

“Dirty”

Chapter 11: Friends

A true friend is someone who has touched your heart and will stay there. Someone you care for, who cares for you. Someone you can do the stupidest things around and always be forgiven. Someone you'll instantly remember in ten years because they are in your heart and not just your mind. They have the ability to change you, even if they don't. They will be etched in your memories forever.

-Urban Dictionary

You're going to love this chapter. Ok, to be fair I'm going to love this chapter, but I hope you do too. I feel like singing *That's what friends are for* by Dionne Warwick. The other side of me wants to sing *we're not gonna take it* by Twisted Sister. Either way we have an opinion on friendships. These people that we call friends come from familiar places like family, school, and playgrounds. They are with us in our finest moments, and hugging us in our weakest. They are our friends.

Another view point has me asking you *why do you think I'm your friend?* Is it my looks? Is it my money? Is it the other friends I have? Why do you want to spend time with me? I want to explore those questions. It's simple: if we like feeling beat down and dirty, then spend time with your enemies, not your friends. Those around us that we consider friends should not make us feel unworthy, beaten, or dirty. The problem is that we tend to keep close to those who bash us and not seek out those who would love us. I swear we are an odd species.

I saw a post the other day that said something like:

I ignore your texts, I blocked your calls, and I looked the other way when you tried to talk to me, yet I really need those friends that never give up on me when I gave up on them.

I like that statement. Isn't that the true definition of friendship? We need our friends, but at other times there is a need to be left alone. Yet, there is something sad about being without

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friends. Valuing friendship should be a top priority. I just read this cute quote *Don't let the blustery days whisk your dear friends away*. Keep those close to you, very close. You never know when you might need them or they need you. So when someone seems too close or overly interested in your life, they may seem annoying, but they are annoying friends, not annoying enemies.

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?

I have a Jack Russel Terrier. He is my friend. When I come home he greets me by barking (a lot). Is he happy or angry to see me? Well no, he wants his welcome home treat. I always say sarcastically as he runs off with a treat in mouth *man's best friend*. Really, I'm dog's best friend with a treat.

There are people who look like their dog. Why is that? I wonder if we pick pets that are like us. Geesh, half the time they even look like us. Maybe they are man's and woman's best friend. Yet, my dog is no less my friend than my wife or Jesus. On what basis do we rate friendship? I don't call you friend based on degrees. Should I?

There are several things I like about my wife. There are several things I do not like. It's like *Go Dog Go* by Dr. Seuss. The male dog casts his eyes upon the fair female dog. She is wearing several different hats throughout the story. She always says to him *do you like my hat?*

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He always replies *I do not*. Is that the making of a friendship? In the end, he loves her hat and she loves that he loves her hat. Ahhh romance! Friendship is more than a hat, isn't it?

Why bother with friendship. It always seems so complicated. I think that this book *Dirty* helps solve the friendship dilemma. It digs deep into our soul. Who are your friends? I have read that you are known by the friends you hold. You would not hang out with those that you hate, would you? Of course not, it's about picking those around you that you like. I guess we can't pick our relatives. Are they friends too? I guess that is not always true. That's sad, we need family. Friendship is part of our genetic DNA.

Deservedly or not we worship some people we call friends. When they don't reciprocate those feelings, we can feel dirty or lower than them. We might wish we could knock them off their pedestal I certainly can put myself on a pedestal. Yet, I really can't knock myself off of it. That's left up to others. The trouble is this. We put people on pedestals. For better or worse we raise people up. There are those who seem to spend their lives devoted to knocking us off.

I read an article by Joseph Stromberg about friendships. He pointed out that there is a strong correlation between the number of choices we have in picking friends and the strength of those relationships. What he means is that in a big school there are many choices of friends. We seem to choose specific types. We can be picky in how we chose our friends in a big school. Within a school half the size, we might have to settle just to have a friend. There's not much to choose from. What I like is the friendship pursuit. No matter the place or size, we seek friends. We will even settle for less just to have one.

There was another article by the BBC's Jason G Goldman that questioned whether we pick friends by traits or genes. His argument explored the possibility that our genes seek out other “like” genes to preserve the gene type. Oh, I like that. It seems a stretch but fun. Yet, it

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seems that we do tend to pick other peas from the same pod. My goodness, all the twins I know hang out together. I feel familiarity with my family. I may dislike some but for the most part I'm attracted to them as family. I like certain types. Is that just the genes talking?

Why do abused wives continually try, again and again, to solve their marriage? Why do men bring flowers to an abusive wife? Why do we hang out with the bad crowd? I have heard time and again of so called good people dying in the company of bad people. The statement is always that they were good but they hung out with the wrong crowd. Well it was not the wrong crowd in someone's mind. That abusive husband still attracts women. Men still adore a nagging wife. Do we love bad relationships?

I feel that often, people find themselves in jail or in a grave situation for the wrong reasons. There are some truly good people around us, yet, they put themselves in very bad situations. Our self-esteem takes a hit in an abusive relationship. We want to feel needed. Why is it then that we put ourselves in harm's way just to be loved? Bad people don't love. They treat you as an asset. The trouble comes when the asset becomes a burden. Then the burden turns to hate. The hate turns to abuse. Yet, the good people try and love abusers even if they feel dirty.

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?

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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, and idiot seems harsh? It’s that simple really, Forrest Gump said *stupid is what stupid does*. Yet, friendships are also very complicated.

Now, now don’t go all Jesus on me. There are instances when you would put yourself in harm’s way for a loved one. I get that. Yet, the only loved one in harm’s way in a bad relationship is you. The point of harm’s way is to sacrifice or rescue. In the company of bad people who are you helping? I have heard stories of pastors refusing to marry people that are not of the same belief. Time and again these people ignore the preacher and marry who they want. Far too often, down the road, these people are divorced. They thought they could turn or save the unbelieving spouse. The marriage ends in a burning dumpster fire of regret and shame. Then we find ourselves, thinking we’re a failure by taking responsibility for not saving the loved one. That’s all that will remain from a dumpster fire relationship. It’s noble but a foolishly stupid act of chivalry that rarely works.

We’re not Jesus but we are someone. That someone needs to know him or herself well to be a good friend to anyone. It’s better to know yourself and not sacrifice yourself to have good friendships. What has knowing yourself got to do with friendships? This is the complicated part. What do you like to eat? What makes your day? Are there movies and music you like. Some people get into friendships based on commonalities. They eat the same meals. You only watch the same shows. It’s fine to watch some of the same stuff, but not all the time.

A strong “you” that desires to do your things is paramount. It’s not selfish. Of course, you compromise, yet your desires need to be met too. If your friends or relationships don’t take an interest in your stuff then there is something wrong. To know “you” means that you recognize

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your desires. You have opinions. People need that from you. We should push ourselves and others to be all that we can be. Be an individual and in a relationship. That is a healthy life.

To know friendship is to love yourself first. I have already mentioned this in other chapters but it bears repeating. If you're willing to sacrifice yourself, your character, and your morals to have the love of another; you're in deep doo, doo. Bad company corrupts good character. It does every time. We seem to think Jesus put himself in harm's way to save us. I look at it more like he died as a sacrifice for a reason. To be the payment God required for all sin. That is heroic, noble, chivalry, and a host of other platitudes. He did not die so that we would love him more. If that were the case then why do so many people still not love him or his actions.

Knowing you, loving you, and nurturing you is so important. A person must know themselves deeply. To pick good friends means you know what's good for you and definitely what's not good for you. Secondly, protecting yourself from bad company will only happen if you value yourself. Then, knowing good friends comes easy So, ABBA was right in singing *Knowing me, knowing you It's the best I can do.*

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.

I want solutions to some of our feelings. I will offer you a way past feeling dirty. Yet, we must see that it begins with us. We chose to put ourselves in harm's way with the friends we keep. Do you put yourself in harm's way just to have someone? It seems noble but isn't that selfish. Isn't that prideful. What you're actually saying is *I must have them to make me happy.*

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There is the key. “I” must and “me” happy. Yet, I can tell you from experience I lost myself in the process. I lost my kids, my parents, some friends, and a ton of self-esteem trying to have her at all costs. I am writing about feeling dirty in the presence of others because I survived that relationship dumpster fire.

So, let’s consider our choices in friends. They make us different. It can be in a good or bad way. We also make friends better or worse. I knew a pastor that I liked very much. He was a nice man. His senior pastor was a nice man too. This senior pastor hired another man who within himself was a good man too. Yet, the three of them together were a disaster for the church. In the end, only the senior pastor remained. They did not make each other better. I don’t think any of them are great now solely because of the disaster it wrought. Why did it go wrong?

I took several classes on creating a church. Each class talked about bad mixes within leadership. The downfall of many is picking likeminded people. What happens with likeminded people is that there is no one to grind against you. The downfall of many is also picking your opposite. What? Aren’t I contradicting myself? No, my point is that you need people in your life that believe what you believe. We also need people to be of different character. My wife and I are a great example. We believe many of the same things, yet we are different. We challenge each other to see the others point of view. We live to be better people for each other. We challenge each other to be individuals too. She has helped me excel at who I am and also changed me to see the world through different eyes. That is similar and different all rolled into one.

Back the three pastors. Someone rolled their eyes and called them the three amigos’. That was not a compliment. Their history is one of change, disappointment, and the destruction of a church. There have been many companies that have crumbled because of poor decisions. I

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mention the three amigos because of the legacy left between friends. Many of their decisions cost the church. A good marriage or friendship will leave a legacy. It’s either one of love and admiration or it becomes a dumpster fire. A bad one will affect everything within its influence. Picking good friends or co-workers is critical to your view on life and the view others will have of you.

I just want us to be mindful of friendships. Common ground is good. Healthy differences are good too. Pick friends that love people. The three-amigo’s felt that thinking the same would bring unity and peace. Compromise, compassion, and growth come from differences. Being able to work with people regardless of differences is the key. Being friends is hard enough. We are all different. We need training and practice with people to know what we like and do not like in friendships.

Choose your friends carefully. Your enemies will choose you.

- Yasser Arafat

Do we choose them. Do we choose our friends? I mentioned earlier that some believe it’s fate while others think our genes choose our friends. I am a strong believer in three ways we choose friends. I just want to point out that discovering how we choose friends is a dangerous road. Good friends can be similar or opposites. They can look like us or not at all. There may be odd things that bind friendships together. Picking people with a formula is not a good idea. I think friendship should come naturally. Yet, understanding friendship traits will help you chose your friends wisely.

We need friends. John Donne said *no man is an island*. I could also say be careful what you wish for. Some friends are good for us while others become toxic. Half the time it’s us that are the problem. We tend to spend too much time making sure our friendships are well. We also

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avoid people far too much. There needs to be a healthy balance between our own life and the lives of our friends. So, let’s talk about three ways we pick 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.

Have you heard stories of people getting on a plane that crashed? Some switched flights while others were late and missed it. Was it fate? Now to be fair I am not really into fate as a lock. My first wife was my high school sweetheart. We broke up after grade twelve. I was heartbroken but I felt it was destiny. A year and a half later by chance we met again. The rest was history. I believed that if she left then it was meant to be. If she returned it was fate. If that was truly fate then why 11 years of a rocky marriage? Why a divorce? I think it’s because fate is fun and interesting but it’s what you do with what’s given that’s important. It might have been fate to meet and not fate to get married. I don’t think I understood that at the time.

I look at fate this way. In Genesis 4 God is having relationship troubles with Cain. There is just something wrong. God says to Cain right before he murders his brother:

So, Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?”

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And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

What does all this have to do with friendship and feeling dirty? I’m glad you brought it up. Inside our heart, we make up our mind. I know, that seems weird. Hear me out. We paint a picture of love. We have an idea of what we like. We have a view on sex or being treated fairly. People have expectations of others. Jesus says in Matthew 15:18 **“But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them.”** We assume a lot. A person treats us badly and we assume they are mean. We give of ourselves and people assume we can be used. Perception is nasty business. We decide a great many things in our hearts without a shred of proof or truth. Yet out of our heart comes words, actions, and poor decisions.

Genesis 4 has the key. We get trapped in bad friendships because of our own perception. We accept truth about ourselves and others without any bias. Yet, we believe it. God says in Genesis 4 that we must master sin because it’s crouching at our door. Read it again “master it.” What I’m saying is that we are responsible for our actions. Our actions come from bad reports that we accept in our hearts as truth. So, the mouth says what the heart thinks. We say sorry to an abuser because we were committed to love. We abuse love ones because they don’t fulfill what we desire. Yes, desire in the heart. So, this brings me all the way back to fate. We must master our perception of fate.

It’s the tale of two wives. My first wife was fate because she came back. Yet, sin was crouching at my door. I was willing to put up with abuse to have her. I let my concept of love and fate rule my heart and eventually my mind. I had no master over what was truly good for me. I didn’t care because I wanted her.

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Fate drove my second wife to me. Again, a relationship was crouching at my door. Oh, but I had learned. We did not have sex. We talked and talked and talked. I let it play itself out. I believe our marriage works because we prefer to be real. There are no masks and false fishbowls. Yes, sin was severely lurking at my door with my second chance at marriage. There were two other girls before my second wife I could have married. I decided no, they were not the one. That was hard because they were top notch women, but mastering friendships means you need to be weary of fate.

The Second thing about friendships is connective energy. I read a story in a Christian leadership book on working relationships. If your attracted to someone on staff who is the opposite sex, run. If you can feel a connection with someone who is not yours then put separation between you. Preferably, stay away from them altogether. I totally agree. I have met a few women that connected with me in a strange way. We just knew we had chemistry. Was it the genes talking? Who knows. Yet, there was a connection and we knew it. That is most certainly sin lurking at your door and bed. In essence it is not a bad thing. We should find people attractive. Yet, it can lead to bad things as it did with Sampson and Delila, David and Bathsheba, and Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinski. We must master it.

Again, it comes back to you. Know yourself. Know your limits. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Picking friends based on connective energy is good but it’s dangerous too. Partners in crime share passion for crime. Adultery comes from many things and connective energy is a big one. you can learn to say “no” if you have mastered “you.”

It’s about misreading fate or energy. We perceive they are destiny or good things. Most of the time they are really bad. The wife and I kid all the time that when we see a dog twice or a commercial for a cruise three times it’s calling us to a destiny. Do you know how many times

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that happens? We would be buying and doing many things if we treated life that way. We must master how we perceive fate and connective energy.

My wife has the ability to know good and bad energy. She has warned me about people and places. She can feel things like a premonition. Is she avoiding a bad fate? I think it's about recognizing the difference between good and bad energy. I said that the three pastors were good men. Yet, together they created bad energy. Friendships are forged by many things. Sometimes it's fate. Sometimes we think alike. Yet, energy, when mixed becomes something good or bad. To master our feelings on energy will go a long way. I think energy comes from the heart. I believe that God knew Cain. Yet, I bet he could feel Caine too. Be wary of your feelings on vibes and energy.

Thirdly, there is something else lurking in our friendships. Something else similar to desire, depression, loneliness, and other feelings like that. We meet people who have addictions, social problems, and quirks. These things are evident but also elusive in our lives. They hide behind masks. They are not presented in our fishbowls. To master yourself is to master good friendships. To know what is good for you; know what is bad for you. Master these elusive things by desiring to see behind the masks and beyond the fishbowls. To want that special person is one thing. Ignoring the warning signs is another.

I could go on and on about the warning signs. The baggage people carry. Yet, theirs is not truly the issue. Are you a master at knowing what baggage is good for you and what is not? I recently talked to a fellow who tried to date a girl with similar interests. The issue was this. Yes they loved playing pool together. She liked country music, spicy food, and hiking. My friend didn't like any of these things. To make matters worse they had dated for a while some time ago. They both wondered if fate was calling in a second meeting. He thankfully realized that they

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weren't compatible then and they still are not now. They are just friends playing pool. His desire for a relationship almost got the best of him.

It's important to choose your friends wisely. Friendships can be tricky. When is it personal and when does it become more? Be mindful of connective energy. I bet many bad adultery relationships were good friends but they thought it was more. Again, knowing you will save some of those bad decisions. I have tried to be friends with a few guys over the years. Most of the time we became passing friends and nothing more. I have a ton of female friends. Yet, beyond my wife, they are passing friends. There is distance to be safe. Maybe you think it's fine, but the other side might have other ideas.

There are always two sides to a friendship. I guess that's why one person is dominant in a relationship. I guess that's why one person tries harder than another. Being on both sides I can see that one cares more. Oh, you think that's uncalled for. That's untrue. That's exactly why flirting is so bad. One wants it and one is just skittering around adultery. One is always more invested. Know and master your passions.

Can opposite sexes be just friends. Yes, but one always wants more. It's that way in relationships too. One always cares more. It's the human way. We care about God as long as... We care about our spouse as long as... Try adding adultery, murder, and philosophy change into the mix. If I had a dollar for every woman who is divorce because they decided to try religion when their husband is not religious, I'd be rich. In what way? Nine times out of ten it ends in divorce. We all know the truth about friendship. In a way, this is a dirty word or subject. Friendships always bring masks to the party.

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

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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.

As a kid, I met many boys and girls on the playground. Some of them have been an influence on me. If I meet someone that says something I don't like, then what? Do I accept them, fight them, or reject them? I feel that along the way we gather these confrontations. These experiences build our particular mask. We might need a mask to make ourselves look better. We might need it to hide who we think we are. The mask is a work in progress. Maybe batman was right. *We build a mask to make ourselves*. Maybe there is no mask but just the building of a person. Interacting with people is how we grow.

I just had an interesting conversation about popular opinion. Are we a reflection of who the government is? Are we a reflection of our family or friends? One thing seems evident. The current government might not be the one I agree with. We are given a family. Sometimes we are stuck with government and family. Friends however is a choice. All those years we are being trained to know what we like in a friend. I guess I'm just asking if we are trained to know what we like in ourselves. Are we building masks to avoid the hard questions about who we are? Do those avoidances influence our pick of friends?

If we feel less than others, why? If we feel dirty because others seem clean, why? We all have a level of insecurities. Our view on ourselves will fuel these negative thoughts. However,

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the friends we allow in our lives will reinforce how we feel about ourselves. Pick bad friends and they might bring you down. Choose good friends and you might soar to heights you never dreamed. They will inspire you. They will challenge you. The other side is that people might bring you down.

As always when I'm writing God brings me some real-life examples. Someone close to me had his new wife leave him after 9 months. This is not fun I can assure you. They were friends so I thought. In the final moments, it was revealed that they were heading in different directions. In nine months? This has been painful. It's affected him, her, and all of us. Picking the right friends affects us all.

There is a thought that voting is not important. Yet, if the current government raises taxes then it affects everyone who voted and who didn't. The fall of my friend's marriage has affected more than just two people. He has said he will think twice before saying yes to friendship again. In a horrible way, this became a good thing. He can see himself and his friends clearly through tragedy. He is becoming a master of his own life and who he chooses for friends.

In the meantime, he stands there alone. In a way, he is standing in the forest lost. Yet there is that stupid sign saying *here you are*. Fine, but how do I get to a better place? The sign does not say that. To survive life is all about you. What you think and where you go is all you have. Turn the wrong way and your more lost. Meet the wrong person and you're in more trouble. There is no way to avoid being lost or in trouble. It happens to us all. Yet we can find a way out. We can prepare for those days. It's not being paranoid that the end is coming. It's more about bringing the right weapons to a fight. The right tools for the job. Picking the right friends. Why?

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Back to my close friend. Within three days of being split up, the oceans of his life have parted. On one side are those who love him. They are sticking close to him regardless of fault. They want him to survive and thrive. On the other side were some other friends. It’s odd calling them friends. They are questioning his character. They are not hoping he succeeds. They want to see him burn. In both cases, he chose these people as friends. Does that mean he is a lousy judge of character. Do his friends represent who he truly is?

The harsh reality answer is yes, and a little no. The yes, means he thought he knew what friendship was. He had some criteria on picking a mate and friends. That has changed within the last few days. Part of their criticism was that he is of bad character. He too questioned if that was true because he believed his friends. There is confusion as to who is right. He now feels dirty about his situation. Dirty about what he has become. Picking bad friends has everything to do with how you feel about yourself. They will most certainly tell you when the chips are down.

The little no is this. My friend is a good man. He allowed bad people into his life because his criteria of himself was loose. I suppose it was a small list of what he valued about himself. He, as I did, let some people influence us negatively. We put little stock in protecting our own hearts. That let bad friendships run amuck in our lives. We are good people allowing bad choices to affect us. Molding, perfecting, and mastering ourselves is truly all we have. This will determine our fate with friendships. It will also determine how we feel about ourselves. Like feeling dirty inside.

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

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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.