



The Game of Life Friendships

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Intro... Clip... is from a show called the Big Bang Theory. The lead character...Dr Sheldon Cooper is a Physicist who although, brilliant is socially challenged... and has just realized that he needs friends.

I believe that all of us have been made by God to need friendships ... for one of the very first comments that God made of Adam in the garden of Eden was that *'it is not good for man to be alone'* (Gen 2:18). Some of you are naturals at making friends... they energize you and by your very personality building friendships comes easy. But some people are like Sheldon Cooper... all of a sudden they look around and realized that life could be so much fuller if they had some significant friendships. So they attend a speed dating evening... sign up to eHarmony.com or begin twittering everyone they ever knew, trying to fill a need for friendship that they didn't know was within them. Clip #2

I. Friends... You need One

Isn't that great? There are certain people that I grew up with, that I know would watch this clip and say ...*'I think that guy is brilliant'* I could just see the guy that smoked me in High School Physics coming to the conclusion that because he only had so much time allotted for friendships in his life... that one of his existing acquaintances just had to go. The most telling thing about that clip is that despite his brilliance... despite all he could do... he had this great 'aha' that his life would not be complete unless he had significant friends in his life. And to his credit, he is trying figure it out. Why is so hard for some people to make friends?

i) Our society has become more insular. We drive to work alone in our car... we pull up into our attached garage and never see our neighbours. Houses used to have front porches, they do not any more... it is too bad because the porch was the place people used to sit in the evening and say hello to people as they walk by... it helped friendship grow between neighbours. Plus it used to be acceptable to drop over to a friends houses unannounced for coffee... you would never do that today we need 2 days notice to clear the debris out of our living rooms. If you say hello to the kid who walks down the street... the look you get back, makes you feel like you are the pervert in the neighbourhood. We have put up barriers to making friends.

ii) We seem too busy to develop friendships. We have become busier at work... and with all the time saving devices... we now can be on call 24 hours a day. Someone has said *'certain addictions have been baptized in Christian circles as being good ... work is one of those addictions.* One issue that flows from our work addiction is, that because there are only so many hours in the day ... what often happens is that as our job gets more demanding and we have kids ... we end up having to make a decision to either spend time with our friends or our family. And, while we need to make our family a high priority, that positive choice, especially for men results in many of them having no close friends at all.

iii) We live in a transient society. Because the average NA may make up to 16 moves in their life time, for some it seems easier to put off the effort to establish friendships ... until we know we will be staying in place for a long time.

iv) Cocooning Because we are so busy ...it is easy to want to go home, pull down the curtains, buy TV series like Lost/ Heroes/ The Office, put on the surround sound system and try to catch our breath. But as we cocoon like that we can end up shutting ourselves off from the rest of the world ... and friendships fall away.

And while what is happening makes perfect sense... and while we may have 580 friends on Facebook... many of us are realizing... just like Sheldon Cooper that while we have *lots of acquaintances we need more friends.* We are like Tom Hanks in *Caste Away* ... we realize that we need a Mr. Wilson (the volley ball he painted a face on) in order to survive. And that if we are to experience the Abundant Life that Jn. 10:10 speaks about it will need to include people to share our life with.

Acts 2:42, 43 sometimes you read a scripture and realize that you have put the emphasis on the wrong syllable. I used to believe that the reason why so many people looked with awe at the early church was the miracles that were happening there. Look again... the reason those around the early church were amazed was because of how they lived their lives with deep friendship. For the depth of their friendship was so different how others lived in that society... that it was something others noticed and desired. Where does that come from? It come from Jesus... for despite the enormity of the task that was before him, and despite the fact that he was ministering to 1000s ... he had 12 disciples/12 friends that he moved with... and he had an inner 3 (Peter, James, John) who were his closest friends. And like David had Jonathon as his best friend... Jesus had John as his best friend. For according to Jn.19:26... John who was his best friend. And John was the kind of friend who was willing to put his life on the line for Jesus. John was the one/ the only one, who

was there at the cross to stand by his best friend right to the end. He was Jesus BFF For those who don't know what a BFF is... it means Best Friends Forever. One of the reasons why I have hope for the church is that friendship has become a passion and high priority for our youth/emerging church. When I listen to my son Mark talks to his buddies on the phone I hear him say to his best buddy *'don't hang up until you say you love me ... come on say you love me'*. Where I grew up... that would have resulted in a black eye if I said that to another guy. But today through words to each other ... sharing of pretty deep thoughts on Facebook... or one's every activity being noted on Twitter it is obvious that the passion for deep friendships are on the grow again. And I would add that increasingly I am seeing that the desire to establish true friendships is become a heart call across the ages.

What is a Friend? A friend is *someone who will die for you*. (Face book ... you know it is a real relationship when *it lasts more than 10 text message... and you haven't been Unfriended* by your face book friend). Friends are...

- People with whom you can dare to be yourself...
- You know they are a real friend when... *you make a fool of yourself and they don't feel you have done a permanent job of it.*
- Walter Winchell says... *a friend is the one who walks in when others are walking out.*
- A friend allows you to be yourself... and helps you become your growing self.

A friend is someone who you can weep with ...laugh with... pray with ...and someone who you can call at 3:00 in the morning and they will pick up the phone ... They are someone we all need.

Ill: When I asked for an example of this, Jerry said a number of years ago when he was on the road a lot performing, his engine went out of his truck. Without thinking he called Barry to help him put in the engine... they worked all day... all night... and finished in time for him to leave that next morning for his gig. *Friends like that are hard to find... harder to leave ... and impossible to forget.* That is what we all crave... So I think we all agree ... we all need key friendships in our lives. Let's see Sheldon's Scientific Solution Clip #3

II. Friends... so Be One

Ill: A while ago I decided it was time join Face Book. So I signed up... and almost instantly I had friends contacting me that I hadn't seen since HS. Man I felt loved... as that number grew. The only problem was I have so many emails to deal with every day that I wasn't checking my face book as much I should. And when I failed to accept my daughter as a friend ... I knew that I needed to get my act together or get off Face book. I had to make some decisions... that if I was

going to be a face book friend I needed to do some specific things so I would be a better friend. So that we can be better friends... and therefore have deeper friendship... let me list 8 things I think we need to understand:

1. Friends... need to be chosen wisely

I know I will sound like your mom here... but we know from either experience or observation that *if you get mixed up with the wrong crowds it could cost you greatly*. I Cor. 15:33 says '*Bad company corrupts good character*'. Prov.28:19 '*like a bad tooth ache ... is an unfaithful friend*'. The wrong friend is like 'a pain in the ... tooth'. Ill: Just ask Ken what it is like to have a tooth that is impacted... and as the extraction happens a piece breaks off... and you go to oral surgeon a number of times ... That is what a wrong friend can do ...it can cause not only pain ... It can corrupt our character... Your heart... your future is too precious to place it in the hands of someone who may not care for it carefully. I have the scars that tell of opening my heart to fast ... some of you do as well. Be careful But also remember that without risk very few great things happen.

2. Friends... protect their friends

A Jewish proverb said *a friend is someone who never abandons a friend*. Prov. 17:7 '*Friends stick together through all kinds of weather*' (msg). Ill: One day Doug Pebbles (former Associate Pastor) came to me and said '*Dave I had a dream last night ... we were both dressed in camouflage going across a field. As you led, I was tight to your back looking the other way ...covering your back... know I will always do that for you*'. What a picture... big Doug covering my back ...what a promise. That is the kind of friend all of us wants and needs. But in order to have that kind of friend... you need to be that kind of friend as well. You see I had his back... as well. I think what is often lost today is that we don't promise to be a friend *even when times get tough*. Let's be honest... a little rain is going to fall in all of our lives. Ill: At the Men's Breakfast the other morning one of our men talked about rising to the top of one of our most well known large companies in town, only to find out that he felt he couldn't as a Christians/ as a man of Character stay in his position ... so he resigned. Afterwards when I asked him how he worked through this tough/ possible career ruining decision... he said he had friends who walked with him during the tough times. Friends keep what you tell them in private... private. Friends will not allow others to speak ill of you in their presence. True friends ...as Walter Winchell said "*are the ones who walk in when others walk out*". That is the kind of friend all of us need ... and need to be for others.

3. Friends... tell the truth

Prov. 17:6 *'faithful are the wounds of a friend'* 27:17 *'As steel sharpens steel ...one friend sharpens another'* (msg). Oscar Wilde put it this way *'A true friend stabs you in the front'*. Friendship is also about honesty. Just like you feel compelled to tell your friend who is walking back from the washroom she has toilet paper stuck to her shoe... or tell your friend that his fly is open just after he steps up on the platform. If we care for a friend we need to speak about things that may not be that pleasant... but may be necessary for their care. If you do ... Please remember Eph4:15 *'speak the truth in love...'* Do it gently... caringly... and only after making sure of your motives (that it is not just one of your biases- but something they need to hear for their care) then come in a way that is appropriate, necessary, helpful and *'we will all grow up in Him'*... the result is that not only will it help them become a better them ... but it will also build our friendship and help us grow as well. Can I add ... that when someone comes to you like this ... try to lower you guard ... asks if there is truth in what they are saying? Then place it before the Lord and see if he agrees. And if he does ... use it to grow and know that if the person did this correctly you have found a friend you can trust. Let me also add that this works best face to face ...because when one receives an email/letter it is hard to see/ hear the tone in which the words or careful challenge is being given. And you miss the chance to grow better as friends.

4. Friends... bring the best out of us

'A friend is one who knows you as you are, understands where you have been – accepts you for who you are ...and gently invites you to grow'. A real friend wants to help you become a better you. Ill: Each staff meeting we ask a simple questions ... how did Sunday work... what we need to do better. I have a few friends I ask the same question ... because we want to keep growing in our capabilities and our hearts.

5. Friends... are willing to overlook foibles

Have you ever turned to a friend and said *'thank God you and I are normal ... because the rest of the world sure can be weird'*. The truth is that we all have foibles ... and we all make mistakes. Someone has said *if you really want to find out who your friends are, just make a mistake*". There is a lot of truth to that. A number of years ago Mark and went tobogganing down by the Bow in the middle of blizzard... as we were about to leave didn't see one of those 2 foot high slanted meridian ... my wheel caught and I drove right up on top of it. There I was hanging 3 feet in the air unable

to get down. So I called my good friend Dan Nemez – he came down with his heavy duty van ... and a camera. I wanted to die ... and when I saw the cherished grin on his face ...I thought to myself *‘I will never ever live this one down’*. Do you know that to this day I haven’t seen the pictures ... or heard him mention it again. Prov. 11:12 *“A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbour, but a man of understanding holds his tongue”*. Remember that eventually all of us will step in ‘it’ ... so walk carefully and graciously so when it is your turn ... your friends will be gracious to you as well. Can I add a note here ...when it comes to the church sometimes we forget that before a idea may fly ... a friend may find their way ... and a ministry may soar ... a few failures may happen along the way. Often churches fail to realize that in order to step out in faith and make a profound difference ... some setbacks will be happen along the way. So give others the slack you want them to give you some... that is God’s way of doing things.

6. Friends... bear others burdens

Ill: One day a person who was having trouble putting his antenna on his roof was amazed to see his neighbour appear on the ladder and he had his best tools with him. After the job was completed the man, who was wondering what his neighbour normally used those tools for asked *‘what do you make with your tools?’* His answer was *“mainly friends”*. Prov. 17:7 *‘a friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity’*. A brother is born FOR adversity ... he is the greatest blessing in adversity. Ill: Two weeks ago Linden Schmidt (18) was at Hub Sunday night when someone came into the group ... sat beside him ... and stole his 32 gig ... iPod Touch. They chased the fellow across the road ... cornered him ... but he slipped away. This iPod cost him a lot of money ... and he wasn’t able to buy a new one ... it was really a tough loss. Do you know that all that week Ken received money from different Hub folks ... and last weekend at the retreat they called Linden forward and presented him with a brand new iPod and an iTunes gift card. What happened there was his Hub brothers and sisters were born FOR adversity ...and the depth of their friendship was seen during the adversity. We need to be that kind of friend.

7. Friends... build us up Spiritually

Prov. 27:17 *‘As steel sharpens steel...one friend sharpens another’ (msg)*. Ill; My first senior Pastor was Loren Irwin... he was my boss and my friend. Every day we would go for coffee and a cinnamon roll at the same restaurant. He would be himself ... his spiritual self ... and he refreshed and blessed and stretched my soul. We all need friends like that.

8. Friends... Refresh others

Prov. 11:25 *'He who refreshes others... is himself refreshed'*. That needs to be the take away verse of this whole series. Let me give you an example of what can happen when friendship really works.

Ill: A few weeks ago one of our men and his wife visited Marilyn and Todd Stiles. Todd is one of our Elders ... and his wife is one of the key leaders in our Caring ministry. She spends hours on the phone counselling/caring for others and praying with people. She is the key to getting food to people whose loved ones are in the hospital. She is the kind of person that would never tell you that she has been struggling with poor health... at times life threatening health for many years. And yet she is always positive... always caring... always interested in the needs of others first. However, this past while his health has taken a turn for the worst – and the Drs in Calgary had reached a dead end. So the suggestion arose ... why not go to the Mayo clinic and see what they can find? The solution was simple... but would cost over \$30,000; what do you do... re-mortgage the house... take out a huge loan? So basically this option fell off the table. So this couple met with them, prayed with them, cried with them ... because they were friends. When they went home they couldn't sleep... so they met with another couple, also friends ... Together they decided to send an email around to see if others would be interested in helping – and no tax receipts could be given. A week ago while Todd was at the Elders meeting... we had these 2 couples join us ... to tell him that they had promises for \$33,000 – plane tickets – and accommodation for the both of them.... After we wept with him ... and prayed for him we told him to leave the Elders board meeting and go home with these 4 friends and tell his wife to start packing. I can tell you, that night a miracle happened for the Stile family... they were refreshed by their friends and astounded at what God did ... and everyone who gave has been refreshed as they cared for their friend. The wonder of friendship is that as we refresh others ... we in turn are refreshed.

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