

Spiritual Considerations...

Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.



Dave Phillips, editor

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I Just Want To Be Your Friend

Dave Phillips, Germantown, TN

There is a kind of friend that we truly despise. We often call them “fair weather friends.” They are the kind of friends that are loyal as long as everything goes well. When the way grows difficult, they often vanish. I have been blessed in my life to have none of these that I can recall. This means that either none happened to come my way, or if they did, I have been blessed with a poor enough memory to forget them. I can’t imagine having a more challenging time than for a person to realize that a supposed friend was trying to take advantage of the situation. It must be devastating and disappointing. It is difficult to find good friends.

To think that Jesus never experienced this feeling is to misread the scriptures. Matthew records an account of Judas betraying Jesus for a mere 30 pieces of silver. Some have supposed that perhaps Judas recognized the need for money in the travels of Jesus, and knowing that Jesus could never be taken against his will, arranged for a method of “profiting” from despicable religious leaders. After all, in Matthew’s account Judas initiates the conversation with the chief priests immediately following the anointing of the head of Jesus with expensive ointment. The disciples themselves had remarked that the price of ointment would have been valuable in taking care of the needs of the poor. This explanation seems a little too contrived for me. But, the fact remains that Judas felt a tremendous sense of guilt and regret after Jesus had been taken, and made a feeble attempt to rectify the situation by returning the coins. This remorseful offer was rejected by the chief priests.

A curious exchange takes place between Jesus and Judas at the time that Judas signals the identity of Jesus by means of a kiss. When Judas, accompanied by a large group of armed assistants, approaches Jesus and identifies him as his teacher, Jesus turns and says, “Friend, do what you have come to do” (Matt. 26:50). The label of friend is used here when it seems to be most inappropriate. How could Jesus have regarded him as a friend when he was in the process of promulgating his death? Is this the kind of friend Jesus desires? Was Jesus not telling the truth when he called Judas his friend?

Fortunately, the original language tells us that the word Jesus used is a different word than he uses in John 15:13, when he said, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” The word used to describe the relationship with Judas was a term that simply means “a comrade or companion,” whereas the term Jesus uses to describe a friend worth a sacrifice is one who “is loved, or has deep feeling for.” Even in the use of his words, Jesus was distinguishing between faithful friends and those who have a common acquaintance.

The next time you tell someone, “I just want to be your friend,” keep in mind that Jesus knows very well the difference between a friend that betrayed him and a friend that sacrificed for him. Which kind have I been? More importantly, which kind will I become?

Friends

AESOP “The Hound and the Hare,” Fables (6th century B.C.)

“A doubtful friend is worse than a certain enemy. Let a man be one thing or the other, and we then know how to meet them.”

Leaders and Ladders

Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, Ken McElrath, The Ascent of a Leader, p. 17

During the summers of his university days, Bruce worked for an electrical contractor. Several journeymen enjoyed the twisted thrill of testing his rookie mettle, exposing him to extreme heights, dark tunnels, and shocking experiments. One day, they asked Bruce to climb a too-old ladder truck to install some too-high lights.

Ascending the first extension of rungs posed no problem. But as he continued onto the next extension, connections (and knees) began to wobble. Just before Bruce reached the final rung, the ladder hooks malfunctioned and the extensions collapsed, plummeting him toward earth. Bruce's rapid descent stopped just ten feet short of the ground as the foot of the uppermost ladder extension slammed into the floor of the truck bed. Bruce barely hung on to one of the upper rungs, saving his life. He escaped with a few hand injuries and one more round of veteran tough laughter from the electrical pros.

Many men and women of influence discover that leadership is like that ladder – a challenging and unpredictable climb, often stable at the bottom and shaky at the top. From the bottom, life at the top looks appealing, even alluring, and many leaders attack the ladder with gusto, confident that they possess what it takes to conquer the rungs.

Yet, when these leaders reach positions of authority, unforeseen instability begins to surface. Such issues as the pressure of success, the temptations of privilege, the demands of followers, and the isolation of leadership leave deep depressions on the rungs – caused by the white-knuckle grip of the leader. Many look for a way to stabilize their situation, but too many leaders come crashing down. And when they land, few are there to help. Some will even laugh.

A Challenging Verse

Milton Harris, Woodland Hills Herald, Vol. 45, Issue 7

I believe that Col. 3:2 is the hardest precept of the Scripture for a born-again Christian to live up to.

“Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things.”

Boy. That's tough, isn't it?

Because the world *SCREAMS* at us. The volume is hard to ignore. Like TV and radio commercials, for instance; the volume is increased so that we will look up (or listen up) and pay attention. When reason fails, the world substitutes *VOLUME*.

God doesn't do much screaming. We usually have to listen, and then we'll hear Him. Look, and we will see Him.

The world *DEMANDS* our attention! Billboards, magazines, newspapers, all announce their claims *BOLDLY!*

God's claims are written silently in the hearts of His children through His Spirit and His Word.

The world urges *IMMEDIACY!* Buy *TODAY!* See it *TODAY!* Coming *SOON!* Act *NOW!*

God says, “Be still – and know that I am God.”

The world endorses *EASY PAYMENTS*. 90 days same as cash. No payments for 12 months. Buy now, pay later.

God says that we must count the cost of Christianity, and be willing to pay the price when we take up the cross.

The world says, “You're a victim! Your rights have been violated! You're not to blame! It's someone else's fault!”

God says, “You are responsible for your mistakes. Sure, I'll forgive them; but you must first own up to them.”

The world says it's every man for himself. Toot your own horn. Do whatever's necessary to whomever necessary to get to where you want to be.

God says for us to submit to one another out of love; to look out for the good of our neighbor; to bear each other's burdens; to consider others better than ourselves; to serve rather than seeking to be served; to love and pray for even our enemies.

Like the parents who speaks softly to his child, God as for, and demands, our attention. But He won't use volume to get it.

One More Thought About Friends

“I keep my friends as misers do their treasure, because, of all the things granted us by wisdom, none is greater or better than friendship.” Pietro Aretino, (July 7, 1537)