

**What makes the best friendships? How can I be a better friend? What should I look for in a good friend?**

As always, our highest example of the perfection of human life is our Master, Jesus. Jesus was the best of the very best of friend to each of His group. They all believed in Him as the Son of God because of the way He loved them all as His friends. Let us take a look at what they said about His kind of friendship with them.

*161:2.3 His life association with us exemplifies the ideal of human friendship; only a divine being could possibly be such a human friend. He is the most truly unselfish person we have ever known. He is the friend even of sinners; he dares to love his enemies. He is very loyal to us. While he does not hesitate to reprove us, it is plain to all that he truly loves us. The better you know him, the more you will love him. You will be charmed by his unswerving devotion. Through all these years of our failure to comprehend his mission, he has been a faithful friend. While he makes no use of flattery, he does treat us all with equal kindness; he is invariably tender and compassionate. He has shared his life and everything else with us. We are a happy community; we share all things in common. We do not believe that a mere human could live such a blameless life under such trying circumstances. ~ Nathaniel and Thomas*

Jesus was unselfish in His daily life. He found great joy in meeting the needs of anyone He met. A child, a young boy, a woman at a well, a man in a tree or a grieving mother. He loved perfectly in every situation He encountered. Unlike Judas, the betrayer, Jesus was completely loyal to His friends. He was devoted to them in every possible way and when chastisement was needed He did it with kind, tender and compassionate. These are the qualities we all should look for in a friend. If you have such a friend in your life then consider yourself very blessed indeed. Yes.

**Loyalty, service of heart as a friend and for a friend, never is friendship a 'sacrifice'.**

*180:1.6 Keep in mind: It is loyalty, not sacrifice, that Jesus demands. The consciousness of sacrifice implies the absence of that wholehearted affection which would have made such a loving service a supreme joy. The idea of duty signifies that you are servant-minded and hence are missing the mighty thrill of doing your service as a friend and for a friend. The impulse of friendship transcends all convictions of duty, and the service of a friend for a friend can never be called a sacrifice. The Master has taught the apostles that they are the sons of God. He has called them brethren, and now, before he leaves, he calls them his friends.*

**Marriage is the next highest level of friendship potential.**

*160:2.6 Mutual self-expression and self-understanding is vital. Many noble human impulses die because there is no one to hear their expression. Truly, it is not good for people to be alone. Some degree of recognition and a certain amount of appreciation are essential to the development of human character. Without the genuine love of a home, no child can achieve the full development of normal character. Character is something more than mere mind and morals. Of all social relations calculated to develop character, the most effective and ideal is the affectionate and understanding friendship of man and woman in the mutual embrace of intelligent wedlock. Marriage, with its manifold relations, is best designed to draw forth those precious impulses and those higher motives which are indispensable to the development of a strong character. I do not hesitate thus to glorify family life, for your Master has wisely chosen the father-child relationship as the very cornerstone of this new gospel of the kingdom. And such a matchless community of relationship, man and woman in the fond embrace of the highest ideals of time, is so valuable and satisfying an experience that it is worth any price, any sacrifice, requisite for its possession.*

A good friend will seek to appreciate you often. They will not take you for granted or demean you. Trusting and sharing with a true friend brings character building and a great zest for life.

Friendship is sharing similar viewpoints, affinity in the things you both like to do and talk about. Friendship is laughter, understanding, patience and trust. The skill of being a good listener is a part of a loving friendship and this provides a safe and secure place to share our deeper thoughts and feelings.

**The enthusiasm for living.**

*160:2.8 Isolation tends to exhaust the energy charge of the soul. Association with one's fellows is essential to the renewal of the zest for life and is indispensable to the maintenance of the courage to fight those battles consequent upon the ascent to the higher levels of human living. Friendship enhances the joys and glorifies the triumphs of life. Loving and intimate human associations tend to rob suffering of its sorrow and hardship of much of its bitterness. The presence of a friend enhances all beauty and exalts every goodness. By intelligent symbols man is able to quicken and enlarge the appreciative capacities of his friends. One of the crowning glories of human friendship is this power and possibility of the mutual stimulation of the imagination. Great spiritual power is inherent in the consciousness of wholehearted devotion to a common cause, mutual loyalty to a cosmic Deity.*

The challenges of friendship help us to grow personally. No one is exactly the same – EVER. In our friendships we are stretched at times to push ourselves in ways that we never thought of before. Jesus challenged Nathaniel, a very intelligent man, to add some things and take away some things as well.

*192:2.10 Then said the Master to Nathaniel, "Nathaniel, do you serve me?" And the apostle answered, "Yes, Master, and with an undivided affection." Then said Jesus: "If, therefore, you serve me with a whole heart, make sure that you are devoted to the welfare of my brethren on earth with tireless affection. Admix friendship with your counsel and add love to your philosophy. Serve your fellow men even as I have served you. Be faithful to men as I have watched over you. Be less critical; expect less of some men and thereby lessen the extent of your disappointment. And when the work down here is over, you shall serve with me on high."*

Jesus knew that Nathaniel had some growing to do. But, see how lovingly He dealt with Nathaniel?! And, because Nathaniel knew that Jesus loved him so much it was easy to take His correction and suggestions. Jesus was devoted to Nathaniel's welfare. We can learn something from Jesus here. Let us pray this week and ask for our indwelling Paradise Father to show us how to love more, become less critical and try to look for the good in others. Not to just internally recognize this but to use our voice, our words, and speak these things to each other.

**The many blessings of friendship bring sustaining life energies through more love. Here is our litmus test.**

*156:5.15 As the days pass, every true believer becomes more skillful in alluring his fellows into the love of eternal truth. Are you more resourceful in revealing goodness to humanity today than you were yesterday? Are you a better righteousness recommend-er this year than you were last year? Are you becoming increasingly artistic in your technique of leading hungry souls into the spiritual kingdom?*

**From our beloved Teacher regarding beauty in our associations with one another.**

True beauty is like fuel for everyday living – it can take the sharp edges off of the darkness that you experience. Identifying real beauty in everyday living draws forth meanings and values from the darkness. One who can see beauty in everything is a light in the darkened world.

What is beauty? Beauty is experiencing those mortal moments that bring you closer to God. Beauty is the hope that love overcomes hate, good overcomes evil, and light overcomes darkness. When you have become burdened by the world's pressures and feel depressed and without liberty, then you have gone too long without divine beauty. Beauty is a redirecting of focus. It is that spirit-energy that refuels you to go beyond coping with your circumstances, to actually being challenged by them.

Where do you find this energy source? Ask yourselves: "What is it that makes me remember God? "What are those things that refocus my attention from darkness to light? "What are those things that make me exclaim – there is a God, and He is with all power and perfection!"

Certainly, there is beauty in nature that brings a calmness to the mind and leads us to contemplate the intricate designs found within nature. We find beauty in science and how all living things have a perfect design. We find beauty in truth, and that creates light in our unknowingness. To be with anything less than truth can create fear in the imaginings of our minds. I do believe our best source of beauty lies within our association with each other. Small kindnesses done does cause us all to refocus our minds back on Father's plan and purpose, Father's love and caring.

How beautiful it is to put all your effort into raising a child, and then see that child live a loving and conscientious life. To see that child care for others and have passion to create good in the world – yes, that is real beauty. To become involved in a stranger's life, to assist without thought for one's own welfare, is inner-spirit beauty. To assist your fellows without thoughts of self-aggrandizement or receiving credit, is beauty; and this beauty you create is helping others to refocus their thoughts back on Father. A mind stayed on God is the strongest link in a chain of good.

We know in this mortal life we must find the beauty in those places where there may appear to be none. Beauty is a soul fuel; it is hope for the hopeless, light in the darkness, encouragement for the discouraged; it is to know that with God, all things are possible. To refuel with beauty reminds you of the awesome Caretakers that know everything about you, who do all they can to assist you and are never failing in their love for you.

This week, find those things which redirect your focus back on to Father. When the world seems to be too much, find your source of beauty. While seemingly negative things might deplete your being of energy, note how divine beauty restores and refreshes your outlook. What can you do to be a source of beauty? How can you live so that your fellows may redirect their focus back to Father?

If you have prepared a written Lovenote [as above referred to as 'intelligent symbols to quicken and enlarge' your friendship and soul growth] to your friend, now is our time to speak these words of friendship and love. Consider giving this Lovenote to them as a keepsake of this special night. After this let us move to the snack time to continue our celebration.

[Snacks, previously made together with friends, are shared with recipe cards brought to share and given to the group to enjoy.]

**To true lasting and loyal friendships ~ the group at God Discovered**

Next week we will discuss **Lucifer Rebellion: Then and Now** Week #40