

FOCUS

The Magazine of Enfield Evangelical Free Church

Aiming to glorify God by calling and equipping people to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ

FRIENDSHIPS

John Lennon sang about it, Aristotle philosophised about it, and most people I know long for it. What am I talking about? Friendship. I'm guessing that to most of us friendship is important, and we greatly value the friends we have. To some the subject of friendship may stir feelings of pain, sadness or even loneliness. Either way, for a few moments I want to reflect on the subject of friendship as it is presented to us in the Bible.

Everyone has a friendship-shaped hole that needs filling

We discover in Genesis 1 v 18 that "it is not good for man to be alone". God made humans for companionship with each other.

This should not surprise us as humans are made in the image of God who is a relational God. He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Being made in his image means we're made for relationship.

As we progress through the Bible this is affirmed to us by a very positive view of friendship and being without friends is a state of desolation.

For example, Psalm 88 v 18 – "You have taken my friends and loved ones from me; the darkness is my closest friend." And on the flip-side we see the positive friendships of people like Ruth and Naomi or David and Jonathan.

In fact the Bible teaches that ties with a good friend can be closer than family: "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." - Proverbs 18:24.

The Bible portrays friendship as a precious thing! It's a big part of how God made us.

But there is a problem that I'm sure many of you can identify with. Human friendship, no matter how good never completely satisfies that friendship shaped hole. At it's best it's amazing, but at its worst friendship can be painful or even ugly.

So here is the great news...

Jesus is the friend who sticks closer than a brother

Friendships we have can give us a taste of what it's like to be satisfied when it comes to friendship. But just like drinking a glass of water you will always end up thirsty again.

Jesus on the other hand is a friend to be longed for. In fact Jesus promises friendship that will satisfy.

How? Simply because he behaves like the perfect friend.

The first place we see this is the cross.

Listen to Jesus' words: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13

The truth of the Bible is that we're all in trouble. A day is coming when God will

judge people for ignoring him. It's trouble because there is nothing we can do to get ourselves out of this situation. But as we read the story of Jesus we discover that he came in order to lay down his life for his friends. At the cross, Jesus laid down his life to protect and save our lives.

What an amazing act of friendship. But it doesn't stop there! Not only does he save us but the Bible speaks about Jesus as the one who listens to us, who protects us, provides for us and more. Jesus truly is the friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Human friendships are a great gift from God, but they are like a signpost to the only friendship that will truly satisfy. That is Jesus. And as we enjoy the perfect friend, Jesus, we discover that not only is Jesus the perfect friend but he is also the pattern for how we do friendship with each other.

Therefore let me encourage you to find perfect friendship in Jesus and to treat others how he treats us. Imagine what sort of a place the Church would be if we all did friendship like Jesus!

Nathan Howard