

The essence of uncommon community is a devotion to spiritual friendship.

Discuss the statement above. List examples of things people are devoted to other than Christ and his church. To what degree do these things compete for your devotion to Christ and his church? How?

We are being taught by our culture that we should not need or want friends, a marital partner, children, parents, or a church. Do you feel this pressure? How?

Do you ache for genuine friendship? If you feel lonely at times you are not dysfunctional. You are human. Your desire for friendship is not a sign of weakness but maturity. God wired us so that we cannot fully enjoy life without devoted friendships.

Friendships have various levels of devotion. How many friends do you have who would say you are devoted to them? How would they say you demonstrate your devotion?

We all have different capacity for the number of friendships we can maintain. How many friendships at the “devoted” level do you believe you need and can maintain?

1) Spiritual friendships cannot be forced or faked. (v. 9a)

Do you ever find yourself pretending to love someone out of a sense of duty? When we have to be forced or have to fake our love, our hearts have grown cold and the fire of our affection has burned out.

Read 1Sam. 17:55-18:2. Did Saul have a genuine love for David? Why not? What was in Saul’s heart that prevented it from being devoted to David? What was Saul devoted to?

What is your heart devoted to that prevents it from being devoted to others? How did it get there?

What must happen in your heart for God to awaken it to genuinely love again?

How do you know the love of Jesus for you is not forced or faked? How does thinking about his devotion to you affect your devotion to him?

2) Spiritual friends are devoted to the same fight. (v. 9b)

The world is always trying to erase the line between good and evil. Yet the bible draws the line quite thick. Name 3 “evils” that should stir the strongest emotions of hatred in your heart. Name 3 “goods” that stir the strongest emotions of love.

Who do you know that feels as strongly about good and evil as you do?

Read 1Sam 18:1. Can you think of a time when your heart was “knit together” with someone as you saw them fighting for good and against evil?

What did Jesus fight against evil and kill the “giant”? What was the giant that he slayed?

3) Spiritual friends are devoted to a love that never quits. (v.10a)

Spiritual friendship doesn’t focus on the question, “Do you love me?” but rather, “Do you love the same truth as I love?” and “Do you have the same Father as I do? What makes us devoted to one another is not so much our love for one another as our common love for Jesus. Until we have a common grip on something outside the relationship we will suck the life out of each

other. But when we have a common devotion to Jesus as our common friend we will experience an affinity that creates a powerful devotion to one another.

No matter our differences, our common devotion to Christ creates a genuine love for one another. We are family. We are able to have a genuine love for one another when we realize we are Christians first and whatever else second.

When you are making friendships (including dating and business relationships) how important is a person's spiritual infinity with you?

Read 1Sam. 18:3. The word covenant means "to cut". The covenant was a promise of devotion symbolized by the shedding of blood. Why do you think Jonathan and David went to all the trouble and mess of making a covenant with each other?

Christians are in covenant with Christ and each other because of the shedding of Christ's blood. Our covenant with Christ ensures Jesus is devoted to us no matter how much forgiveness we need. Our covenant with each other ensures spiritual friends will often need to forgive one another. When we are devoted to one another we will continually need to be reminded of the blood of the covenant to find the forgiveness required to remain friends. Covenant love never quits on a friend.

Read 2Sam. 1:26. How long did David and Jonathan's love last? Do you think the permanence of their friendship was based on their performance or their covenant?

Is Christ's devotion to you based on your performance or your covenant? Is your devotion to your friends based on their performance or your covenant? Who do you need to forgive in order to remain devoted to?

4) Spiritual friends are devoted to humble sacrifice. (v.10b)

Spiritual friends are in a competition for the place of humility. Who regularly "outdoes" you in honor, humility and sacrifice? What can you do to outdo them this week?

Read 1Sam. 18:4. What did Jonathan's devotion to David cost him?

Are you willing to give a friend a position, possession, or power you have a right to in order to show your devotion?

How did Jesus show honor, humility and sacrifice to us? How are you showing honor, humility, and sacrifice to him?

5) Spiritual friendship is possible only because Jesus came to make us his friends. (John 15:13-15)

Is your relationship with Jesus close enough to be described as a friendship?

Are you devoted to him?

Are you devoted to his friends?

Additional Scripture

- 2Sam. 9:1-13
- John 13:34-35

SMALL GROUP PULPIT CURRICULUM

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- 1Cor. 13:1-13
 - 1Cor. 16:15
 - Heb. 13:1-5