



TRUTH

“. . . thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

July 2021

TELL ME ABOUT THE FRIENDS OF JESUS

Some of our most stirring spiritual songs are those which have a message about Jesus being a friend to us, or vice versa. “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” “There’s Not a Friend,” and “I’ll Be a Friend to Jesus” are three familiar hymns which come to mind.

For humans, it feels like having friends is a normal part of life. When Jesus lived on the earth, He had friends, too. The Bible says, “*Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus*” (John 11:5). Jesus loved all people, but there was a special bond between Him and those three siblings. When Jesus addressed the apostles, He spoke about “*our friend Lazarus*” (John 11:11). It is obvious that Jesus did not shy away from being friends with people.

Jesus counted His hand-picked apostles as His friends. He told them, “. . . *I have called you friends*” (John 15:15). Even when Judas came to betray Him, Jesus called him “friend” (Matthew 26:50). Some labeled Jesus as “*a friend of tax collectors and sinners*” (Luke 7:34), and that was an accurate description.

How did the Christ’s friends treat Him? John the Baptist thought of himself as “*the friend of the bridegroom*” (John 3:29). John was a loyal friend to Jesus, showing no signs of jealousy or bitterness when he acknowledged this about Him: “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:30). We see those two sisters, Martha and Mary, showing their friendship to Him. Martha served Him (John 12:2), while Mary attentively listened to His teaching (Luke 10:39).

There were times when Jesus’ friends wavered in their loyalty. In one evening’s time, all the apostles forsook Him and fled (Mark 14:50), Peter denied Him three times (Luke 22:57-62), and Judas Iscariot betrayed Him, fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah’s “*own familiar friend*” would eat bread with Him and lift up his heel against Him (Psalm 41:9). Other than the betrayer, after Jesus’ resurrection and the beginning of the church, the apostles are pictured as becoming stronger and remaining loyal to the Lord.

How did the Christ treat His friends? There is certainly much to learn from His wonderful example in this regard. For one thing, He was willing to befriend those who were counted as outcasts by many

in society (Luke 15:1,2). He praised the good deeds of His friends, as in the case of John (Matthew 11:11).

Jesus received and enjoyed the association and hospitality of His friends, as in the case of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). He was understanding of their weaknesses and was patient with them, as He demonstrated with Peter (Luke 22:31,32). Another way in which the Christ showed Himself to be a true friend was by teaching His friends the truth (Mark 4:34; 8:31). Because He sincerely longed for them to do better, with kindness He pointed out their error(s) (Luke 10:40-42). When needed, He would strongly rebuke His friends for misspeaking or misbehaving (Matthew 16:23).

As a friend, Jesus shared in His friends’ sorrow (John 11:33-35). He *prayed for* His friends (John 17:6-19). The Master was *loyal* to His friends: “. . . *having loved His own who were in the world, he loved them to the end*” (John 13:1). His loyal love caused Jesus to sacrifice for His friends, as He told the apostles, “*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends*” (John 15:13). How much do you and I act like the kind of friend Jesus was to others?

When we read the Bible, we clearly see that not everyone wanted to be Jesus’ friend. Some were His open adversaries (Luke 13:17). There are only two possibilities for each person: either one is *with* the Christ, or he/she is *against* Him (Matthew 12:30). Well, what is required in order to be Jesus’ friend?

In order to be our Lord’s friend, one does not have to be wealthy, highly-educated, or from a certain race, nationality, or age group. In order to be Jesus’ friend, one must have a heart that is willing to obey Him. Jesus told His disciples, “*You are My friends if you do whatever I command you*” (John 15:14). No one can be a faithful friend of Jesus without submitting to Him. What does one do who loves the Lord? He/she obeys His commands. Jesus said so (John 14:15).

Jesus will not force us to do it, but He wants you and me to be His loyal friends . . . for as long as we live. If we will confess Him now, He will confess us before the angels of God (Luke 12:8).

-- Roger D. Campbell

“IN GOD’S SIGHT, ALL CHURCHES ARE THE SAME”

The statement that forms the title of this article—or something similar—is commonly heard from many religious people. The idea is that God really does not care where a person “goes to church” because (supposedly) all churches are the same to Him. This belief is common, but it truly is a “deadly doctrine.” Our thoughts on this matter are irrelevant; the most important question is, “What does the Bible say?”

Jesus never spoke of His church in terms of being divided or being more than one. He told Peter, “*I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18). The words “church” and “it” both are singular. Jesus never referenced “churches,” nor did He ever indicate that His church should be divided.

Jesus uses two metaphors for the church that show His intention for the church to be one. First, Jesus teaches in John 10:1-30 that He is the Good Shepherd, and His followers are His flock. He says, “*I am the good shepherd*” (John 10:14). In that same context, He clearly states, “*There will be one flock and one shepherd*” (John 10:16). If one should wonder how to determine who belongs to Jesus’ flock, Jesus answers that question also when He states, “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*” (John 10:27). Similarly, Jesus speaks in John 15 of the oneness of His church (or, His collective group of disciples), saying, “*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser*” (John 15:1). He then goes on to say, “*I am the vine, you are the branches*” (John 15:5). Some might say that Jesus is the vine and the various denominations are the branches, but this cannot be so. Why not? Because Jesus was speaking to people, not denominations (and the concept of denominationalism is completely foreign to New Testament Christianity).

Combining Jesus’ teaching from John 10 and John 15, Jesus clearly says there is **one Shepherd** (Jesus) and **one fold** (His disciples), and that one fold is made up of those who hear His voice and follow His teaching. Likewise, there is **one Vine** (Jesus), and **the branches are disciples who follow His teaching**, not denominations that each have their own beliefs and doctrines. Those not following His teaching—whether an individual or group of individuals—are not His fold (and, by implication, **cannot** be His fold), nor can they be a part of the True Vine (Jesus). Jesus Himself taught, “*You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thornbushes, or figs from thistles?*” (Matthew 7:16). It would be illogical for Jesus to have “branches” teaching differing doctrines, many of which are contrary to His own teachings. The concepts of one Shepherd with one flock and one Vine

with individual disciples as branches show that Jesus fully intends and expects His people to be **one**. May we never forget: Jesus has all authority (Matthew 28:18), so His word is final on this—and all—matters.

The apostles speak of the church as singular. Particularly, the apostle Paul references “*one body*” (Ephesians 4:4), and he says the church is that body (Ephesians 1:22,23). In writing about the unity of the body, Paul says, “*But now indeed there are many members, yet one body*” (1 Corinthians 12:20). One need not be an expert in Koine Greek or linguistics to know what Paul says over and over and over: the body of Christ, which is the church of Jesus Christ, is **one**.

Going back through the points made in this article, consider a few questions. If a person carefully builds one solitary, unique structure, would that person agree or disagree if someone said, “Well, that structure is nice, but there are many others, and they are really all the same?” Does a shepherd think all flocks are the same, or does he know his own flock intimately? Imagine a landowner hiring a man to work in his field and, when the times comes for pay, the owner finds out the man worked in another field instead. When questioned, the worker says, “It really is no big deal, for the fields are all the same.” Will that man receive payment? To ask these questions is to answer them!

The Bible sometimes uses the phrase, “*Do not be deceived*” (Galatians 6:7) to warn against ignoring plain, obvious teaching in Scripture. The devil is a counterfeiter; he will always make a counterfeit of God’s genuine creation. Satan has counterfeit doctrines (“*doctrines of demons,*” 1 Timothy 4:1), counterfeit apostles (“*false apostles,*” 2 Corinthians 11:13), and even counterfeit churches (“*the synagogue of Satan,*” Revelation 3:9). Do not be deceived by counterfeits!

Reading the teachings of Jesus and His apostles and using simple common sense tell us that all churches are **not**, in fact, the same in God’s eyes at all. Genuine Christians are those who believe Jesus is *the way, truth, and life* (John 14:1-6), repent of their sins (Acts 17:30), confess Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9,10), and are baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:27) to have their sins washed away (Acts 22:16). Upon becoming a genuine New Testament Christian, a person is added by Jesus to His one genuine church (Acts 2:47). Jesus purchased **one** church with His blood (Acts 20:28), and He is the Savior of His **one** body (Ephesians 5:23). Our eternal destiny depends upon our searching the Scriptures diligently and making certain that we are a part of that **one** body of the saved.

-- Chad Dollahite

Personal Evangelism Is for You and Me!

“Evangelism” is teaching/communicating the gospel to lost people. We are convinced that our Savior wants every Christian involved in that work!

Why do we call it “personal” evangelism? In contrast to public teaching, it is done in private, making it a person-to-person matter. It is “personal” because you and I personally are involved. It is not what “they” are doing, but what “we” are doing. Finally, it is personal because we try to make our approach to people as personal as possible, showing them that we care about them as a person.

So, why would we think that personal evangelism is for you and me? Jesus charged eleven men to go preach the gospel to every person in the whole world (Mark 16:14-16). What makes us think that “the Great Commission” applied to anyone other than those apostles, and why would anyone conclude that saints living today are still under the same obligation?

In the early chapters of the book of Acts, where the focus is on activities in Jerusalem, we see that it was the apostles doing the teaching/preaching. The first record of a non-apostle involved in the teaching was when Stephen spoke and disputed with certain Jews (Acts 6:8-10), then he spoke before the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 7:2-56).

Acts 8 is a transition chapter. Because of intense persecution against the church in Jerusalem, while the apostles remained there, the other disciples were scattered into different regions (8:1). When that took place, “. . . those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). “Common” brothers and sisters (not apostles) were proclaiming the word.

Timothy was instructed, “*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*” (2 Timothy 2:2). What is the picture? Timothy training faithful saints to teach others. That is God’s plan for church growth: train saints to teach! In fact, in that same chapter we read that one characteristic of “*a servant of the Lord*” is he/she “must” be “able to teach” (2:24). Are *you* a teaching servant of the Lord?

As Jesus sent the apostles to teach/make disciples of all nations, He assured them He would be with them until the end of the age/world (Matthew 28:20). Thus, the charge to evangelize will be in effect as long as the earth stands. There still are lost people, right? The gospel is still God’s power to save, correct?

Let us do more than study the Bible, pray, and attend worship services. Teach a lost soul the gospel! Personal evangelism is for *you and me*. Believe it!

-- Roger D. Campbell

Ephesians 4:5 — “One Lord”

The “one Lord” is the Christ. He is called “*the Lord Jesus*” (Acts 4:33), “*the Lord Jesus Christ*” (James 1:1), and “*our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 3:18).

The word “Lord” (Greek: “κύριος/kurios”) means ruler, master, or possessor. God the Father made Jesus “*both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36). It is the Father’s will that every knee bow at the name of Jesus and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord (Philippians 2:11). As Lord, Jesus possesses all authority (Matthew 28:18), serves as Head of the church, and has preeminence in all things (Colossians 1:18).

Because Jesus is our Lord, Christians **belong to Him**. He has ownership — we are His! With His blood, He redeemed/purchased us. Yes, we were bought with a price (1 Corinthians 7:23).

Because Jesus is our Lord, **we are His servants**. A Roman centurion made this statement about his authority: “*And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it*” (Luke 7:8). Here is the principle: servants do what their masters tell them. As Jesus’ servants, our heart always wants to know, “*What shall I do, Lord?*” (Acts 22:10).

Because Jesus is our Lord, **we are devoted to Him**. Our devotion is to Him above all others, including family and friends (Matthew 10:37). For Him, we forsake all (Luke 14:33). Like Paul, we are willing not only to be mistreated, but to “*to die . . . for the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Acts 21:13). For our Lord, we are ready to lay aside our own thoughts and desires in order to submit to His will (Luke 5:5).

Because Jesus is our Lord, **we have a commitment to keep**. With our mouth, we confessed Him as Lord (Romans 10:9). Now, we must stick with our commitment and confess Him with our lives. When the storms of life are raging, stay committed. When folks disappoint us, stay committed. When people act like lunatics, stay committed.

Because Jesus is our Lord, **we proclaim His Lordship** to the world. To the Jews, Peter preached Jesus as Lord (Acts 2:36). The same apostle preached Jesus as “*Lord of all*” to Gentiles, too (Acts 10:36). The world needs to hear us declaring that Jesus is “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (Revelation 19:16).

Thomas said to Jesus, “*My Lord and my God!*” (John 20:28). That sounds personal, does it not? If Jesus truly is the Ruler of our lives, what is expected? Hear Him: “*But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46).

-- Roger D. Campbell

What Christians Do — BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

We continue our study this month of *one another* passages with a look at Galatians 6:2, “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*” This passage comes from a section of Galatians which begins in chapter 5. To appreciate Galatians 6:2, we must see it in this context. Paul commands in Galatians 5:1 to “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free . . .*” This liberty “*we have in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 2:4; 3:26-29). In Galatians 5:13-14, he instructs *how* liberty is to be used. “*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*” In verse 16, the command is given to “*Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh*” (Galatians 5:16).

The teaching about Spirit and flesh continues to Galatians 6:10. We learn that the Spirit and flesh are contrary to one another, what the works of the flesh are, and the consequence of engaging in them. The nine attributes of the fruit of the Spirit are listed, and we learn against such there is no law. The last mention of the Spirit and flesh in this section is Galatians 6:7,8 in connection with the law of sowing and reaping. The emphasis in these passages is that a man reaps **how/what** he sows. The next verse exhorts us, “*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*” The emphasis in this passage is that a man will reap **if** he sows. Therefore, instead of losing heart, “*As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith*” (Galatians 6:10).

Galatians 6:1-6 Paul mentions some opportunities in which we can go about doing good. These are all imperatives, that is, commands. Therefore they are not optional, but essential. They are also present tense, which means continuous, not occasional, intermittent deeds. The commands are to: restore (verse 1), bear (verse 2), examine (verse 4), and share (verse 6).

To *bear* another’s burdens is “to take up in order to carry, to endure, to put upon oneself to be carried” (Thayer’s). *Burdens* is a word that means a heavy weight or load pressing on one. It is the imagery of one sagging or collapsing under a heavy load. We all, including Christians, have burdens or heavy loads that God does not intend to be carried alone. We are commanded to help one another bear it, with a heart of love that wants to serve. In doing so, we are fulfilling (filling full, fill up) the law of Christ (John 13:1-17,34,35; 1 Corinthians 12:26; 1 John 4:7-11).

We may act as if we have everything together in our lives, when the reality is that many are suffering

through something and burdened with a load too heavy to carry. It may be struggling with an addiction, suffering an illness or injury, mental difficulties (TBI, some form of dementia), financial issues (debt from unemployment, or medical issues, unexpected large expenses), family issues (relationship problems, children who have left the faith), marital problems (unfaithful spouse or other issues), emotional issues and wounds, discouraged with life not turning out as planned, or simply struggling with age-related issues.

To understand the seriousness that the Lord attaches to our bearing the burdens of one another, consider carefully Matthew 25:34-46 and ask yourself: “On what basis, according to this text, were individuals saved or lost?” I believe you would have to answer: “On the basis of whether they had helped bear one another’s burdens.” Study Acts 9:26-28 and see how Barnabas bore Paul’s burden when Paul returned to Jerusalem three years after his conversion and the brethren were all afraid of him.

What are some ways to help bear the burdens of others? Space will only allow mentioning some without much explanation. (1) Pray with and for them, making mention of their burdens. (2) Visit those shut in or in the hospital. (3) Visit assisted living homes and nursing homes. Many of these people are lonely. (4) Listen — very powerful. (5) Buy them some groceries. (6) Buy a gift card to help with expenses such as gas, food, etc... (7) Take care of a young couple’s children and give the couple some money for a “date night.” (8) Volunteer to drive them to doctor, etc. . . . (9) Be there. Sometimes you do not even have to say a word. I’m reminded of an elderly gentleman who had lost his wife and was overcome with grief. He would sit on his porch and cry at times. A little 4-year old boy went up on the porch and climbed into the gentleman’s lap. He stayed a while and then came back home. His dad asked him what he had said to help the elderly man and the little boy said, “I didn’t say anything. I just cried with him.” Carrying burdens, comforting sorrows, sharing griefs. These are small deeds that display a heart of compassion.

“Each day I’ll do a golden deed, by helping those who are in need.”

Why not bear someone’s burden this week?

-- John Priola

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