



SIPS OF FRIENDSHIP

The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust you with a friendship.—

Ralph Waldo Emerson⁸

Watching the orange-yellow sunrise, I sipped slowly on a steaming cup of French Roast coffee. I lounged back knowing a full day of activity also rose before me. I asked myself, “Where and how in the world do I even begin today’s tasks?” I felt the familiar sensation of being overwhelmed flood my tired body and weary soul; the caffeine hadn’t helped.

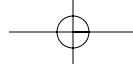
The phone’s ring jarred me back to attention. Grabbing the phone I heard, “Hi, it’s Lisa. Remember when we ran into each other again in Georgia?”

Her question reminded me of an occasion where I had been racing to another appointment at a convention, when suddenly we bumped into one another. We didn’t know each other well, but we both recalled our immediate connection with each other at a different conference the year before. We traded phone numbers and promised to chat soon, so we could catch on the happenings with our families and life goals.

Friendship

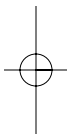
DAY FOUR

**My Heart’s Cry:
Father, remind me
to slow down
enough in my busy
life to enjoy good
conversation with
my girlfriends. And
help me to remem-
ber to take time to
really listen. Amen.**



“He who separates himself seeks his own desire, He quarrels against all sound wisdom.”

**Proverbs 18:1
(NASB)**



“Loners who care only for themselves spit on the common good.”

**Proverbs 18:1
(The Message)**

Now as I listened to her excitement over the phone about what Christ was doing in her life, I smiled to myself. I continued to sip my coffee and celebrate with her as she told one story after another of God’s hand in her day-to-day life.

Yes, she was busy, too. Her full life consisted of a husband out-of-work, two small children, and her own career. Plus, her mother was recently diagnosed with a devastating illness. Yet, she bubbled with enthusiasm for God’s continual provision and unexpected blessings.

We talked for a long time. We discussed life, books, and coffee. She is a coffee aficionado, too. Finally as I hung up the phone, I drained the last drop of brew from my cup. The sun shone high and bright in the sky. “Wow! The morning is almost gone,” I thought. But somehow I didn’t feel panicky; instead I felt renewed. The day’s tasks didn’t seem as daunting.


I continued to grin as I realized the tremendous refreshment and joy that phone call delivered to my anxious soul. Little did my friend realize how she encouraged me by telling me about the details of “God moments” in her busy life. I started my own day, not with a dread of all that needed to be accomplished but with an anticipation of watching for the God-orchestrated moments. Suddenly, I giggled. I realized I had just experienced one. Lisa’s phone call refreshed me! God’s refreshment poured through me with a pot of coffee and a sip of sweet friendship.

Friendships refresh us. They remind me of strong mugs of coffee. Not only do they infuse us with energy, but also they come in all flavors, strength, and brewing time, yet they need tender care lest they are broken. Today, just for fun, we are going to use the analogy of cups of coffee to help us find out more about friendships.

 In the margin read both versions of Proverbs 18:1

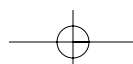
What does this verse mean to you and the value of friendship?

We all need companions to walk the road of life. I tend to be introverted, so I prefer a few close friends to chat with on a regular basis. However, my extroverted husband loves lots of people and commotion. Neither way is right or wrong. In fact, Scripture points us to having a balance of different types of friendships.

 Jesus is always the best example for us to study. Let’s take a look at His friends and see what information we can garner for our own lives. Read the following verses and place the amount of friends and companions that were with Jesus during His time on earth. Also, note the activities that they are mentioned doing.

Matthew 4:25—5:1

Luke 10:1, 17



Luke 6:13

Matthew 17:1; Mark 5:37; Mark 14:33

John 19:26



Jesus had quite an array of people that He interacted with during His life. So, how do you think that applies to us?

I believe we are to have a wide variety of friends. We should belong to a local church, so that we have access to a group of people to befriend us. Joining civic service groups, sports teams, or other likeminded enthusiasts provide an outlet for our individual interests and hobbies. A Sunday school class or small group serves a purpose in providing a more intimate atmosphere where we can share our hearts and grow together in all areas of our life. And then, just as Jesus had, we need an inner circle of friends—friends who will love us through the good and bad times.

Okay, now think back to what we just learned about the friends of Jesus. Because not all friendships are created equal. I have discovered that just like cups of coffee, friends come in a myriad of varieties. Friendship manifests itself in varying degrees of strength and longevity. I am going to list a few different coffee drinks and the types of friends that might share similar characteristics. I want you to jot down a couple of names of friends, past or present, who might fit each description. (Be careful to honor others; you might want to use fictitious names or initials.)

Proverbs 25:17—The Decaf Friend

The decaf friend is the chum whom you enjoy chatting with on occasion, but the relationship doesn't give a strong boost to your day. The depth of the relationship feels shallow. I believe the crowds that followed Jesus were a good example of this type of friendship. Although pleasant, the friendship will never move past the superficial needs to real heart-to-heart conversations. Most friends fall into this category. Decaf friends are fun and needed. They give our lives balance and social equilibrium.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Proverbs 18:24—The Espresso Friends

Some friendships turn out to be short and sweet. We find these buddies usually through group associations. They can be people we meet in a small group, co-workers, or perhaps a group of parents for a child's soccer team. Similar interests and functions bind these camaraderies together. I would guess the seventy-two disciples (Luke 10:1) that Jesus sent out fell in to this category of comrades.



Did You Know?

COFFEE LEGENDS

A coffee bean is really not a bean but a berry? It is actually a fruit. A legend dating back to 850 BC is told that a goat herder in Ethiopia noticed his goats were friskier after eating the red berries of a local shrub. He began to munch on the berries and felt happier himself. After much experimentation, the cup of coffee was developed to help give us a stimulating boost.

However, around AD 1100, coffee was believed by some Christians to be the devil's drink. Pope Vincent III wished to banish the drink. Before doing so, he decided to give it a try first. He delighted in the tasty drink so much that he acknowledged it a "blessed" drink and said, "Coffee is so delicious it would be a pity to let the infidels have exclusive use of it." Shortly thereafter, monks began to brew the drink at monasteries so they could stay awake during the long duration of prayer sessions.

The Decaf Friend:
**“And when you find
 a friend, don’t out-
 wear your welcome;
 show up at all
 hours and he’ll soon
 get fed up.”**

**Proverbs 25:17
 (The Message)**

The Espresso Friend:
**“Friends come and
 friends go, but a
 true friend sticks by
 you like family.”**

**Proverbs 18:24
 (The Message)**

**The Cappuccino
 Friend:**

**“Friends love
 through all kinds of
 weather.”**

**Proverbs 17:17a
 The Message**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Proverbs 17:17a—The Cappuccino Friends

Cappuccino friends are important confidants. Jesus’ twelve “inner circle” disciples are a good example of this type of friendship. Usually, we will have several of these at one time. These strong friendships endure with time and distance. A friend that exemplifies this pattern may be a girlfriend you chat with only a couple of times a year, but the deep love and trust you have for each other maintains the friendship. These friends strengthen and sharpen us with their good advice.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Proverbs 27:17—The Latte Friends

Ah, “latte friends” are my favorite. These sweet, long-lasting relationships deliciously flavor my life. Usually, you will only come across three or four of these treasures during a lifetime. James, John, and Peter were “latte friends” for Jesus. These allies know and guard your secrets. They help you to see yourself for who you really are inside. They discern the good and the bad traits of your personality. “Latte friends” will tell you the truth; they speak the truth with kindness and love.

These invaluable companions in life will become your inner circle; in a sense they become spiritual soul mates. Sometimes these life companions become more like family than your own biological relatives. (Remember Jonathan and David?) “Latte friends” love you through all of life’s joys and sorrows.

Sweet, long-lasting friendships brew over time. Their strength increases with relational experiences. The depth of relationship matures through life’s uncertain circumstances. Savor your latte friends; they are a gift from heaven.


1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I hope you had fun with this coffee illustration. I did. But now, unfortunately we need to study one last type of friendship. Unhealthy friendships. A few people, disguise themselves as essential friends, but can bring emotional and spiritual harm to us. As I said, I would be remiss, if I did not recognize the fact that not all our pals are beneficial friends.


In my life, I have encountered a few friendships that turned sour. They each left a pungent taste when the relationship evaporated. I call these “bitter coffee” types. In hindsight, the friends I have had that fit this description never fully displayed true friendship, and it is quite possible that I didn’t show true friendship to them. Though Jesus offers the antithesis of this type of friendship, one of His twelve disciples fits the “bitter coffee” description to a “T.”

The Bitter Cup Friend

 Read Luke 22:47–48. In what manner did Judas betray Jesus?

 Read Proverbs 21:10 in the margin. Describe how this proverb applies to the friendship of Jesus and Judas.

 Now read Matthew 26:48–50. By what name did Jesus address Judas?

 Read Proverbs 12:20. Write your thoughts on how this proverb pertains to Judas and then to Jesus.


I feel sure we all have felt betrayed by a “friend” at sometime in life. I don’t believe you can make it through middle school or high school and not experience duplicity by a girlfriend or a boyfriend. Betrayal seems to hide in the lockers, cafeterias, and gyms just waiting to spring upon us in those vulnerable teen years.



Can you recall a time of feeling betrayed by someone close to your heart? Do you still feel the sting of hurt?

Not only do these hurtful friends betray us, but they can also hurt us by leading us astray. In my early years, I was called upon to mentor a young woman about my age. As it turned out, our friendship instead of being uplifting and God-fearing turned into a disastrous road of sin. We were not wise in our decisions together. I watched with envy her ability to vomit up her food after she ate to keep her svelte shape. I attempted to become bulimic through her instruction.

Even more devastating was the criticism of our husbands that became the primary topic of conversation. We encouraged each other to live our lives to the fullest capability, with or without our husbands. We prodded one another into deeper and deeper sin. Eventually, we recognized our propensity for double trouble when we were together. The friendship ended, but not before we caused tremendous damage to our families and ourselves.

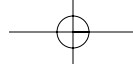
 Read Proverbs 2:12–15. Below, record next to each reference what can happen when a friendship takes the wrong course.

***The Latte Friend:
“You use steel to
sharpen steel, and
one friend sharpens
another.”***

***Proverbs 27:17
(The Message)***

***“Wicked souls love
to make trouble;
they feel nothing
for friends and
neighbors.”***

***Proverbs 21:10
(The Message)***



Verse 12:

Verse 13:

Verse 14:


Verse 15:

Although, it may be necessary to break off a friendship, it doesn't mean that you become enemies. I remember a family member once asked me, "Don't you have any enemies?"

I hope not! The very thought scares me.

When I look at Jesus and Judas during the betrayal, I see Jesus display no bitterness nor anger. I see sorrow instead. Jesus fulfilled to the very end the words of the apostle Paul found in Romans 12:18, "*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*"

May that be said of every one of us who loves the Lord Jesus.

 Read Luke 9:57–62. Now apply Proverbs 19:4, 6 and relate these words to Jesus and His statements. How might some of His disciples and friends have reacted?

Today's Heart-Print

"Friends love through all kinds of weather." (Proverbs 17:17a; *The Message*)

Lord,

 **Extra Mile**
CUP OF FRIENDSHIP

In closing our Day Four section, let's be grateful for our true friends. Let's thank them for their unique blend of friendship. Maybe we can send an occasional card, thanking them for their matchless places in our lives. Or better yet, we can call up girlfriends and invite them for coffee, our treat. Then we can relax for a while and enjoy a "cup of friendship."

Ask God to enrich your friendships and help you to become a better friend in each of them.

