who can genuinely love others in a Gospel-centered way.

⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 4, Ch. 4.

- Our friendships and relationships began with Jesus. When we reach the very end, Jesus remains as our Greatest and Truest Friend, and he will be our Friend for all eternity.

Romans 11:36: *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.*

IV. MISCELLANEOUS (BUT STILL VERY RELEVANT) TOPICS

- **The Practice of Encouragement**
 - Seeing and Celebrating Evidences of Grace
 - *Encouragement: How to See and Celebrate Evidences of Grace* by Jared Mellinger
- **Friendship with the Wrong Motivations**
 - When Christ is not at the center of our relationships
- **Friends Keep It Real... Lovingly**
 - Self-Vulnerability/Disclosure and Admonishment
 - Learning to receive correction with humility
- **Face-to-Face Interactions**
 - Fighting the temptation of convenience in relationships (“Rule of Two”)
- **Active Listeners**
 - Listening to understand, developing skills to empathize and help others feel cared for
- **Pray for Each Other and *WITH* Each Other**
 - Grounding our friendship in the most important commonality shared between us: Jesus
- **We Are Mere Mortals**
 - We can’t be close friends with everyone, and that’s by design (Jesus didn’t either)
 - We are prone to make mistakes. Let’s be prone to freely forgive.
- **“We’re Not Compatible”**
 - **John 15:12:** “This is my commandment, that you love one another **as I have loved you.**”
 - Jesus doesn’t provide any qualifiers or exceptions. We’re called to steward our relationships out of love and obedience.
 - How you foster friendship will look different with each person.
- **Missional Friendships**
 - The Great Commission: we love our enemies with the hope that they would become friends with us, and also with Christ.
 - 2 Cor. 5:18-21: “The Ministry of Reconciliation” – God entrusts us to introduce non-Christians to our greatest Friend.

- **It Takes Time**

- Friendships will build the fruit of the Spirit in your life. It'll have its ups and downs. Trust in the LORD to show grace through it all, and through this trust you'll start to see your relationships deepen and sweeten.