

Christian Friendship

A friend is a person you know well and regard with affection and trust

Synonyms: *accomplice, acquaintance, admirer, advocate, ally, associate, confidant.*

Antonyms: *adversary, antagonist, competitor, enemy, foe, stranger, rival.*

Acquaintance: *associate, colleague or social contact – someone you have met and maybe share some common interests, but have no real commitment to them.*

Fellowship: Fellowship (*koinonia*) means ‘common’. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.^{2Cor.13:14} Fellowship is also translated in the Bible as *contribution*,^{Rom.15:26} *participation*^{1Cor.10:16} and *partnership*.^{Phil.1:4-5}

Fellowship is deeper than acquaintanceship and involves a sharing together in some common venture or values. *James and John... Simon's [fishing] partners (koinonos).*^{Lk.5:10}

Christian fellowship is a spiritual relationship based on common spiritual values: **we share the same Father, Saviour, Spirit, Scriptures and destination** – we are a spiritual Family. Thus when Christian strangers meet they can immediately have fellowship due to their common spiritual heritage.^{Phil.1:4-5; 1Cor.10:16; Acts 2:42; 2Cor.13:14}

Jesus introduced a new level of friendship as a command.^{Jn.13:34-35}

This friendship is built on fellowship but develops into a deeper relationship involving both our spirit and our soul. Thus it goes further than just spiritual fellowship (*fellowship of the spirit*) or an acquaintance (*a soul connection*) and should be taken to the ultimate.^{Jn.15:13}

Although there is some overlapping of the definitions of spirit, soul and flesh, it is generally accepted that we are a spirit, we have a soul and we live in a body. Our spirit is our God conscious part and our soul is our personality (including emotions).^{1Thes.5:23} Flesh sometimes refers to the body but mostly to the natural or temporal (non-eternal) life and its influence. (NIV translates “flesh” as “sinful nature”)^{Rom.7:5;7:18; 8:8-9;13:14}

Friends are committed to one another.^{Jn.5:14} This commitment is like a “covenant” which puts us under an obligation. *It was also called Mizpah because he said, May the Lord keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other.*^{Gen.31:44-49} *My companion attacks his friends; he violates his covenant.*^{P.s.55:20}

Friendship involves a heart (soul) commitment.^{Ruth 1:16-18;4:15}

Friends are “dear” – they are loved.^{Phile.1:1; 1Pet.4:12; 2Pet.3:1}

We have an obligation to love others: *Be under obligation to no one—the only obligation you have is to love one another.*^{Rom.13:8} Under the New Covenant, we are not bound by “laws” where we have to obey or are punished but we are bound by our indebtedness to God for His grace — we have an obligation.^{Rom.8:12}

Marriage should be the closest of all friendship as this represents Christ & the Church.^{Eph.5:25-32} *You've captured my heart, dear friend. You looked at me, and I fell in love. One look my way and I was hopelessly in love!*^{SofS.4:9} In marriage, the husband and wife become one flesh (*that is, united in purpose and desire*).^{Mal.2:14-15} So also true friendship has a deep unity of the soul: *the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.*^{1Sam.18:1}

Friendship has no social or racial barriers: *The ‘colour line’ was washed away by the blood.*^{Bartleman, Azusa Street} Our example Jesus, is described as *a friend of tax collectors and sinners.*^{Lk.7:34}

Friendship produces credit: Credit is a resource that one can draw on in times of need.^{Jas.2:23; Phil.4:17-18} People may call in their “*credit*” at inconvenient moments but true friendship will gladly respond. Note in Luke 11 there are 2 types of friendship. One friend calls in his “*credit*” by turning up at midnight un-announced and un-expected but is welcomed. The other friend is asked to lend some bread but refuses to “*credit*” the friendship. Albeit, he gives in because of the boldness but not because of the friendship!^{Luke 11:5-8;16:9}

There is strength in friendship: *If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no-one to help him up! ...By yourself you're unprotected. With a friend you can face the worst. Can you round up a third? A three-stranded rope isn't easily snapped.*^{Eccles.4:10-12}

Friends think the best of us: Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation.^{Heb.6:9-10}

There is wisdom in Friendship.^{2Sam.16:17-20} *Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses. ...Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.*^{Prov.27:6-9}

Friends stand together.^{Jn.13:37;15:18-2;} *Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.*^{Phil.4:14}

Friends should be chosen carefully: *A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray ... Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered.*^{Prov.12:26;22:24} *Bad company corrupts good character.*^{1Cor.15:33} *Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*^{Jas.4:4-5}

Friends see us through adversity: *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*^{Prov.17:17} *Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father, and do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you— better a neighbour nearby than a brother far away.*^{Prov.27:10} *For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend; Lest he forsake the fear of the Almighty.*^{Job 6:14}

Friends are friendly: *An unfriendly man pursues selfish ends; he defies all sound judgment. [A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment.*^{NKJV } Prov.18:1}

We can be different but should not be divisive.^{1Cor.1:10;11:18-19}

You cannot win people by preaching against their Church or Pastor... If you get to preaching against Churches you will find that the sweet Spirit of Christ... is lacking and a harsh judging spirit takes place. The Churches are not to be blamed for divisions. People were hunting for light. They built up denominations because they did not know a better way. When people run out of the love of God they get to preaching dress and meats and doctrine of men and preaching against Churches. All these denominations are our brethren... So let us speak peace and not confusion... The moment we feel we have all the truth or more than anyone else, we will drop.^{William Seymore Apostolic Faith January 1907}

Believers should be able to disagree a million miles on theology but if they ever came to the place where they couldn't embrace one another as brothers then they should feel 'backslid'. God did not put his endorsement on a particular Church but he revealed that the pure in heart would see God. Let the fellow believe whatever he wants about it. These things don't matter very much anyhow. Be brothers and have fellowship with one another.^{William Branham}

A friend is a person you know well and regard with affection and trust: *You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*^{Jn.15:14-15}

Friends are not irreplaceable – others can take their place: ^{Jn.14:16; 15:26}

Friends communicate – they talk about each other and to each other. ^{Jn.15:26-27; Ex.33:11; Job 16:20-22} *I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace to you. The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name.* ^{3Jn.1:14}

Friends don't speak against each other. *Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD? Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right... Those who refuse to gossip or harm their neighbours or speak evil of their friends.* ^{Ps.15:1-3}

Friendship is tried and tested. Time spent together in gladness and sadness, joys and sorrows, pleasures and pain, hardships and happiness, establishes true friendship. ^{Jn.16:22; Prov.18:24; Lk.15:6-9; Mk.14:33-34}

Friends sometimes let you down but God sustains us. *Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.* ^{Ps.41:9}

Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend deserts him. ^{Prov.19:4} *You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.* ^{Lk.21:16} *Praise be to the Lord, to God our Saviour, who daily bears our burdens.* ^{Ps.68:19}

Friends protect. *While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me* ^{Jn.17:11-12} *If you are looking for me, then let these men go.* ^{Jn.18:8}

Friends enjoy spiritual and social fellowship. ^{Jn.17:24; Lk.24:15-32; Ps.55:12-14; 119:6;}

He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend ^{Prov.22:11}

Friends care. ^{Jn.19:26-27; Ps.15:3; Acts 27:3} *and permit his friends to take care of his needs.* ^{Acts 24:23}

Jesus had levels of fellowship

Acquaintances: Crowds (1000's). No commitment. ^{Matt.13:1-11}

Colleagues: Followers (100's). Commitment to work with Jesus. ^{Lk.10:1}

Friends: Disciples (10's). They spent time together. ^{Mk.3:14; 6:30}

Close friends: Intimates (3). Jesus involved them. ^{Mk.5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33}

David also had levels of fellowship. 100's. ^{1Sam.22:2; 30:9} **10's.** ^{2Sam.23:24-39}

3's. ^{2Sam.23:17-19; 22-23} (Note that although there are lists of people, the numbers are not precise i.e. the 400 became 600, the 30 became 37 and the 3 became 4).

Friendship is a “dialogue” and must be reciprocated.

Friendship is established through shared experiences.

Friendship will develop naturally when we are friendly.

Friendship cannot be bought but will leave you with credit.

Friendship is based on mutual trust and has no hidden agenda.

“True friends remain your friends even after they have got to know you well!”