

Friends

#0085

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—January 12, 1973

Do you know why Jesus is coming down to this earth? He's coming to get us because we're His friends. In the same wonderful discourse that begins in John 13 and runs on through John 16, Jesus said to those gathered about Him, "I have called you friends." It's a wonderful thing to have the King for our friend. It's a wonderful thing to be *His* friend.

I found a little text that I think will interest you. It's talking about the various men associated with Solomon in the government of Israel. It says king Solomon was king over all Israel. It tells the princes he had. Then it says:

"And Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers:
and Zabub the son of Nathan was principal officer and
the king's friend" 1 Kings 4:5.

Does the king need a friend? He thought so. If I were king, I think I would want a friend too. Everyone needs a friend. This man, Zabub, was distinguished from all the other officers as the king's friend. What an honor.

Turn now to Proverbs and we will study some verses about friends:

"Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the
sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel" Proverbs 27:9.

I have several gray hairs, and this gives me the privilege of looking back over a number of years of life, and I want to tell you this: the sweetest thing in this world is friends. I've found it so. God has been, it seems to me, unusually lavish with me. I have sometimes said that I would rather have the friends I have even if I have a few enemies than to get along without either one. And Solomon is right here when he says that the sweetness of a man's friend in hearty counsel is like sweet perfume and precious ointment. In fact, I believe that the greatest joy of Heaven is going to be the joy of friendship.

You remember that beautiful statement in *The Great Controversy* that tells us:

"The loves and sympathies which God himself has planted in
the soul, shall there find truest and sweetest exercise" *The
Great Controversy*, page 677.

There we'll share

“The pure communion with holy beings, the harmonious social life with the blessed angels and with the faithful ones of all ages...” *Ibid.*

Elder Luther Warren used to put it this way: “My Best Friend has made arrangements for me to become personally acquainted with everyone that has ever lived in this world that’s worth knowing.”

It would be quite a privilege to sit down in personal fellowship with somebody like Enoch or Moses or Elijah. To have David sing for you personally *because* you were his friend. To sit down with Mary of Bethany and have her tell you the little intimate things in the baby life and child life of Jesus in Bethlehem and Nazareth. Wouldn't it be nice to have Ellen G. White for a friend? A personal friend? Well, we could go on. There are rich things ahead for us.

This evening I am focusing on the wonderful blessings that come from having a friend right here in this world. Do you have a friend? Someone who shares your joys and your sorrows? Someone whose fellowship means, “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.” In eternity we are going to have the same thing, only more of it. Sweeter and closer.

“The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven” *Ministry of Healing*, page 360.

There are others here tonight in this service who have been a wonderful blessing as friends to me through the years, and I thank the Lord for the contribution that each one has made to my life, my ministry, my joy.

I think of others. I think of the dear man who spoke from this pulpit three weeks ago who’s getting ready to lead our group across the waters in this new venture. When he calls me on the phone and we share in counsel, it’s just like this verse says:

“Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel”
Proverbs 27:9.

But friendship is more than joy. It’s more than pleasure. It’s more than sweetness.

“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” Proverbs 27:17.

Sometimes God uses our enemies as a grindstone. He uses various trials and difficulties that we need in life. He uses circumstances. But there is a kind of filing and polishing which God has reserved to be done by our special friends. It takes a friend's touch to do it. Filing is not particularly pleasant. But remember that when a man puts a file to an axe he’s not trying to get rid of the axe, he’s simply

trying to improve its ministry. And when God takes my friend and uses him to file me a bit and sharpen me up, it's so that I may do more effective service for the Master.

And may I tell you, such friends are hard to come by. They are few and far between. It's much easier to get enemies to do it. As I have indicated, God has to use them at times. But oh, the wealth of having a friend who will sharpen you and file away the irregularities and the roughness, and as the result, you are able to accomplish more in the service of God.

Sometimes when we're in the room getting ready to come on the platform, someone may notice some little white thread that has gotten on my coat and they pardon me and they take it off. What do I say? I say, "Thank you." Wouldn't it be wonderful if some of the things that count more that need to be taken away we would appreciate as much? Can you stand being filed by your friend?

"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" Proverbs 27:17.

But may I tell you: iron is not soft. If it is, it can't do a very good job of filing, nor can it do a good job of being sharpened. Am I right?

Aaron was rather soft. Moses was harder. The people found it so. They thought Moses was hard to get along with. They admired Aaron. You remember when Moses came down from the mount and began to rebuke Aaron in front of the people, and began to rebuke the people, Aaron stood by meekly taking it all very calmly and sweetly. We are told by Inspiration the people were charmed with Aaron's lovely spirit and were disgusted with the rashness of Moses.

Eli too was a very friendly, very helpful, very gentle, very meek gentleman. And his sons went to hell and dragged the nation of Israel down with them.

The kind of friend we are studying about tonight is as true as steel, and he may be as hard as steel. And the friend he works on needs to be hard too—iron sharpeneth iron. Iron doesn't sharpen putty. It doesn't put an edge on punk. So if your friend is hard on you, thank God for it. Welcome it. Appreciate it.

For many years I had the privilege of the counsel and correction of my father and mother. My mother was a teacher of English, and I suppose she spent more time with this student than with anyone else in her life.

I remember up at Haskell Hall, she used to sit in the corner up there with her notebook. Later I would come to her room and she'd say, "Bill, get me my notebook." Then she'd begin to tell me where I had mispronounced this word or hadn't used the right grammatical construction or some other mistake. I appreciated it some. I appreciate it more now.

I tell you that in order to tell you this. Through the years, there were those who heard that I was getting this bonus, this special benefit. They wanted to get in on it, and my mother was willing. But you know what mother told me? She said,

“Very few people ever came back the second time. Most people don't want correction. They want praise.”

My dear brothers and sisters, fellow teachers, students, guests, do you really want to be changed so that you will be more effective? Do you really want to be filed away a bit and be modified so that you can accomplish more for the Master? You may pray, but God's answer to your prayer may be to give you a *friend* who will deal honestly and truly with your soul.

I say again, I've had a few friends like that, and I thank the Lord for them. Over here sits a man who's been that kind of friend for me. And as he leaves us soon to take a position of great responsibility in this new school in the west, I shall miss his quiet, kindly, firm counsel. Some others will need to follow in those footsteps.

“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” Proverbs 27:17.

You oftentimes have to open the way for that kind of help. Your enemies will tell you off sometimes without your asking for it. Even casual acquaintances, if you provoke them enough, will tell you what's the matter with you. But if you really want the kind of friend and the kind of friendly counsel we're looking at, then you may need to make earnest efforts to get it, and be thankful and appreciate it when it's given.

“Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out” Proverbs 20:5.

Do you get the picture? There's water in the well. How many of you have ever had the experience of drawing up a bucket of water? First, you have to let the bucket down and wait while it fills, and then draw it up. Have you done that with some friend?

If it weren't so serious, it would be laughable the way some people get counsel. They rush in with a plan that they have. It may be someone they want to marry. It may be someplace they want to go to school. It may be some job they want to take. And what they really want is your ok *fast* so they can get on with the job.

But that's not the picture here. The picture is coming and letting the bucket down, let it fill up, and then draw it out. Some of the best counsel you can get from your best friend you will have to seek for. You will have to wait. You will have to draw it out. But it's worth oh so much.

Let's go back to Proverbs and find something perhaps even harder than filing:

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend” Proverbs 27:6.

The what? The wounds of a friend.

You mean a friend would wound me? He would if I needed it and he was a good enough friend.

Last August I had an experience that some of you know about. One afternoon I got a real pain in my stomach, and the next morning I was taken over to the hospital. And the next morning, they took me into the operating room and began to use a knife on me. They cut me, and I was sore for quite awhile afterward too.

Were those bad people who did that to me? No. They were my friends, and I thank God for the loving care I received at the Wildwood Sanitarium and Hospital. I left there weighing a little less than when I entered, but my gallbladder will never trouble me again. It's gone.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend" *Ibid.*

It's a wonderful thing to have a friend who will not only file some irregularity but will get down to business with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God which pierces deep, and deal with deep things that need to come out of the life. We have far too little of this kind of surgery. Too much of the surgery that is received and given is more like these accidents out on the freeways. There are amputations taking place every day on these highways. I pray to be delivered from those. I'd rather have my *friend* do it than some drunken driver. I'd rather have it done carefully, skillfully, tenderly, but *done*.

Dear friends, are we really in earnest? Do we really want to go to Heaven? Do we really want to get rid of the things that hinder and delay the coming of the Lord? God's servant tells us how in 1844 when they were expecting the Master to come soon, that when they meet together in prayer and in meeting, different ones would say, "Brethren, have you seen anything in me that is not like Jesus. I know we are sometimes blind to our faults, and if you see something, I wish you would point it out." Sometimes faults were pointed out, and brothers would be seen arm in arm going off to some grove to pray together, or into a room to seek the Lord together. Oh, for friends like that, and for friendship like that.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend" Proverbs 27:6.

Now back to the ninth verse, where we started in this chapter:

"Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel Proverbs 27:9.

We need the ointment to prepare for surgery, and we need the ointment after surgery. The servant of the Lord tells us that some people would make good surgeons, but poor nurses. Let us seek to combine in our ministry of friendship, the ointment with the wounding. What do you say?

Jesus said concerning a true friend:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" John 15:13.

Yes, a real friend will lay down his life for you.

The book *Mount of Blessing* tells us that we are not ready to go to someone and point out some mistake or weakness or fault or sin in their lives *until* we are ready to lay down our lives for them. That would save a lot of rebuking that is done through wounded pride or vanity, or through getting angry and blowing off steam. What we're studying just now is something entirely different. It's faithful work that is done *from* love, *through* love, *in* love, and for love's sake.

I think every man needs at least three kinds of friends. I'll illustrate it by elevation. Not necessarily in position but, shall I say, in experience.

It's a wonderful thing to have a friend that you share with in fellowship. This is the kind of friendship David and Jonathan had. This is the kind of fellowship that Peter and John had. And this is probably what we usually think of when we think of a friend.

But there's another type of friendship which sometimes is of even more value. It's the friendship of one older and more experienced with one younger and less experienced. Elijah with Elisha. Paul with Timothy. What wonderful possibilities there are in a close fellowship of that kind. The Devil hates that. That's why he talks about the generation gap. But there was no generation gap between Paul and Timothy. There was none between Elijah and Elisha. There was the sweetest, closest fellowship.

This is God's plan of educating men for His ministry. This is the way I was trained with Elder John Tindall, and what a friend he was to me. I think of the great privileges God gave me in friendship with such men as Elder Luther Warren, Elder Meade MacGuire, Elder W. C. White (the son of the prophet), and others through the years. I am greatly in debt. And the only way I can give even a token payment on those debts, it's to try to be a friend to others such as the friends that God has given me have been to me.

Some of the most valuable friendships I have had were forged during my teen years with young people my own age or a little older, as well as with some of these older men whose names I have mentioned. May I suggest to you students and everyone else: Ask God to give you three friends. At least three. Ask God to give you some fellow, some teammate, someone you can share with, in praying together heart with heart, soul with soul, somewhat as equals. Then ask God to give you someone of more experience, older and more mature that you can go to for counsel and who will pray with you. And third, (and this is so important) ask God to give you someone of less experience than you that you can be a friend to, and, shall I say, practice on.

Don't miss this third point, for if you do, you'll never get out of the other two experiences what God intends. The only way that a pipe can hold more water is to let some of it out. That's what a faucet is for. The only way your heart can hold more of love and wisdom and blessing is to share with others what God, through Christian friends, has shared with you.

Oh, the blessing of being a channel. The banks through which the river flows are always green. He that watereth shall be watered also himself. Acquaintances we may have many-fold, but the kind of friends we are studying tonight, don't come by the hundreds, much less by the thousands. If you have *one*, you're rich. If you have two, you're a multimillionaire. If you have three or four, well you really are wealthy.

But they *cost*. Not in money. They cost in the matters we have noted tonight, the willingness to be *frank* for love's sake, and the willingness to be true and faithful, even when it hurts; to do it not because we're exasperated, not because we're irritated, and certainly not because we're proud, but because we *love* the friend. And a willingness to listen when we are the recipient, the willingness to *thank* our friend even when we may not agree with him, for friends do not always agree; this is part of the process of development, to be able to have a friend whose viewpoint may not be exactly as yours is on everything and still you don't fall out over it. This is so important. To respect your friend and not feel that he's got to come to your viewpoint in order to continue to be your friend. Such an idea shows an utter lack of understanding of what friendship is all about. I thank God for friends.

One of the most important ingredients in the type of friendship we are studying tonight is presented in Matthew 18:19. It's one of the most wonderful promises in all the Bible:

"Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" Matthew 18:19.

Here is a wonderful promise to two people who agree. Two friends who kneel down together, Jesus the unseen one with them, and agreeing together they storm Heaven concerning certain matters. It may be personal problems. Most likely it involves the salvation of some other soul for whom they are both burdened. This is the experience that has given me the best friendships of my life.

There is a Spirit of Prophecy statement which has led me in this for nearly 50 years. To some of you, it will be very familiar. Some of you will be hearing it for the first time. All of you listen:

Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another? In our churches let companies be formed for service. Let different ones unite in labor as fishers of men. Let them seek to gather souls from the corruption of the world into the saving purity of Christ's love.

"The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members

be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, each gaining courage and strength from the assistance of the others. Let them reveal Christlike forbearance and patience, speaking no hasty words, using the talent of speech to build one another up in the most holy faith. Let them labor in Christlike love for those outside the fold, forgetting self in their endeavor to help others. As they work and pray in Christ's name, their numbers will increase; for the Saviour says: 'If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven'" *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 7, pages 21–22.*

If this simple recipe is followed, this will be the greatest year in soul-winning that we have ever seen. Mission 1973 will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who have planned it if you and I will use friendship as a basis for accomplishing God's mission. Remember someone to pray with, someone to share as brother with brother, as sister with sister, as John and Peter did, as David and Jonathan did. Remember someone to whom you can look for counsel and help. And who is that third friend? Someone whom you can help.

I want to be very practical tonight, so I want to deal with something that someone is thinking. How do I know what you are thinking? Wait a minute and see. Someone is sitting here thinking, "Oh, I just wish I had that kind of a friend, and I wish they'd let me." Listen: God is the one who arranges friendships if people will *let* Him. And it may be, it could be that what you think you want wouldn't fit at all. If there is someone whose friendship you covet, but somehow or another you cannot attain it, why not go to God and say, "Dear Lord, instead of asking You to give me what *I* want, I'm asking You to give me what *You* want." If you will do that, God will answer your prayer exceedingly abundantly above all you can ask or think.

An experience comes to my mind just now that I haven't thought of in a long time. I remember when I was just a 16-year old boy. I was going to a camp meeting. I had never been to a camp meeting in that place before, and I was moved to pray before I went to that camp meeting, "Lord help me, if it's Your will, to meet a young person at this camp meeting who will be a friend in Christ, a friend that can help me in my Christian experience." God heard and answered my prayer, and I know He will do it for you.

You can have a friend. You can be a friend. God will answer your prayer. Perhaps in the way you think, maybe in ways you have no idea of. And remember,—don't miss this—while you cannot control whether you get a friend that you are seeking, you *can* control whether you will *be* a friend. This is the thing to address yourself to. Oh, if you will *be* a friend, God will see to it that you have friends.

“A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” Proverbs 18:24.

Precious Lord, rightly interpret to our hearts the wonderful and eternal principles that we have studied tonight. We thank Thee that as we take them into the laboratory of human experience, we shall find riches beyond anything this world knows anything about. Grant it for every heart, in Jesus’ name, amen.

[Testimony service]

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