

The Christian Man

Friendship: Finding and Keeping Godly Friends

Rough Transcript

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So, like I said, our theme this morning is friendships, finding and keeping Godly friends. And as guys, we crave relationship, we crave friends. We don't do it the same way that, say, women do, we do it our own way. And I don't think there's any place better than you get the illustration of how guys do friendships, than what is commonly called a buddy movie. How many of you all have seen buddy movies. So, yell out a buddy movie that you've seen. Gladiator, is not a buddy movie, he's all by himself, dead at the end, okay. The Three Amigos is a buddy movie, right? One more, give me one more. Three Men and a Baby, you guys have not been in a movie theater in like 25 years. It's pathetic.

So, you're going to flunk this quiz, but let's do it anyway. Here we have the buddy movie quote challenge, right? I'm going to give you a quote, you see if you can figure out which buddy movie it's from. Here's the first one, "We're on a mission from God." The Blues Brothers, that was an easy one and three of you answered. I thought this was going to go so well. All right, The Blues Brothers. "Think you used enough dynamite there, Butch?" Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, all right, very good. "Ogres are like onions." Shrek, very good. It was Donkey talking to Shrek. Actually, Shrek said that to Donkey, know what Donkey's response was? "There's more like a parfait, you know with layers, right?" And he said "No, we're like onions, stinky."

"Boy, that escalated quickly." Anchorman, that's right. I had to get an Anchorman quote in here, somebody's going to write a letter about that one. All right, "I don't have friends, I have family." Fast and Furious, you know which one? The last one, right, Furious Seven. All right, "Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light." Somebody said Batman. The bat light I guess in the sky, no that's not it. Anyone? Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban, Dumbledore says that to a Harry Potter. You guys are like, oh yeah, my grandkids went to that movie. Okay, "Just keep swimming, just keep swimming." Dory, and what's the movie? Finding Nemo, that's right, it's Dory in finding Nemo.

"Don't get cocky kid." Star Wars, very good. And, "I made a promise, Mr Frodo a promise. Don't you leave him, Samwise Gamgee and I don't mean to, I don't mean to." The Lord of the Rings, very good. So there's your movie quote, any of you get all of them? Anybody get all of them? If you raise your hand, you're a liar, cause nobody answered the Harry Potter one. I don't know how you guys did watching this on the web, but there's your buddy movie. I was actually thinking of some buddy movies and I did much better than you guys did. I can't believe that nobody said Dumb and Dumber, the ultimate buddy movie, right? Starsky and Hutch was a buddy movie, Lethal Weapon, nobody said Lethal Weapon, right? And of course Men in Black is a buddy movie, right? Bad Boys, one of the greatest buddy movies out there, a little movie franchise there. Starsky and Hutch, very good.

This is how we're wired, guys are wired to have buddies, to have friends. But we want to go a little bit deeper than sort of the world's view of what buddies look like. We want to go down to the level of what does it really mean to have a Godly friend? How would it impact your life to have Godly friends? And so here's our outline for today, we're going to talk about why you need Godly friends. And then we're going to talk about having a 2:00 AM friend, and then finally, what does it look like to find friends in a small group?

WHY YOU NEED GODLY FRIENDS

So, let's talk about why you need Godly friends. Well, the first reason you need Godly friends is that Jesus made it central to the gospel. If you think about the way that Jesus did his ministry, he didn't walk around and just go on platforms and preach big messages to big crowds and then go on to the next thing. What did he do? He gathered a group of guys around him and he taught the truth of the gospel, always in the context of the relationships that he had with the disciples.

And some of the most deepest things that he said to his disciples about how to live life together, and how to live out the gospel, we're based on living life together. So John 13:35 he says, "By this they will know that you are my disciples." That you're really good speakers and your theology is perfect, that's what he said, right? No, by this they'll know you're my disciples, that you love one another. Imagine in the church today, if we were more concerned about loving one another than picking on each other about some point of theology, or some political belief or, where you're from or whatever these things are that we allow to divide us, instead what Jesus said is just love each other. That's how people are going to know you're my disciples.

Imagine the view that people would have of the church if we were known for loving each other. In John 15:12 and 13 he says, "Greater love has no man than this." Than to do what, lay down his life or another man. That's love. That's central to the way that Jesus talked about living the Christian life. So what is a Godly man? Now, some of you may have The Christian Man with you, if you're watching this you probably have the book there in front of you. So what I want to do is, I want to turn to pages 136 and 137, because in this book there's a list of attributes of a Godly friend that are all based on scripture. So I'm just going to read through this list and give you the scriptures that go with it. Now you're going to want to write down these scriptures cause it's going to help you answer one of the discussion questions. Not whole scripture, just the reference.

Godly friends make you stronger. Listen to this from Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, "Two are better than one. Because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls down and has no one to help him up. Also, if two lie down together, they'll keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves and accord of three strands is not quickly broken." So Godly friends will make you stronger. Godly friends love you no matter what.

Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all times and a brother is born of adversity", Proverbs 17:17. Godly friends are there when you need them, Proverbs 18:24, "One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Godly friends are there for you when you need them, Proverbs 18:24. Godly friends are faithful and trustworthy. Proverbs 20, verse 6 says, "Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find." Proverbs 27:6 talks about Godly friends hold each other accountable. "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." Proverbs 27:6.

Proverbs 27:9 talks about how Godly friends offer each other honest advice, "The pleasantness of friend springs from their heartfelt advice." Proverbs 27:17 talks about how we sharpen each other, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." I love this verse, we make it sound like sharpening is like this nice thing. Anybody ever watched something get sharpened on a whetstone? What happens when that stone is spinning, sparks right? So friends do that for each other, they're willing to experience the friction and the sparks to help each other become sharper. That's really the point of that verse. Godly friends restore each other. Galatians 6:1 says, "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the spirit should shun them and make fun of them and criticize them on Facebook." Galatians 6, right? No, "You who live by the spirit should restore that person gently, but watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted." And Galatians 6:2 says, "Godly friends carry each other's burdens. And in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ." So scripture is full of guidelines for the power, the benefit of having Godly friends, all these things that a Godly friend can do for you.

And if you think through that list, there's nothing on there that I don't want. I want guys who will love me and care for me and correct me and keep me pointed in the right direction. I want a guy that can look me in the eye and tell me something's wrong. I want a guy that will rejoice with me when things are going well and not envy me. And a guy that will pick me up when things are going wrong, and not make fun of me, not too much. A little bit of making fun is like a love language for guys, but not too much. So this is what Godly friendships can look like, this is the power of a Godly friendship. A great story that we see in the Bible about Godly friendships is found in John chapter 11. We see several friend groups, my kids have had talked about this phrase, friend groups. Have you heard this phrase? This friend group, I don't know, we'd probably call it a circle of friends back when I was a kid, but he has these friend groups. So he's got his disciples, that's a group of guys that he's with. And then he's got this family, Mary, Martha and Lazarus that he's friends with.

Now, Mary, Martha and Lazarus were good friends for Jesus. It's their house that he stays in during Passion Week and it says he stayed in Bethany and then he walked into Jerusalem each day and preached in the temple and raised enough trouble that he finally got arrested later on in that week. And so he loves Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They were probably successful, maybe ran a successful business and they supported Jesus. They obviously had money, Mary in the next chapter after this takes a whole thing of very expensive perfume and washes Jesus's feet with the perfume and her hair, do you remember that story? So she would have had a fair amount of money to even be able to do that. And so this is a family that Jesus was close to and Lazarus was the brother. And so they were, they were buddies, they were friends. So John, chapter 11 says this, "Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister, Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill."

And then over the next few verses, what you see is Jesus delays and he delays because Lazarus needs to die so that Jesus can come and raise him from the dead and show his deity, show his power. But it's not a fun experience for Jesus to go through. He's not happy about it. Now, they're in Bethany was just right outside of Jerusalem. If you look back in chapter 10 the way chapter 10 ends is, they were going to stone Jesus because he says the statement "I and the father are one," they accused him of blasphemy and they're about ready to stone him and he slips away. And they've gotten sort of away from town, to get out of trouble, and Jesus says, we're going back. And the disciples are like, no. Listen to this, Jesus says, "Let us go to Judea again". And in verse eight the disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you and you're going there again?" So the disciples are like watching out for their teacher. They're watching out for their brother, they don't want him to go and get hurt. And so Jesus

insists, he's like, no, we got to go, Lazarus is asleep. Disciples are like, well, he'll wake up. That's literally what they say, he'll wake up. Well, I don't think you understand Jesus says, he's dead and we're going.

And so Thomas, I love Thomas. Thomas gets a bad rap for being doubting Thomas, right? But Thomas is involved in two or three of the most iconic moments in Jesus's ministry, including this one. So Thomas, called the twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go that we may die with him." Or in the vernacular, well if he dies, we die. We're going, come on guys. And he rallies the troops, I would've expected Peter to say that, wouldn't you? But Thomas says that, I don't think Thomas doubted at all. I think Thomas was a loyal friend and he wasn't going to let Jesus go into danger by himself, this is what Godly friends do for each other. And then Jesus has this wonderful conversation with, with Martha. And in the course of the conversation, he says, "Do you believe that I'm the Messiah?" And she says, "Yes, I believe that you're the Messiah." And she says, "I believe that Lazarus is going to be resurrected in the next life." And Jesus says, "I'm the resurrection."

Then Mary comes out and she kind of shakes a finger at Jesus. She said, "If you'd been here, he wouldn't have died." He gets angry. He goes towards the tomb. And John 11 says he's angry, he's frustrated, he's aching for his friend who dies. This is not fun. And John 11:35 this verse that we all as kids thought oh, this is great, I can memorize a Bible verse, Jesus wept. It's really a deep verse, if you think about it. The God of the universe weeping over a dead friend. And then he raises Lazarus from the dead, and then he says to Lazarus's friends when he comes out, he's all bound up with the burial clothes. He says to his friends, unwrap him, set him free. It's a great metaphor, what your friends can do for you. Even as you seemingly come back from the dead after you make horrible mistakes, your friends can come around you and and unwrap you and set you free. That's what Godly friends do, that's why we all need Godly friends. So that's why we need godly friends. How do you find a good friend?

A 2:00AM FRIEND

I love this idea of having what we would call a 2:00 AM friend. So what's a 2:00 AM friend? The 2:00 AM friend is the guy that you call it two o'clock when something's gone wrong, you need bail money, your wife said the couch isn't far enough away from her. You know when things are really bad at two o'clock in the morning, who do you call? And if you don't have a guy that you can call, you don't have a 2:00 AM friend. It's a great metaphor for the kind of friends that we want to have. I've had several, 2:00 AM friends in my life and my first 2:00 AM, and is a 2:00 AM friend to this day, although he's not around, is my friend Doug. I grew up with Doug, I was from Boston, I was in Lexington, sort of the Winter Park of Boston. And he was from Somerville, sort of the Washington Shores of Boston. I was from a much higher income neighborhood, he was from a very working class, blue collar neighborhood.

We met at church and we were best friends and we're thick as thieves, we just did everything together. Fascinating thing, our dads died within a few months of each other this year. So you can imagine Doug and I just on the phone checking in with each other, making sure each other's okay. This is the kind of friend that got only guys can have, I don't think women can have friends like this, honestly. Doug and I will go two years without talking and then we'll call each other or I'll be in town and I'll call him and say, "Hey, can you, can you grab dinner?" And it's like we were together yesterday. I think guys had this great ability to have this connection that they maintain with friends.

About 10 years ago I found another 2:00 AM friend, I didn't even know I had him. My dad had a heart attack and so I was in the hospital in the cardiac surgery waiting room at Florida Hospital South here in Orlando. I turn around and a new friend that I only knew peripherally, our wives were friends that's the

old fashioned way of guys making friends, the husbands of your wife's friends. He walks in and just sat down beside me and we waited for hours together in the cardiac surgery waiting room for them to come out and tell me that my dad had had quadruple bypass and he was going to be okay. I didn't even know I had him and we just barely knew each other, but he heard that I had a need, and he heard that nobody was with me at the hospital and so he got in his car and he came over. That was the spark of a great friendship, a very deep friendship for several years. Our daughters are the same age. For several years we were in each other's lives, very deeply as our daughters grew up together in church. We were elders together for a time at our church and we were just great, great friends. But it started with him taking a step and showing himself to be that friend. Maybe you can be that friend for another guy and you can start a friendship like that.

And then my friend Brian, when I was in college, I was in a fraternity. I actually majored in psychology in college and got a degree in psychology, but I majored in fraternity. Brian was my best friend in college when I was the fraternity president, he was the vice president. I couldn't stand him. Brian was an economics major and I was a psychology major, he might as well been an engineer. We didn't think the same way. Brian talked very slowly and deliberately and I was sort of the face man. I was like, a mile a minute, let's get going, let's get it done. And we used to have these hilarious conversations early in our friendship where I would be talking to Brian about what we were going to do and Brian would say, "Well, that's a great idea Brett, let's talk through some of the ramifications of that course of action."

So about six months go by and all of a sudden I realize, I look around and Brian's my best friend. Like we do everything together, we ended up being roommates. And so finally one day I asked him, I said, "Hey, you remember when we were like just getting to know each other and you were the vice president of fraternity, and I was the president of fraternity?" And he just started laughing. He's like, "Yeah, I used to see how slow I could talk to you just to tick you off." That's what friendships are made of.

And Brian and I became best friends and Brian's death is one of the worst moments of my life. We were both in our early twenties when he passed away from an accident. To this day I think about him and some of you guys probably have friends like that, that have passed away and there's that hole that will always be there for my friend Brian. He touched a part of me that nobody else could touch and I miss him, I miss him greatly.

I had three, 2:00 AM friends, and I got another guy right now that's probably a 2:00 AM friend that I know I could call him at two o'clock in the morning and he'd come bail me out. He'd give me crap the whole way home, he'd come get me if I needed him. That what a 2:00 AM friend is. So how do you find 2:00 AM friends? Well I don't want to give you a formula, but I want to give you some of the things that I've noticed that seemed to develop a 2:00 AM friend. One is you have to spend time together. If you pop down to shared experiences, that's the best way to spend time together. You might go to like on a mission trip and you find that there's a guy that went on that mission trip with you, that you just become buds. Or you join a softball team or maybe it's a friend from work or maybe even a past job, that becomes a friend. And then over time you guys become close, close friends. So shared experiences over time. You have to have something in common.

This is my frustration sometimes with the churches, that they want to put you in a small group with a bunch of strangers that you've never met before and you're like, I don't like any of the things that these guys like. The only thing that we have in common is that we live within a three mile radius of each other. You know what I'm talking about? That's not always the best way, you need to look for guys with common interests. Why? Because if you have common interest, then you'll end up having shared

experiences. I talked to a guy he's like, "Oh yeah, my best buddy, we go fly fishing together all the time." I'm like, "Well tell me about that." He's like, "It's great. We put on these waders and we wade out into the river and he's like 200 yards up the river from me and I'm where I am and we're fly fishing." I'm like 200 yards away from each other, that's not doing it with him. He's like "Oh no, it's awesome."

Well it is, cause at the end of the day they're at lunch time, and at the end of the day they do get together and they talk about, I had a huge one on the hook and he got away, he was like this big, because that's what buddies do. Well, I had one that big too. Oh really? I think mine might've been this big then. That's what we do. And so having those shared experiences.

And then finally, I think this last one is the most important one, and that's just being faithful. Are you a faithful friend? You can wound a brother, you can tell him the truth, a hard truth, you can even screw up. If you're a faithful friend, you can get through those tough times, those hard truths or even making mistakes. And I got to tell you guys, I know guys that have blown up friendships over mistakes. And it was a mistake. It wasn't evil, it wasn't ill intent, it was just a mistake. A guy going through a rough time doing or saying something stupid. And I've seen guys just abandon each other over that. Don't do that. If you've got a great friend and he makes a mistake, then restore him, go after him, pursue him, when the time is right. But don't throw a friendship away over a lapse, over a dumb move. So those are your 2:00 AM friends. One of the places that you might find 2:00 AM friends would be in a small group.

A SMALL GROUP

I've had a couple of great small groups. I had great small groups and in high school, I sort of made friends there, but then in college I got in this great group of guys. I told already told you about it, it was my fraternity. So what did we do? We did all those things. We had affinity for something, we had shared experiences, we spent time together and we were faithful to each other. And so out of that group I developed my friend Brian and I had a couple of other guys in that group that were friends too. And the funny thing is if you looked at me and a couple of my friends or me and my friend Doug, or even me and my friend Dewayne, we don't look like we go together. But because of the shared experiences, because of our common faith, we're drawn together by having affinity for the same things and having those memories, those shared experiences that we can call on.

And so a small group can be a great place to find that. You guys know my story, it was a small group that saved my marriage. I'm in a business crisis, my wife is unhappy with me because I'm gone all the time. And it was a small group at church of guys that pulled me in and we read *The Man in the Mirror* before I knew anything about Pat. And as we went through that book together and we got real with each other and we had to get real, it took us a month or two, but finally we got real. And when we got real with each other, we became tight. We locked arms together and out of that group, I had a couple of guys that I knew I could call at two o'clock in the morning if I had a hard time. I knew they were going to tell me the truth. I knew they were going to spur me on to do good works. They were in spur me on to be the kind of man that I said I wanted to be. And so those were where I found those friends.

John 11 is another great example of this, that Jesus has this group of disciples. I'm going to Jerusalem, and they're like, they'll kill you, dude. And Thomas says, well, if you're going, we're going, we'll all die together. That's a group of friends doing that, a small group can be like that. Us here, we're a small group, your tables are small groups. Some of you may not have realized that, you're like, I'm not in a small group, I go to *The Man in the Mirror* Bible study. There's a small group of guys around the table, I hate to tell you, you're in a small group, congratulations. I know that there are some tables here where

you guys are contacting each other throughout the week. You're doing stuff together, you're taking care of each other. That's what it's supposed to be, that's what The man in the Mirror Bible study is supposed to be.

If you're doing this study online, hopefully you're doing it with a group of guys and you're living life together, you're not just getting together for an hour a week, but you're actually throughout the week figuring out ways to live life together. If you've ever wanted to know how to start a Bible study, start a men's group again in the same chapter in The Christian Man, go to page 144, it gives you a great pathway to follow to find guys, start a group, plan that first meeting and then keep your group going into the future.

And then why does small groups last? Here's what I've noticed about small groups that last, they do these three things. They bring value, in other words, you get something out of it. The guys love each other and it changes their lives. It brings value, they love each other and there's impact in their lives. Small groups that do this stay together. And so that's my prayer for you guys. So that brings us to our Big Idea then. So our Big Idea is very straight forward. **Find a friend or two, join a small group and live life together with a few brothers.** If you will do this, you will find your 2:00 AM friends, you will find those guys that will be there through thick and thin. You will find guys that fulfill all those attributes that we talked about in Proverbs and Galatians. You'll find Thomas level friends who are willing to die with you. And that's my prayer for all of us.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for this opportunity here on Friday mornings to come and be together with a small group of guys to talk about real things, to dive into your word together to figure out how to apply your truth into our lives, Lord. Father, I pray that at each table you would raise up Godly friendships. You would help men to love each other well, to impact each other's lives, Lord, to speak the truth to each other, in love. And Lord, I pray that for, for everyone at these tables, I pray that for everyone, Lord, that's watching this online, that you would bring around each of us, a group of men to live life with and 2:00 AM friends who will rescue us and restore us when we need it the most. In Jesus name we pray, amen.