

Remnant Life Church
January 18, 2015

“Establishing True Friendships”

Eccl 4:9-12

- Like most things there has been a great change to the concept of friendship and what it means
- Not too many generations ago there was a certainty that you could rely on as it related to the people in your life
 1. Families, no matter their level of health or dynamic, stayed together
 2. The kids you grew up with were your friends and associates for your entire life
 3. There was a sense of intimacy and security with those in your life that created an “us” feeling that you guarded and protected
 4. Certainly right and wrong were much more clearly defined and in most instances of your life there was a path to travel
- Today virtually all of that is gone
 1. The stigma of divorce has disappeared; instead it is strange if you are not divorced
 2. The goal of most kids is to move as far away from their parents as possible Right and wrong have been virtually obliterated
 3. Right and wrong have been virtually obliterated
 4. The concept of friendship is based more and more on what is best for me in any circumstance (Outrunning the Grizzly)
- Is there any wonder why relationships today are so fleeting and unsatisfying?
- What is a biblical model for relationships that have substance and can stand the test of time and circumstances?
- Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes from a place of age and wisdom
 1. Proverbs and Song of Songs are written in the prime of life and the energy of youth
 2. The theme of Eccl is “meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless.”
 - While that might be his theme, his writings and what we can learn from them are far from it
- There is within each of us created a need to belong
 1. Some deny it by saying they are loners
 2. But that is not how we are created
 - *It is not good that man should be alone* (**Gen. 2:18**)
 - God did not intend for us to go through life alone
 - Being alone from time to time is not bad
 - Jesus went off alone regularly to pray
 - Everyone enjoys at least some measure of solitude
 - But for those who prefer that to being with others is always a reason
 - Establishing meaningful, healthy friendships should be one of our highest earthly priorities

3. Chuck Swindoll - "The neighborhood bar is possibly the best counterfeit that there is to the fellowship Christ wants us to give one another in His church."
 - 1982 song written by Gary Portnoy as the theme song for Cheers
 - Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name, and they're always glad you came; You want to be where you can see, troubles are all the same; You want to be where everybody knows your name.
 - Isn't it sad that the words of that song better describe more bars than it does churches?

READ – Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 – The value of a friend

4. The first thing we read is that friendship requires investment (v9)
 - Time; energy; self
 - People who only invest themselves in the things of life, rather than people, will ultimately find themselves in possession of neither.
 - The poster child of material acquisitions was Malcom Forbes.
 - Said this – "He who dies with the most toys, wins."
 - He did die, but he didn't win anything, he just died
 - Our investments should be in the relationships of our lives
 - It starts first and foremost with a relationship with Jesus Christ
 - We then should care about the relationships with family and those closest to us
- **What is a Real Friend?**
 1. Someone who helps you when you are down (v10)
 - How can you tell the difference between a real friend and an acquaintance?
 - Get in trouble
 - Who is there with you without reservation?
 - Can you make a call at 2:00 a.m. and the question is not "what's your problem?" but rather "Where are you? I'll be right there."
 - **Prov 17:7** – *A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity.*
 - Do you have that person or people in your life and, perhaps even more important than that, are you that someone else?
 - The circle of people in my life
 2. Provides emotional and physical warmth in the times of cold (v11)
 - Physical comfort and meeting needs is just one part
 - More than that – when you are emotionally spent who do you turn to?
 - Does anyone know that they can turn to you?
 - When you come on the scene do you make it better or worse?
 3. Someone who will fight to protect you and your reputation (v12)
 - Born out of that time's military strategy

- Virtually all combat was hand-to-hand
 - No one ever went anywhere by themselves
 - You only left the group if someone was with you to watch your back
 - This needed to be someone they trusted implicitly
 - A friend always guards your back, they never stab it
 - Gossip is the biggest knife
 - Gossip – saying something negative or unkind about a person who is not present whether it is true or not
 - Gossip will kill more churches than almost anything else
 - A real friend will not only never do that but will not stand silently while someone else does it either
4. Someone who cares about your spiritual life and growth
- **Prov 27:17** – *As iron sharpens iron, so one friend sharpens another*
 - **John 15:13** - *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends*
 - Laying down your life does not mean dying only
 - It means giving up your own desires for someone else's
 - It means wanting for someone else to be successful even it means you are not
 - It means deferring to someone else and not getting the credit
 - It means, more than all of that, demonstrating Jesus' love
- Do you demonstrate Jesus everywhere you go?
 - Do you have that kind of friend in your life and if not, why?
 - Are you that friend to someone else? If not, why?
 - The single most important friendship you can have is with Jesus Christ
 - If you do, are you the kind of friend who will point others to Him as well?
 - Karl Marx - Karl Marx who wrote the Communist Manifesto in 1848 had - and still has - millions of followers. His philosophy has helped shape (and some would say, ruin) many nations. Yet Marxists still consider him the true champion of the under classed people.

But anyone who knew or know of him must admit that Marx did not live what he preached. One of his most famous quotes was "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need." But he must have seen himself in the very "needy" category because he never held a steady job. Instead he lived off the inheritance of his aristocratic wife and his wealthy friend and benefactor, Friedrich Engels.

He preached revolution for the downtrodden masses --- but did not take the time to form friendships outside of a very few. As a matter of fact in his personal life, he had formed few close ties. And when he died, only 11 people attended his funeral – including his two daughters and their husbands.

Karl Marx and Jesus Christ shared a few things in common. Both were considered revolutionaries. Both championed the poor, the outcasts and the downtrodden. But the similarity ends there. People might follow the TEACHINGS of Marx, but they follow the EXAMPLE of Jesus. Jesus lived the simple, generous, pure life that He taught. He surrounded himself with the common folks that He championed. Jesus reached out to the poor. He touched and healed the outcasts. He lifted up the downtrodden. Jesus truly LIVED what he taught.