

Friendship Chapter 11 (Dirty)

Questions for discussion

1. How do you pick your friends?

How many friends do you have? Do you have different classes of friends? I know people who had certain friends. Those relationships deepened or fell apart. How strong are your friendships? It comes back to making friendships a priority. Is it important that you're a friend with yourself? Do you cultivate deep friendships? So many of us live lives rather alone. Deep friendships are rare. I think it's because strong friendships are rare.

"I have heard people say that those around them are assets. I had a friend that called people outside his religion "chums" but not true friends. Really? Is that what friendship is all about. A collection of people we categorize into chums, assets, and real friends. I think that friendship is far, far deeper than that. To say my wife and Jesus are friends of mine seems odd. Should they be just friends? The religious man snaps quickly to point out Jesus is the best friend. I know others who would say it's a spouse or a pet is. How do we define friendship?" Chapter 11, p, 2

2. What will you sacrifice to have a friend?

I have sacrificed myself to have a marriage. I have kept friends who bash me. Years ago, I was taught that we compromise our own interests for others. That is so wrong. Sacrificing yourself for others is nice and noble. The problem arises when we don't know there are two sides. One side says it's good to do things for others. Seeing other people thrive is a great thing to witness. The other side says we neglect, ignore, and alienate our own lives for others. Keeping friends happy at the expense of our soul is a terrible thing. We need to thrive too. Good friends want you to thrive also.

"But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved. -James 1:14-16

People roll their eyes with Bible talk, yet the Bible has some really good wisdom. If you don't like James above then check out Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:33 "Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good character." This is that Duh moment. Well if it was that easy then why do we insist on being in the company of those who bash us? The abusers that keep us down? Somehow, we have decided in our hearts and minds that we must have their love at all costs? Even the cost of our soul. Good people that get caught or killed in association with bad people are foolishly stupid. What kind of an idiot would put themselves in harm's way for others, especially bad others? The words foolish, stupid,

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and idiot seems harsh? It's that simple really, Forrest Gump said stupid is what stupid does. Yet, friendships are also very complicated." Chapter 11, p, 4

3. We were made for good friendships

I feel we were trained to have compromise friendships. It's about toleration rather than admiration. People get used to abusive relationships. We begin to pick friends that bash and expect results. This way of thinking seeps into family, marriage, and eventually our children. The circle of training us to be tolerant will be our undoing. I believe counselling is an institution because we don't know how to pick good friendships. What we need to understand is good friendships help us thrive. Bad relationships don't.

"We need to live good lives. There should be a need to be happy much of the time. There is always time for sadness and pain, but happy is where it's at. Do you deserve to be happy? I don't think it's a right but we do deserve to be happy. God did not create this world to be sad. He said it was very good. He liked what he made. God brought animals to Adam so that he might not be alone. We were made for friendships. Further to that, we were made for good friendships." Chapter 11, p, 6

4. Are friendships fate?

People pick bad friends and ensuing trouble comes. People pick bad relationships and divorce, abuse, and stale living ensues. I don't want to totally blame us for the friends we keep. We meet people we like. We are trained to tolerate in the name of love. The problem is that abuse and some forms of toleration are not love. Fate can look good. We keep bumping into some types people. Is it fate or is it our inability to make discerning choices in friends?

"Is it fate that we end up friends? I totally believe that's part of it with all my heart. I had heard about this young woman from a friend. He said she is nice but he was also unsure about her. A few more times I heard about this girl from several other people. Then I met that woman one day at a public event. I was running the show and I bumped into this girl six times during the day. At the end of the show my son told me that this girl wants to talk to me. We talked briefly and I suddenly could see her. What was going on? This seemed strange and weird. I guess I clued in all of a sudden. The next night I gave a speech and who do you guess was in the front row? Fate was in the front row. We've been married 13 years now." Chapter 11, p, 9

5. Is true friendship rare?

How many close friends do you have? They say most people have between 1-3 true friends. That leaves a ton of people on the peripheral of your life. I don't think we can have 20 strong friendships. People are way too individual and different. It might be better to know what a strong relationship looks like. Concentrate on a few to make them magical. It's possible we need to reinvent how we look at friendships. It begins with us. Treat yourself as your best friend and you will know what a good friend looks like. You will also know how you prefer to be treated.

"We desire to say vows. We are willing to live with that person for life. But, and that is a big butt. There are few couples that stay together for 50 years. It's rare because true friendship is rare. True respect is rare. We are creeped out around others by the things they say and do. Who really accepts people for who they are. I think I have tried hard to accept others as they truly present themselves. Yet, the neighbors two doors down are the exception. The pastor that let his church run amuck is the exception. My ex-wife might even be the exception. There are things we don't love about others. When those things come up what do we do? We look the other way. We give a false smile. We decide to avoid their company. That is human nature and that is real. It's also the reason I called this book dirty. Friendships are dirty business." Chapter 11, p, 13

6. Be careful picking friends

Our downfall begins with us. We are willing to be treated badly just to have family and friends. In turn, we pick less than stellar friendships. Abuse runs amuck when we put the theory of love first. This theory goes that if we love and do life in the name of love, things will go well. Most of the time we are just allowing abuse to fester. In the end, we are left feeling dirty and neglected. Be careful in your friendships. You might lose you in the process.

"So, where does that leave us with friends? The lesson learned is painful. Picking good friends will protect our self-esteem and hearts. Picking good friends will build a tough wall against our enemies. We need good friends more than we know. Finally, we need to know what makes up a good friend. That begins within ourselves. We need to value who we are. It must be important to know what we like and dislike. Picking friends that challenge us to be better people is paramount. That will only happen if we love and know ourselves deeply. So, the last chapter is called searching. It's time to search for a stronger you that does not believe you are dirty." Chapter 11, p, 16