



November 1999

## Party Time!

Our consolation for running out of summer is the holiday season. This year feels especially relevant. A prophetic word last Spring was that the third quarter would be a season of warfare, the fourth would be blessing. I've felt the warfare. I'm really ready for answered prayer, changed circumstances, healings, deliverances, and rejoicing.

God gives us things in such cycles. For every week with a Monday in it, He also gives one with a Saturday and a Sunday. It's important to keep an eye on the entire package before we judge it too harshly or critically. It was looking over the whole of creation that God said, *It is good.*

We've been looking at the subject of friendship these last few months, and I've been walking with you over some of the journeys I've made on that subject. It does take time to be the kind of people we want to be and God desires us to be.

One thing to develop is a proper expectation of ourselves, of God, and of other people. When we begin to appreciate the dynamic of what we really need, what others really want, and what God really expects of us it can change our whole picture from one of frustration to joy and excitement. God's Word works!

This month I want to talk about the subject of covenant. We hear a lot about covenant friendships, with David and Jonathan being the best example. There's some important truth here but what's not said is as important as what is.

To begin with, the Bible says very little about covenants between men. Even the most common covenant, the marriage vow, is barely addressed in the Scripture. What we see a great deal of however, is covenant between God and man.

The Bible reveals man as a covenant breaker by nature. God is the great maker and keeper of covenants, man is the breaker and profaner.

Part of God's moral excellence is His unique ability to keep his word. We can trust Him.

Part of our hope is that by entering into the covenant God made for us, we'll receive power to begin to keep our word and be men and women of truth. This is a radical and farfetched idea but as God's idea it has merit.

This depraved and treacherous nature of man however, is something we need to take account of as we allow ourselves to enter deeper levels of friendship with others. Our capacity both to hurt and be hurt is very great. For this reason, the basis for all friendship should be not be our covenant with one another but our covenant with God. What kind of shape is it in right now?

How much love and commitment do I demonstrate toward the Lord and His house? Am I there every service, or do I miss a lot? Am I regular to read the Bible and pray? Do I tithe consistently? Do I talk more about the latest movie or current TV season than I do about the Lord or His Word? Am I keeping my covenant with God?

We should apply the same yardstick to potential friends too. This will clue us how far to open our heart, whether they should be on a peer level with us or whether we should be mentoring them or allow them to mentor us. All these relationships are necessary and valid but failing to discern and properly classify them can lead to problems.

We see such a separation spoken of in the life of Christ. *But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man's testimony about him, for he knew what was in a man.* (John 2:24-25) The man who came to redeem all mankind and calls each of us to come unto him did not fully give himself to anyone on his earthly walk. For this reason, when all forsook him, he still stood.

Be that as it may, there are some covenantal areas between men that are very important. That's because friendship is always given as a **limited** commodity. It has boundaries. Jesus referred to this indirectly in his story of the importunate friend (Luke 11:5-8). Friendship alone was not good enough reason to get his neighbor out of bed in the middle of the night.

The function of covenant in friendship is primarily to establish the *boundaries or limitations* of the relationship.

OK, so we're friends. Do I have the right to call you at home? What if it's 2 AM, can I still call? What if I'm calling at 2 AM because I need a ride to the airport at 3 AM, will you help me? If you help me, will you be glad to do it, or will that be the last time you ever want to see me?

If I ask you over for dinner, will you come? Suppose I don't ask you, will you invite me over sometime just because *it's been too long*? It's in areas like these we need to know the limitations and boundaries of each friendship of our lives, for each one will be different. Once again we get back to our key phrase from Ephesians 4, *Speaking the truth in love...*

We need to realize that in developing friendship we're cultivating our ability and understanding of what we can and cannot expect of the other person. The wonderful truth of friendship is that we *love* to be imposed on, provided it's by the right person, at the right time, and for the right reason. Usually we'll even settle for a two out of three and be thrilled about it. Sometimes even a one out of three, if that one is a good one.

Bear in mind that many of our friendships will develop with those whom life thrusts us together with such as neighbors, job-mates, ministry partners, business associates... In *body* parlance, the wrist will have more fellowship with the forearm than with the elbow. At one season in my life I realized my best customer had become my best friend, and it came as kind of a shock because it happened long before I realized it had.

Lord, open our minds and hearts to more friendships, and better friendships...

## Events:

Looks like our usual activities again, but why meddle when you approach perfection? (A little heavy handed humor, there.) We do try to keep the scheduling on the light side because we've discovered something about our TORCH people and feel it's of the Lord- we are very busy, very involved people.

Not only that, we have a conviction. We feel, for our age, that the very best singles' program in City Bible Church is City Bible Church itself, the services and the various opportunities for ministry it presents. To try to establish a high profile group modeled after what some of the younger ages are doing would be a step down for it would pull many of us from better things we're presently doing.

The younger groups do seem to need more attention, and may God bless them with it but by the time we're TORCH age we're done growed up and ready to do some of the things we dreamed about. For this reason TORCH seeks to establish a low key support group/peer network that is nevertheless real and vital.

What does that mean to each of you? If you can only make one event every six months or so, by all means come because we're here for you and you fit right in even on such a stretched time frame.

For the men, Promise Keepers is still going strong with back to basics. We should be reading the chapter about friends and the three categories (chapter 2). This month we're giving M- a night off and potlucking the dinner, so let's see what everyone can do, huh? Be on time, bring your book, and come ready to talk about how you're applying these principles in your life.

Ladies, it's Marie Callendar time on the 13th! Meet at 1:45 and plan on a good morning of fellowship.

The movie, *The Omega Code* has been taking the country by storm. We plan on going as a group on the 20th and catching dinner afterwards. C- is seeing to the arrangements as movies are hard to plan a month in advance.

Having an after Thanksgiving leftovers potluck worked well last year for our monthly group meeting, so we'll plan on it again this year at S's. See you there....

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