

The Care and Feeding of Our Friends
by Chris Famisaran and Bill Aumack

Bill: Welcome everyone. Pastor, it's good to see you again. Thank you. It's good to be I know you were on vacation last week and I know it was a staycation. He didn't go any place tropical with those cool drinks with umbrellas in them. He didn't get to do any of that.

Chris: No.

Bill: But, you know, hopefully you took care of the stuff you needed to stay for your vacation on and you got a little mental break from us. So that's good too.

Chris: Cause you guys are such an issue.

Bill: All right, Pastor, why you open us up with prayer.

Chris: Before I pray, I just want to share a message of thanks on behalf of my sister. I have not publicly shared with everybody, but my sister was diagnosed with cancer a couple of weeks ago and it was very serious. So fortunately enough, her doctor was able to bump the time up. She was able to have surgery a couple of weeks ago and that's actually why I was off. was spending time with her. She's recovering well and she'll be starting the next phase of treatment probably in about a month and a half or so. So please continue to pray for her. I greatly appreciate you all doing praying for her. Thank you. Father in heaven, we thank you. Lord, you are good and you are a great God. As we now journey together, when it comes to friendship, leading guidance in Jesus name, amen.

Bill: All right, so obviously we're doing something a little different today. You notice that there's no sermon notes on the back of your handout, but there's a blank sheet of paper so you can write stuff down if anything cool happens that you want to remember, okay? We encourage you to do that.

And there's something that I've always struggled a little bit with. And so Pastor and decided we wanted to talk about that. And I think if I struggle with it,

probably other people do too. I hope that I'm not the only one. But you know, the Bible gives us lots of commands, if you will, right? Go and make disciples, love everybody, you know, be kind. take care of our money, take care of our bodies, take care of our spiritual being, take care of our neighbors. That one gets a little hard sometimes. Because it's easy to take care of your neighbor like in the parable of the Good Samaritan, you see somebody that really needs help, that's easy. But how do you take care of that coworker you might not even like. Maybe you're both fighting for the same promotion, know, and there's some animosity.

Chris: Yeah,

Bill: [can't remember the word animosity]. that thing! between you.

Chris: Words are hard. Words are hard.

Bill: Words are hard. Retired now. I can't think. So, you know, how do we do that? You know, we know how to take care of our family, how to take care of our kids, how to take care of our spouse. But how do we take care of our neighbors and be intentional about that? That's a big long question, but basically I think what I'm kind of getting down to is how can I be intentional about my friendships?

Chris: So friends are good, right? Friends are great to have. How many of you have at least one friend? Okay. How many of you have at least five friends? How many of you have 10 friends? How many of you have 50 friends?

Bill: Do count everybody here?

Chris: Okay, fine. How many of you though, you know, when you think about it, like, okay, I have 50 friends, but how many of them are really your friends? And where do they become acquaintances? And even within the friend structure, I find that, oh yeah, I have my best friend, but then I also have that best friend and that one and that one. Pretty soon I realized I have six best friends. So is it really a best friend if you have six of them? So I have six really, really close friends. But where is the line? And ultimately... My friends, do I have to keep ministering to them or is there a balance that I need to have?

And ultimately when it comes to friendship. What do friends required? Communication. And with communication you need to have what? You need to spend time together. And simply put, you can't be everybody's best friend. Amen? I tried that and I wish I could be with all of my friends and hang out and have lunch every day. But the older I get, the busier I get, the busier my friends get. Until sometimes it might be, hey, a week goes by. or even a couple of months, all of a sudden, wait, we haven't talked. We haven't caught up and it felt like it was forever.

I do believe that Jesus wants us to be intentional about our friendships. When you look at the disciples, we've talked about this before. How many disciples, what were the core number of disciples that followed Jesus? There was 12, right? But even within that, there was a subset of three disciples, Peter, James, and John, who Jesus regularly took. And I think it was more of a mentorship role to kind of help prepare them for what would be in the future. But Jesus was also very intentional about spending time with those around him.

So, you know, how do how can I be a friend? Well, you have to have similar interests. I'm sure you have to have similar beliefs. Those are probably good. If you had opposite beliefs, it'd be hard for you to get along. But then again, opposites do attract, right? Same with your relationship with your spouse. Do you believe everything? Are you completely aligned? Or is there some commonality but also some differences? Or are you just complete opposites? And how's that working out? It can be challenging, right? If you agree and want to be aligned, anything can happen. But you have to be aligned in some respects. So spend time together. What are some of the interests that you share?

And one thing that I've learned as well, if you want to build a friendship, if you want to build a relationship, I think this is maybe unpopular, but I think you need to have a little adversity. You need to have a lot of commonality, a shared suffering. And I'll make this a case in point. It's a good point. You know, a couple of years ago, those of you who know, when it rained, do you know what

happened to me? My stomach and my heart would just cringe because I knew our building was just allowing water to go through. And we came together and we raised a lot of money, right? Because we knew this place is important not only to God, but also for us. And so, you know, some of us, maybe we had to give up a couple of coffees, a couple of McDonald's runs just for the sake of the church group. And that shared stuff enabled us to move forward. Right? So I think adversity also Friendships also require maybe a little challenge to get through, but you have to be aligned.

Bill: I know when Linda and I first started dating, we had adversity because I was a hardcore Celtic fan and she was a hardcore Laker fan. And that was the 80s and you know, that was, those were wars that we had, but I won when we moved into a house and it had a parquet wood floor. She was converted.

Chris: Uh, yes. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. No. Sorry. You're in LA territory, So, you know, looking back, there was some adversity. Do fun things to try something new. Go to a pottery class, a baking class. So one of the things, you know, when Leisa and I first got married, she would go to the store and she and her friend, Lisa, they would go and take baking classes. It's a shared experience. What do you find in common? with your friends, okay? Go to the gym together, grab lunch, do things that are fun.

Bill: All right. All right. So, you know, if I summed all that up, I'm hearing balance.

Chris: Yes.

Bill: Do some things together, spend time together. Maybe it's not always your favorite thing to do, but you're spending time with your friend doing their favorite thing. You have to think of the other person too, yeah. And you know, I love balance. I ride a motorcycle. Balance is something I think about a lot. very important to me. So I like that.

But what else is important? Like maybe what's maybe the single most important thing we can do with our friends to have good friends, to keep good friends.

Chris: Well, there's a couple of things. I guess you could say there's a couple of points is number one, when you create and build relationships, you need to have humility. It's not about you. Is my mic short?

Bill: It is. I'm trying to decide if it's where I stand or where you stand.

Chris: All right, should I stand over here? Maybe that will help. I apologize. Jesus taught us not to be first, to think of others. Okay, so maybe, hey, you want to go to lunch at this spot and next time you go to the other spot, their spot. Try different things, but ultimately we have to think of others. And sometimes your friends needs, I'm not saying they completely trump over yours, but that they, you have to take into consideration their facts, their ideas, what they desire. have different interests and that's the only way you're going to grow is when you get uncomfortable. What do you find in common? Okay.

Chris: And also, you know, when it comes to friendship, it's never going to be 50-50. If you've been married long enough, you realize it's not always 50-50. You try to meet that as much as possible 50-50. But sometimes friendships require, hey, if they're busy, maybe you're not going to be able to hang out as much. How can I still be able to be a friend to them? And then at the same time, too, maybe you have a project that you got to work on, but they're able to share. Hey, send a note of encouragement. Send a text, send a door dash coupon, whatever it be. right.

Chris: But the thing that I think we have to be mindful of is in this relationship, not only am I receiving, but how can I share and don't take advantage of your friends? First Corinthians, we don't have time to read it. But in 1 Corinthians, sorry, 1 Chronicles, chapter 11, David, there was a stronghold in the Pharisee, yeah, Philistines trying to get after David. And David says, I'm thirsty. And his buddies literally go and risk their life for some water. And they come back and they bring him the water. And he's like, what, what? Are you serious? So. It says, should I drink the blood of these men who were at the risk of their lives because they risked their lives to bring it back, David would not drink it. When it comes to friend, be fair, be kind, be helpful. Do not take advantage of your friend's good will.

Chris: And then continuing on the theme of humility. One of the greatest stories of humility that I can find is actually in the book of first Samuel. Let's go there real quick. Okay, 1st Samuel, I want to go to chapter 20. And it's a story that many of us are probably familiar with. We've studied it a couple times. But I just want to highlight a couple of things here. So 1st Samuel chapter 20. Those of you who know the story know that Jonathan is the son of who? King Saul. Did King Saul love David for the most part? No, because he was threatened. David was very popular. He was a great warrior and he felt insecure. Jonathan... Okay, starting at verse one.

Then David fled from Natioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and said, what have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father that he's trying to kill me? And Jonathan said, never, you are not going to die. Look, my father doesn't do anything great or small without letting me know why he, why would he hide this from me? It isn't so. Okay. Then David says, Hey, your dad knows that I found great favor amongst the people and the Lord and everything, Jonathan, if you, if you follow the story recognizes that David is going to be a great King. Jonathan actually has the opportunity. He is supposed to be the successor, but he gives up that possibility because he knows that David will be a better King. He's humble. He thinks of them. If you also continue to read, you'll see that there's examples of trust, loyalty. There's mutual respect, but also vulnerability. Not only that, after Jonathan is actually killed in battle, he has a son, Mephibosheth. And who goes in and takes care of little Mephibosheth? David. So much so, that all David had to say, all you have to do, you get to choose what breakfast you want in the morning. He says all of your needs will be taken care of. Friendship means not caring for them, but also connected.

So being part of a friendship also at times will require vulnerability. Takes a lot of humility to be vulnerable. Amen. It's hard to open up sometimes to you, especially when you have been betrayed. You ever been betrayed before? It's a drag. It's a bummer. It hurts. And it's hard to, it's hard to, you know, put your feelings out there because you do not want to be burned again. But you, having an open friendship is also being vulnerable with those you are close to.

Anything else? also, They were great friends. Jesus and the beloved disciple, as many of us believe, is the John. And then you also have the example of Paul and Timothy. Timothy kind of becomes, in a way, an adopted son of Paul. And Paul pours his life into Timothy to help him to become not only a great teacher and leader in the church, but he genuinely considers him as his own son. So humility, vulnerability. What else? Oh, we'll come back to that later.

Bill: Okay. I also think of Naomi and Ruth a little bit.

Chris: That too.

Bill: That's an example maybe. So it seems like there's quite a bit here. I mean, you talk about humility, vulnerability, lots of stuff going on there. But I have a couple of friends. How do I keep those friends?

Chris: Scheduled time if they are important to you you will make time right now Does this mean that you block out 20 hours of the week no, it's it's not realistic But even if you may not be able to grab lunch Hey Catch up via FaceTime, right

Chris: Or one thing that I actually learned and I did a video. I think a couple weeks ago I called it a waffle Wednesday And there was this idea where this guy, he takes his phone, he does a one or two minute quick life update on how things are going, and he sends it to his group of friends in the chat thread. And all of a sudden he realized three, four or five people did the same thing. And so you may not all be able to like spend hours at a time watching the game on Sunday or doing a barbecue or playing golf in the middle of the week, but you're able to give a quick update and you're able to see each other face to face. It's still not the same, but it's still something better than nothing,

Even, you know, you could text somebody something, but it doesn't have the same effect as being able to see their face, their mannerisms, you know, the look of mischievousness on their face, right? Spend time, be intentional. And look, if they are valuable to you, you will make time. Vice versa. If a friend is in need, you will make time. So schedule that.

Chris: Now Ecclesiastes 4, 9 through 12 talks about two are better than one because they have a return for their labor. either of them falls down, one can help the other, but pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. And if two lie together, they will be warm. How can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A quarter of three strands is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes is talking about the importance of having friendships because life, can it be tiring? Can it be exhausting? Can it be difficult? Absolutely. And friendships help us to get through those difficult times. And it's also talking about too, that we need to be there for one another. So spend the time building and cultivating friendships. Okay. And also Proverbs 27, 17 talks about as iron sharpens iron. So one person sharpens another. You can't sharpen iron if you're not spending time together. What does that mean? Again, okay, at the very least, if you can't get together, call them, text them, ask them how's their spouse? How's their kids doing? You know, their son got a new car, new job promotion, whatever it may be. Take and find out what their interests are and share those experiences. Share the joys. Share the struggles together. Let's see.

Bill: I have a question about iron sharpens iron.

Chris: Yes.

Bill: You know what I'm going to ask. Maybe. So I struggle with that text sometimes because I feel like that text is kind of meant for Christian to Christian friendships. Right. I can tell my Christian brother, hey man, get your act together, do this or whatever. But I have a hard time doing that with my non-Christian friends. Because they don't have the same belief system I do. And so sometimes it seems like that's not iron sharpening iron, that's iron beaten on a piece of wood or something. I don't know. So any tips on how we do that with our non-Christian friends who may have vastly different beliefs than us?

Chris: Thank you. I promise to share and that's also another thing too. Good friends share. You know, what did we just talk about in our last small group series? We talked about relationships. Should we not listen, care, respect

them, build trust? If you don't have those things, you're not able to do what? What was the next step? Influence them. Thank you. Making me feel better. I did something right. you're not able to influence them. And ultimately you're not able to lead them. Okay. So if you want to be able to help your friends and, and look, not only do you want to be, uh, influential, but in a ways you, you, you are influenced by them as well. So maybe a positive influence. And the biggest thing is just listen, listen. Don't go around, hey, Bill, you really messed up this last week. Does that win hearts and minds? No.

And where there may be challenges, how do you deal with that? Ask questions. Don't tell them they're wrong. Make them think. Why? What's a better way? So that's one of them. But again, communication. Just because you may be a believer doesn't mean you know everything and you're definitely not perfect. Okay? Okay. I'm not perfect. Okay. I'll just say that. I know I'm the first to say that, Hey, I'm a sinner just like everybody else, but you can't influence if you don't care about them. As soon as somebody knows that you genuinely love and care for them, that's when they will open up. Otherwise, what you ever experienced when somebody wants something from you? How does it make you feel? keep them at a distance. That's true, right? And yet if they genuinely love you, they have no hidden agenda. You're willing to open up and listen, right? Same thing just as is it in church. All these principles apply throughout your whole life. Does that answer?

Bill: Yes. All right, so. Sometimes we don't like to necessarily. can be used as confront our friends, right? And so, you know, and we say things like, I'm an introvert and I don't wanna talk to anybody because I'm an introvert. And I think we're all some kind of mix of extrovert and introvert and we're on this great, I didn't wanna use that word but spectrum is a good word of introvert and extrovert. And some days, you know, we're more on one side or the other side. COVID experience made us all a little more introverted.

Chris: Absolutely.

Bill: I used to go to the grocery store and talk to people. I haven't been in the grocery store in like five years, cause you know, they deliver it to my house

now. So why go? Right? So you miss those opportunities to talk to people and it's hard. And so we say, I'm gonna live my life as a good example. And I'm gonna be just the best example. And they'll come flocking to Jesus cause they'll see how I live. I found that to generally not be true because there's a lot of people out there living good lives, right? They're not mass murderers, they're not thieves, they're not...., they're decent people. So as a Christian, how do I differentiate? How do I be different? How do I make an eternal difference in my friendships?

Chris: Do you have to be a different person for the people who are not in the church? That's a question that I've pondered. Do I have to act differently? The only thing different is maybe, you know, it's one thing we can have a very serious theological question, conversation, right? Am I going to do the same thing to John Smith out on the street? No. Why? Because he has no idea what I'm talking about, right? You have to meet them where they are at. And so, you know, be mindful as you talk to people. As Christians, I think even as Adventists, we assume a lot. And we assume a lot as far as what people should know. And I think sometimes we just, we have to start at the very basics. Just treat them with respect, love them.

Chris: How many of you have a really good friend that's not even in the church? Okay, next time I ask that question, I want to see all of your hands raised. It's actually very concerning when I ask this question, does anybody have friends outside of church and only a handful of people like when I talk about friends, like not a lot of people's hands went up. That scared me to death because how are we supposed to share the gospel if we're not even talking and getting to know people outside the church? Okay. We cannot expect people to come here. If anything, the culture has changed where people do not want to come. And if you watched the video with this last week, the point was, you know, they may not run into the church, but you may be the only example outside of the church.

Chris: So how are you representing the church? I mean, just really, how are you reflecting Christ? You know, is my talk, is my demeanor, is my posture, is

that of warmth and love or hostility? and anger when you're driving. We have to lead with empathy and love and compassion. But also at times we're called, you know, we can be firm in our convictions, but we do so with love. It all begins with love. And ultimately we have to build relationships outside, listen, trust, care, respect, influence, and be able to lead. So as a person, I hope that I am The person that's up here is also the same person outside. And I think I will say for sure, over the years of being a pastor, I'm definitely more myself than I was basically almost 19 years ago when I started. It's easy to put a mask on, but I don't want to wear a mask. I want to be authentic. I want to be myself. If we're truly hiding, what good is that?

Bill: Okay. So when you talk about hiding, I'm thinking about accountability here.

Chris: Uh-oh. Should we be accountable to each other? If your friend is drowning, are you just going to let them sink?

Bill: I hope not.

Chris: Yeah, you would hope not. Although maybe they made you mad the other day. You can suffer a little. No, no, no, no. And I think this is so true friendship. If you see your friend struggling, do you just not say anything? Or do you say something? And if you do, how do you do so? Do you just go up and say, Hey, you know, you're wrong and take a mallet, you know, use a mallet if you're wrong. Or do you listen, Hey, what's up? You know, I noticed this. I noticed that is everything. Okay. Just start with, you okay? And you know, when you're struggling, it's, it's nice to hear when somebody recognizes that you're struggling or You could say, no, I'm fine. And you can act like everything is okay, but you know, deep down it's not going back to our conversation when it comes to David and Jonathan was everything okay? No, Saul was trying to kill David and they had to be very vulnerable and honest. And sometimes that's hard, especially guys. We don't want to be vulnerable. We don't want to admit when we're struggling. We don't want to admit when we're hurting. We don't want to admit when it hurts when we feel rejected or we feel like we have the weight of the world on our shoulders and we don't get

recognized. Okay. It's hard to admit those things. But yet if we're not going to be honest, we're just going to suffer in silence. And that's why friendships and relationships are key. That's why we have the church. That's why we're here. I mean, yes, we're here to worship God, but a part of it, the reason why we're here is because we love each other. It's a place that we can come together. We can feel safe. So when it comes to, in a sense, I guess you could say accountability. True friendship is honesty.

Chris: There are three friends you need in your life, and I mentioned this before, but I want to repeat them. If you can't, write this down, okay? The first friend, number one, you need a truth teller. The truth teller tells you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear, okay? They tell you the truth. I love my wife. She's a truth teller. And sometimes it hurts when she tells me the truth. But you know what? She's usually right 99.9 % of the time. I was only right 0.01 % once. Bill is also a truth teller. There are things that I love and then he realized, well, what about this? I hate that. Or his favorite three letter word, why. But it saved me a lot of grief. Okay. You need to have truth tellers in your life. The second friend that you need is you need a confidant, one who listens. You need somebody who listens. And thirdly, you need your ride or die. The one who, if you got to go to the hospital at 2.38 in the morning and you call them and if they even can't just come, they'll at least be there. Or if you need help, they're there for you. It's amazing if you have at least one of those, right? But if you can have all three, you've hit a unicorn, right? All right.

Bill: So I've heard you say that we're not supposed to lead with how they're wrong and we need to earn their trust through these difficult conversations, asking questions instead of just beating them over the head with what we think is our version of the truth, right? So it... That seems to be different than what the world offers us and shows us is the right way to do things.

Bill: So I'm thinking that maybe our reflection is here. Does my friendships model what the world shows? Or does my friendships model what Jesus example was? And that's a hard thing. It's easy to follow the world's model.

Chris: When somebody disrespects you, what do you want to do? You want to fight back. All right. You got those zingers. Maybe you have a list of zingers in your phone that you review every once in a while. Right. But zingers may make you feel great for five seconds and hopefully, hopefully you will feel bad because you have a conscience. Right. You don't want to go around bashing people. And truth be told, if you bash somebody, if that's the, either the reputation you want to have, eventually at some point it's going to, what, it's going to come back to you. Right. Treat people how you would want to be treated. So at the default love. Don't be ran over though, but be, Jesus was firm, but he was also loving.

Chris: I lost my point. Yeah. So reflection, reflection. So how am I modeling? And the question now is, well, what next? Do the hard work. I want you to reflect on how am I modeling Jesus into the world? Are people naturally drawn to me or am I prickly and push people away? And sometimes that changes. Sometimes you could be prickly and sometimes... You could be full of hugs and joy.

Chris: Okay. Let's lead with hugs and joy. So with that, um, my friends, when it comes to friendships, pay attention, find similar interests, make new friends, you know, next door at the mortuary, John, their son, he's become a very valuable, trusted friend. You know, we get to, we go to lunch every once in a while, find somebody that you can be. either a confident or they can be a confident for you. Tell the truth and love and where needed. If somebody calls you, whether it's 1:38 in the afternoon or 2:38 in the morning, at the very least listen and be there for them.

Chris: May we model this here at Downey church and on the streets of Downey and wherever you go. All right. With that, my friends, let's pray.

Chris: Father in heaven. Thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to gather together and talk. about the importance of why friends are important. Leading guidance, help us to be empathetic, loving, kind, vulnerable. May you help us to be listened, care, respect, influence, and ultimately lead. In Jesus' name, amen.