BRAVE Men

- Spiritual Friendship

Spiritual Friendship

Introduction

The Gospel today talked about the end times, and the signs of the end.

“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” (Matthew 24:10-12)

What does friendship look like in 2026?

Unfortunately, we live in the most “connected” time in human history… and the most disconnected.

- Follow each other on social media
- Like each other’s posts
- Send a birthday message (maybe even it’s hbd)
- Invite each other when there’s a celebration
- Text each other some memes or funny videos
- We know what our friends are doing because of social media

We have 2000 friends on Facebook and no one that actually knows me. We have people we hang out with every single week and still no one knows what I’m struggling with or what’s on the inside. We have friends to have a good time with each other, but no friends to help me get to heaven.

What does friendship look like in God's eyes?

Friendship of St Basil and St Gregory

> “Basil and I were both in Athens. We had come, like streams of a river, from the same source in our native land, had separated from each other in pursuit of learning, and were now united again as if by plan, for God so arranged it. … I was not alone at that time in my regard for my friend, the great Basil. I knew his irreproachable conduct, and the maturity and wisdom of his conversation. … Such was the prelude to our friendship, the kindling of that flame that was to bind us together. In this way we began to feel affection for each other. When, in the course of time, we acknowledged our friendship and recognized that our ambition was a life of true wisdom, we became everything to each other: we shared the same lodging, the same table, the same desires, the same goal. Our love for each other grew daily warmer and deeper. The same hope inspired us: the pursuit of learning. This is an ambition especially subject to envy. Yet between us there was no envy. On the contrary, we made capital out of our

> rivalry. Our rivalry consisted, not in seeking the first place for oneself but in yielding it to the other, for we each looked on the other's success as his own. We seemed to be two bodies with a single spirit. … Our single object and ambition was virtue, and a life of hope in the blessings that are to come; we wanted to withdraw from this world before we departed from it. With this end in view we ordered our lives and all our actions. We followed the guidance of God's law and spurred each other on to virtue. … our great pursuit, the great name we wanted, was to be Christians, to be called Christians. [Gregory Nazianzen, Oratio 43, Funeral Oration for Basil the Great, PG 36, 514-423]

1. Brought together by God

Did you ever feel that a friend was sent into your life for a good reason? Do you believe that meeting friends and making friends is not by chance, but it is directed by a providential power greater than our own? If so, then you share in St. Gregory's view. Loving and healthy friendships are not our achievement but God's gift to us. Friends make us better people and are sent by God for that purpose—to encourage us, protect us, and sometimes challenge us in a way that says "you can do better; you can be better."

Friends are given to us by God as a gift and **for our salvation**

Think about the people are you are the closest with, that God has put in your life. Did you choose all of them? Did you plan to meet them? Did you know when you met them they would be this close?

Sometimes we look back and relaize "God put this person in my life."

And if friendship is a gift from God, then I have to ask "WHY did God give me this friend?" - "WHAT is God trying to accomplsh through this friendship?"

Maybe God gave you a friend to encourage you. Maybe to challenge you. Maybe to protect you. Maybe to teach you patience. Maybe you were getting lazy and you needed someone to push you.

And you can also ask in the opposite way - why did God put ME in his life? What am I doing for him?

2. Shared Goals (Pursuit of Holiness, Virtue)

St Basil and St Gregory were friends not just because they enjoyed each other's company - but they had a common goal and pursuit… holiness. Virtue. They wanted to be come Christians. They wanted to prepare for eternal life.

There is a difference between being "friendly" and being a friend.

- Who is forming me?
- Who has access to my heart?
- Who do I allow to influence my decisions?

- Who do I call when I’m struggling?
- Who do I imitate?

We become like the people we spend our lives with… Show me your friends and I will tell you who you are.

”Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3)

”Evil company corrupts good habits.” (1 Corinthians 15:33)

”He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.” (Proverbs 13:20)

3. Rivalry in Yielding the First Place to the Other

Normal Rivalry: I want to beat you

Christian Rivalry: I want you to be better than me

Your friend’s success isn’t a threat to you. His spiritual growth isn’t a competition. His promotion isn’t something to envy. His marriage isn’t something to compare against. His children succeess doesn’t make you feel inferior.

Sharing in each other’s joys

Being happy for my friend’s growth

When God uses him, I glorify God

Rivarly of wanting the other one to be better than me

”Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:3-4)

”In honor giving preference to one another.” (Romans 12:10)

Friendship of the Paralytic Man

> “And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them,* not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men.* And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let

> down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.
>
> When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”
>
> And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, “Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”
>
> But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘*Your* sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw *anything* like this!”
>
> (Mark 2)

1. Accepting One Another's Vulnerabilities (Selflessness)

TODO: And also exposing our own

A Paralytic man in those days was worthless. He can't bring any income, he can't do you any favors, he can't help you, he can only lay on the side of the road and beg; he wakes up in the morning and sees the ceiling. He is a prisoner in his own body. He has nothing going for him... he is taken as-is. And this problem he has is clearly visible to everyone... he's lying on a mat.

The mat is the vulnerability. We all have a mat...

1. Family Issues
2. Anger Problem
3. Bad Relationship
4. Trust Issues
5. Social Anxiety
    - "Hey man I'll pick you up, we'll walk in together"
6. Past Trauma

Example of Radical Love:

- Taking a day off of work to be with a friend ("I only have 25 days PTO!")

Four of the most incredible friends. They invested in him and went above and beyond.

“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:15)

”Two are better than one… for if they fall, one will lift up his companion.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

”Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

2. Serving One Another

Make time for one another

- Everybody has ten thousand things to do
- You need a chunk of un-hurried time
- Are you available for the people in your life?
- "I was afraid to text you because you're so busy..."
- "Sorry, I didn't want to burden you"
- "I didn't want to bother you"
- How many of your friends think "I don't want to bother him" or "He's probably not available"

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

”Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:15)

1. Even if it’s inconvenient
2. Costly
3. PTO

”My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:18)

”Oh I know him very well!!”

3. Bring each other to Jesus

Imagine if they said to their friend “We are taking you to Jesus to fix your paralysis” and he said “nah man you don’t know my struggle, don’t judge me, etc.”

No! In a friendship, it is known “I am your friend, so I am allowed to tell you when something is wrong. When something is off.” And I’m allowed to “bring you to Jesus” and say “let’s go to Church” or “let’s open the Scripture.” And I’m allowed to say “what you did was not right” or “how you answered wasn’t good” or “you need to improve in this and this and this.”

Nowadays we might have a friend doesn't bring me to Jesus, but even brings me to Satan himself. Hands me to Satan as a gift...

- I have a bad habit? YOU'RE gonna have a bad habit
- I have an addiction? YOU'RE gonna join me in it

- I have some doubts and some questions? YOU'RE gonna share with me in my doubts

King David says:

- "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'" (Psalm 121:1)

Do I have a friend that will bring me to Christ? That will say to me “Let us go into the house of the Lord” - “Let’s go to this meeting” - “Let’s attend the Bible Study”

It can be “Let’s hang out on Wednesday, we’ll go to the Bible Study and then we’ll spend some time together afterward.” And I include the Church activity as part of my plans with my friend

”As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” (Proverbs 27:17)

”If anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death” (James 5:19-20)

Conclusion

Friendship is from God. And every good friend that you have is given to you by God - not by chance, not by your own effort alone.

Resources

https://www.wordonfire.org/articles/contributors/saints-basil-and-gregory-on-true-friendship/