

Christian Friendship

We need to pattern our life after those who, despite difficulties, have successfully lived for Christ. Those who fail to examine themselves end up spending all their efforts living only for themselves, enslaved by destructive habits and dependencies. Full life, however, can be experienced by trusting Jesus Christ and following in his steps. Some of us may wonder if we will ever get beyond the pain we experience on a daily basis. God has given us spiritual friends who walk this journey with us to show us how to trust God and surrender our lives to His love and power.

Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. Their future is eternal destruction. Their god is their appetite. They brag about shameful things and all they think about is this life here on earth. But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. (Philippians 3)

Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to everyone else. Always be joyful. Keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you, who belong to Christ Jesus. (I Thessalonians 5)

A Christian friend is someone who can be a loving witness to our new life and who can also provide perspective on our spiritual journey. She is someone who can appreciate what we are doing and how we are growing. We look for a friend

who can keep a confidence and listen with empathy. We seek someone who will not criticize us, but who will be able to suggest to us any obvious places where we are living in ways that injure ourselves or others.

Christian friendships are characterized by mutual respect and sharing. We are encouraged to learn from one another, to help each other and that includes being willing to both teach and receive love and caring from others. We are invited to watch the example of those who live a life of peace and careful ministry and then to try and put into practice the things they do. We are invited to pray for each other so God can grow more and more of His character in us and bless us in every set of circumstances.

Questions For Discussion and Reflection

1. What is God's plan for Christian friendship? What are they meant to look like? What are they meant to do for us?
2. How is God inviting me to be a Christian friend?
3. What would I need to change on the giving end, and the receiving end, in order to be a better friend?
4. Who has God put in my life that I can look and learn from the pattern of their lives?
5. What is it about their lives that I think I need to pattern my own ways of thinking and acting after?