

Real Love: Would you like you for a friend?

Message for Sunday, April 8, 2018
by Bruce Fraser

Children's Message: Proverbs 17:17

I ask for a volunteer. Now I ask the others what the volunteer must do to make them happy. One may say "Stand by me." Another may say "Sit on the floor." And another may say "Twirl in a circle." It will be impossible for the volunteer to make everyone happy!

The Point: real friends don't demand that you do things before they like you. And you don't do that, either.

Thanks to Harvey and Patsie Moore for this super idea, in their book *The Mysterious Marvelous Snowflake*.

Sermon: "Real Love: Would you like you for a friend?"

I'm starting a new series of messages today. They all come from Jesus' command to love other people. That's a fantastic idea, but what does it look like in practice? What does love look like with friends, with enemies, in families, at work, and so on? Over the next two months, we're going to explore what the Bible teaches about how to live a life of love. I'm calling this series "Real Love."

Magazines often have articles on "What to look for in a husband/wife/friend." What if we turned the tables on that question? In today's message on "Real Love," the question is, "Am I the kind of person I would like to have as a friend?"

Let's see what the Bible says about friends, about the qualities of real friendship, and for some of the examples of famous Bible friendships.

1) How faithful are you as a friend?

Proverbs 17:17, New Living Translation:
A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.

Proverbs 18:24, The Message:
Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family.

A friend is faithful to you, even when others have stopped caring.

In 1947 the Brooklyn Dodgers made baseball history by being the first major league team to have a black person on the team. Jackie Robinson was that player, and Mickey Mantle said that Robinson "without a doubt suffered more abuse and more taunts and more hatred than any player in the history of the game."

He faced jeering crowds in every stadium. In one game in his own home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. His own fans began to ridicule him. He stood at second base, humiliated, while the fans jeered.

Then "Pee Wee" Reese, who played shortstop and was captain of the team came over and stood next to him. Reese put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career.

How faithful are you? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Low High

2) How genuine are you as a friend?

Proverbs 27:6, New American Standard Bible:
Faithful are the wounds of a friend,
But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

Ephesians 4:15, Contemporary English Version:
Love should always make us tell the truth. Then we will grow in every way and be more like Christ.

Friends tell each other the truth, even though it may hurt.

A husband and wife are talking. The wife says, "Darling, why don't you play golf with Harry any more?"

Husband: "Would you play with a sneak who puts down the wrong score and moves his ball when you aren't looking?"

"Certainly not," she answers.

Husband: "Well, neither will Harry."

Here's a better example of friends being honest with each other.

Bill White is a member of a church in Paramount, California. He tells of a couple of men in the church who partnered together to help each other grow in their faith. They agreed to be honest with each other, to hold back no secrets.

Paul had a habit of swearing, and wanted to clean up his language. Here's the plan they arranged: each Sunday they would meet in the parking lot before the worship service began. Paul would tell William how many times he swore during the past week, and he would put \$5 in the offering plate for each time. William's job was to witness this, and to hold him accountable.

The first week cost Paul \$100. The next week was less, but the third and fourth weeks showed little improvement. Paul wasn't achieving the change in his life he desired, and he was losing a lot of hard-earned money.

After the fourth week, William told Paul that he was changing the rules, but he wouldn't say how. Paul wanted to know, but all William would say was, "Trust me. It will cost you both less and more."

The following Sunday before worship, Paul was looking discouraged, obviously having failed again. William put a hand on his shoulder and said, "Paul, this will cost you both less and more. It's called grace." Then William took out of his pocket a check made out to the church, dated and signed by William. Only the amount was blank. William said to Paul, "Your sin still costs, but for you it's free. Just fill in the amount. Next week there will be more grace."

That first week of grace cost William \$55, but the second only cost him \$20. The third cheque never got filled in. It hurt Paul too much to see his friend paying for his sin, so he quit swearing.

How genuine are you? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Low High

3) How helpful are you as a friend?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, New Century Version:
Two people are better than one, because they get more done by working together.

If one falls down, the other can help him up. But it is bad for the person who is alone and falls, because no one is there to help.

If two lie down together, they will be warm, but a person alone will not be warm.

An enemy might defeat one person, but two people together can defend themselves;

a rope that is woven of three strings is hard to break.

When the going gets tough, it's good to have a friend to help out. Not like this story! A group of friends went deer hunting and paired off in twos for the day. That night one of the hunters returned alone, staggering under an eight-point buck.

"Where's Harry?" he was asked.

"Harry had a stroke of some kind. He's a couple of miles back up the trail."

"You left Harry laying there, and carried the deer back?"

"Well," said the hunter, "I figured no one was going to steal Harry."

Although I grew up in Saskatchewan in the middle of the prairies, I was born long after the pioneer days were finished. In those early days, the Canadian government had surveyors mark out the land in 1 mile squares, called sections. The government offered to give quarter-sections—160 acres—of land for free to anyone who would homestead there. The only requirements were that they had to cultivate at least 15 acres of land and live there for three years. People from cities in the east, and from across the ocean, came by the thousands to start a new life as farmers.

Upon arriving at their piece of land, one of the first tasks was to build a sod hut to live in. Most people built their home in the middle of their property, so that it would be easier to manage it. It also gave them a feeling of pride, being able to see their land spread out all around them.

Strange things started happening, though. These people, living on their own, far from the nearest town, and half a mile from their nearest neighbour, often grew desperately lonely. The long, cold winters intensified the isolation. Many of them just

walked away, leaving everything behind them. Others went insane.

The smart ones moved their homes. They put up a new sod house in a corner of their property. The three settlers who were their neighbours also moved their homes to the adjoining corners. Living close together, the four people or families became a little community of friends, sharing their joys and sorrows, life and death together, helping one another with tasks which were too much for one person working alone. These people often persevered through the hardship, became successful farmers, and made the prairies famous as the “breadbasket of the world.”

Friends help one another.

How helpful are you? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Low High

4) How close are you as a friend?

Perhaps the greatest story of friends in the Bible is David and Jonathan. Jonathan’s father was Saul, the king of Israel, and King Saul was insanely jealous of David. David started as a poor shepherd boy, but after defeating Goliath and a few more things, he became a commander in Saul’s army. David was so successful in defeating Israel’s enemies, he was more popular among the people than the king, which made Saul even more jealous.

Saul was paranoid that David was conspiring to take over his throne, and tried multiple times to kill David. David was completely loyal to Saul, but Saul could never believe it. Through all of this, David and Jonathan—King Saul’s son—were close friends, like brothers. This passage, from their early days, sums up the closeness of their relationship.

1 Samuel 18:1, 3-4, New American Standard Bible:
The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. ... Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armour, including his sword and his bow and his belt.

At that time, David was a poor shepherd boy, with old clothes and no weapon. Jonathan gave him his own things. They loved each other like brothers.

How close are you as a friend?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Low High

So, what kind of a friend are you? Would you like to have you as a friend?

One final thought. Even between the dearest of friends, there will be some distance, a wall the other is not allowed inside.

But you’ll never have that problem with Jesus as your friend.

Next Steps:

-) Loving God comes first, even before friends and family.
-) Life is not all about you. Love can be a cure for shyness and fear, because they are self-conscious. Love is other-conscious.
-) Did any of the stories in this message hit home with you? Perhaps you can focus on that area of friendship.