



Facebook has blurred our understanding of a friend. According to Facebook, friendship with someone is obtained by a mere click of a blue "confirm" button. We can have hundreds or thousands of "friends" with little or no commitment to a real relationship! The number of Facebook friends that we have has become a social competition to display our superior likability. According to Facebook I (P David) currently have 1,407 "friends". Don't get me wrong, I have actually met and personally know all of the individuals I am Facebook friends with, but only a small few do I share a **close personal connection** with. In our fast paced and superficial culture, we have lost the meaning, significance, and hard work that are required to experience true friendship.

God intended friendship to be more than a superficial association with someone. Friendship is more than feeling comfortable saying, "hey" as we pass someone in the hallway. Friendship is more than sharing similar interests/hobbies, personality, or sense of humor with someone. According to Proverbs 17:17, a true friend is someone who, "**loves at all times**". The word "love" means to have a, "deep genuine feeling of care or concern" for someone. Friendship could be defined as an inseparable companionship between individuals who share a deep love for one another.

In Acts 4:36 we are introduced to a man named Joseph who was a great example of friendship. He had such a friendly reputation that the apostles called him Barnabas which means "son of encouragement". He lived up to his reputation of being an encouraging friend throughout his life. In Acts 9:27 Barnabas took a recently converted Paul to the other disciples to welcome him, even though they were hesitant to include him into the group, fearful of his past reputation of being a persecutor of the church and violent toward those who believed in Jesus Christ. It was Barnabas that vouched for Paul and convinced his fellow believers to receive him as one of them. In Acts 11:25-26 after Peter brought the message of the gospel to the Gentiles, Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch to teach the new Gentile believers more about Jesus Christ. In Acts 13:2 Paul and Barnabas were sent off to partner together in proclaiming the word of God. Even though Paul and Barnabas' relationship was not always perfect, in the end, the strength of their friendship allowed them to appreciate and recognize one another (1 Cor. 9:6).

Encouragement is just one important characteristic of friendship, in John 15:12-13 Jesus gives the #1 characteristic of friendship saying, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone **lay down his life** for his friends". There is no greater display of friendship than laying our lives down for the sake of a friend . . . which is exactly what Jesus did for his disciples and for us. It's important to have lots of good friendships, but there is only one who is worthy of being considered our best friend . . . Jesus Christ!

## For Discussion



What are some of the most important characteristics of friendship? What do you think of the idea that if you want to HAVE friends, it is important that you BE a friend? What are some ways we can be a friend to others?



READ: Proverbs 19:6

What are some ways you can be generous and giving in friendship?



READ: Proverbs 27:6

Is someone being a faithful friend if they always only smother you with "kisses" of admiration and adoration? Why would the "wounds" of a friend be important sometimes?



READ: Proverbs 27:9

Why is it important to seek the counsel of friends?

**TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY**

**ASK GOD TO HELP YOU EXHIBIT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GODLY FRIEND TOWARD OTHERS**



So often Jesus taught with stories - He knew that we learn really well that way!

What is your nickname? Have you given your children and loved ones nicknames that indicate how special they are to you? Are you calling each other godly things you want each other to live up to? In my family, pet names and nicknames are absolutely the norm. Because I was the first baby to come along in a long time, my extended family called me "Baby Kelly." This was okay until I was 17 and graduating from high school! Think about the names Jesus gave to some of His friends: Simon = Peter (Rock); James and John = Sons of Thunder. The main character in this series of true stories from the Bible, Joseph, so lived up to his nickname, "Barnabas—Son of Encouragement," that he is better known to us by that name! Barnabas's story includes helping someone very unpopular, encouraging forgiveness between friends, and the joy of reconciliation and restitution! His story even includes a disagreement—something we can certainly learn from today! You might remind your kids (and yourselves) of other godly men in Scripture who have the name Joseph, too. I know you will be blessed by this week's devotions, sermon, and Kahoot! about friendship! Miss Kelly *Don't forget Wednesday's Trivia Game!*

Memory Verse

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. Acts 4:32

Questions	Answers
What does Joseph's nickname, Barnabas, mean?	Son of Encouragement
Who needed Barnabas's help in being accepted by the Christians in Jerusalem?	Saul/Paul
Paul and Barnabas became missionary partners after _____ suggested that they work together.	The Holy Spirit
Who were Paul and Barnabas's first audience?	The Jews
Acts talks a lot about unity and friendship. Who gets the credit for making this happen?	The Holy Spirit
God healed what broken part of the man in Lystra?	His feet
After God healed the man, Barnabas was confused for what fake god?	Zeus
Give three (or more!) examples from the Bible of Barnabas's good actions?	Answer could include: Fasting, praying, teaching, preaching, encouraging, ministering, and sticking up for people.
Barnabas preached with Paul that Grace is superior to what?	The Old Testament Law
Who got another chance from Barnabas after he quit on a missionary journey?	John (or Johnmark)