
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

January 12, 2014

Authentic Friendships

*“So Jonathan again made a pledge to David
because he cared about David as much as he cared about himself.”*
1 Samuel 20:17 (Common English Bible)

There is a great reversal of values in this brief passage – a reversal of how the world generally approaches friendships. The message we generally hear from childhood is that friendships can be an opportunity to advance oneself. Make the right friends and you will be positioned for good opportunities. Friendships made less wisely may become meaningful but will do nothing for personal and professional development. The evidence of this may be found in the common axiom, “It’s not what you know but whom you know.”

In this one sentence of scripture we hear something completely different. Jonathan once again affirms his friendship to David simply because he cared about David. Absent is any hint that the friendship is about something else; about using the friendship for personal advantage. Jonathan loved David, cared deeply about David. That was enough reason for pledging his continued friendship. That seems to me to be a better reason for pledging a friendship to another – simply because there is something about another that you love.

What I have found true is that there is a benefit of friendships chosen wisely. The benefit I speak of is that good friends tend to make me a better person. They demonstrate to me how to care more deeply and live for something larger than myself. There are some whose support and love for me makes me a better pastor. And I am deeply grateful for all of this. Yet, I keep coming back to this sentence of scripture. Jonathan again pledged friendship to David simply because he cared about David as much as he cared about himself. This seems to me to be a richer foundation for building friendships than looking for personal opportunity.

So what are we to do? What does this sentence from the Bible say to us? Perhaps, more than anything else, what God desires that we hear is that we should think of ourselves a little less throughout the day. Take time each day and put aside personal goals and aspirations. Put aside any thought of personal hurts and disappointments. Put aside anything at all that has to do with oneself and simply love someone else. Who in your network of relationships simply needs your love right now? If you would quietly, in your heart, pledge once again to love them without any thought of returned value you will discover something about how God works. You will discover your own life richly blessed.

Forgive me Father for thinking more about my life and less about others. Help me today to simply love and value someone else as You love them. Show me clearly how to do this. In Christ’s Name, I ask. Amen.

Doug Hood