

# Whopper Sacrifice

## Why You're Made for Friendships That Make You

July 31, 2016 // Trevor Atwood // John 15 // Friends & Family

Harry, Ron, & Hermione  
Corey, Sean & Topanga  
Frodo & Sam  
Jerry, George, Kramer & Elaine  
Charlie Brown & Linus  
Calvin & Hobbes  
Tom Sawyer & Huck Finn  
The Lone Ranger & Tonto  
Thelma & Louise  
Laverne & Shirley  
Lucy & Ethel  
Bill & Ted  
Craig & Smokey  
Ferris Bueller & Cameron  
Laurel & Hardy  
Bob Hope & Bing Crosby  
Harry & Lloyd  
Sully & Mike  
Woody & Buzz  
Pooh & Piglet  
Mowgli & Baloo  
Holmes & Watson  
George & Linnie  
Kirk & Spock  
Andy Dufresne & Red  
C3PO & R2-D2  
Wilbur & Charlotte  
Robin Hood & Little John  
Jack Sparrow & Will Turner  
Andy & Barney  
Batman & Robin  
The Goonies

...and of course....Ross, Rachel, Joey, Monica, Chandler, & Phoebe.

I could keep that list going probably for the entire length of this sermon, but I think you get point.

We love stories about friendship.

Its in our literature, our TV, our Movies, even in our comics.

We love these stories because we all have an innate, fundamental longing for friendships.

Yet still, in light of how much we love to observe close friendships, to read about them, even fantasize that we had them...we're pretty lousy at practicing them.

Now, I'd like to ask you to do something for me today. Get out your phone, or your notepad and pen...and I want you to do this.

Write down your 5 closest friends. I'll give you a few seconds. Great. Now save that for later.

A recent survey asked the question, "Over the past 6 months, with how many people have you 'discussed deeply an important matter?'"

Over half of the participants couldn't come up with anyone outside their family.

Statistically, over the last 60 years, most people have moved from having somewhere around 5 close friends, to having somewhere between 0 & 1.

Additionally, the term "friend" has been emptied of value by Social Media apps like Facebook.

So much so that back in 2009, Burger King developed this Facebook app called "The Whopper Sacrifice" that offered you a free Whopper (worth 3 dollars and 79 cents) if you would "un-friend" 10 of your Facebook friends. Then the app sent messages to these friends that said, "You have been unfriended by so-and-so for a Whopper". The App was shut down when 233,906 people traded in their friends for a Whopper...in the first week.

Here's the thing. So many of us see friendships as just nice additions to our life. We think "if I can get some friends, it would be nice, it would make my quality of life better...BUT SO WILL A WHOPPER!!!!"

While the average number of friends has drastically reduced over the last 60 years, the average amount of square footage in our houses has been on the steady rise.

In other words, we're working longing hours to get bigger houses, but we don't have time to invest in the friendships to fill those houses up.

We may not be trading our friends for burgers, but we're doing it for bonus rooms...and that's a Whopper of a Sacrifice. ...Because most of us don't really think friends are necessary. Kind of like pickles on a burger.

I want to show you today that friendships are very necessary. In fact, not only are you made FOR friendships, but friendships are a major part of what God uses to MAKE you.

## **John 15:9 & 12-17**

**“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.**

Look. Friendships are not optional. They aren't some condiment to your life. But, before you rush out and try to make a bunch of friends...you ought to know exactly what it means to be someone's friend according to God...because He started the whole thing.

1) You're made for friendship, because you're made in God's image.

Over the past 6 weeks, we've talked about marriage, parenting, race relations, singleness, and divorce.

And each week there is a common theme. To understand these relationships we have to look first at who God is.

Which makes a lot of sense. If we are created in the image of God, then we would expect the more our lives actually “imaged” the way God is, the more of a sweet spot we'd be in all of our given relationships.

Friendship is no different. In fact, I would argue that friendship is fundamental to marriage, parenting, race relations and singleness. In other words, every one of those sermons I preached in this series has, in a way, been about Friendship. Marriage is based on friendship. Singleness is only a viable option to live because of friendship. The way we overcome racial stereotypes and systemic injustices begins with having friendships that span races and cultures.

You were made for friendship...because there is no way you can image God properly without it.

In this passage in John 15, Jesus is talking about friendship love. Now look at the way this logic flows.

## **John 15:9 & 12**

**As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.  
“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**

He says, "From eternity, God the Father has been loving God the Son. Because of that, as you make your home in my love...as you experience this love from me...I am commanding you to love each other that way."

If God... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit love each other, this way...and we are created in God's image...that means that we are created to love each other with this friendship love.

Friendship isn't this created thing that helped us to evolve and get along as a society. Friendship has always existed. Marriage has a beginning. Singleness has a beginning. But Friendship... because its inherent in God himself...has always been.

Which means, if you've cut friends out of your life for marriage, for work, for a house, or for hobbies...You're doing it wrong.

Now, listen close. Don't run out of here and tell your spouse, "See, I need more friends... friends are more important than marriage." Don't run out of here and say the pastor told you to have 6 poker nights a week. You absolutely should prioritize your relationship with your spouse. But I'm telling you, you need friends that are not your spouse.

To write off friendship because you've been hurt in the past, or because you don't have time, or because you're an introvert is more serious than you think. Its not just a personal preference. It's a suppression of the truth that God made you to image him...and its direct disobedience to Jesus' command.

Look, if you keeping friends out of your life...you need to understand that its not a godly thing at all. Romans 1:18 says that the anger of God is against the ungodliness of humans. In other words, the denial of being created in his image. Literally, UNLIKE GOD. And it is that "ungodliness, unrighteousness" that we use to suppress the truth.

In short, if you suppress the truth that you are made for friendships, it isn't coming from a godly place. It is coming from your denial of the image of God. That's how serious this is.

Listen, You can't say, "I don't have time for friends". Friendship was around before time WAS. In fact, in a very real way, that's what time was created FOR. If you don't have time for friends, I guarantee, you are making time for something that you weren't created for.

Now listen, before we all run out of here and start to re-kindle old friendships, let's talk a little about what a friend is.

Because if we live in an age where the word "friend" describes an electronic page of pictures and information...that can be used as currency for hamburgers...perhaps we need to develop a deeper and more robust definition. Here it is.

2) Friends let you in, lift you up, and move you forward.

I realize that this could make a great pin on Pinterest. You know this would look really good written in some kind of hip cursive font and put on one of those shirts ladies wear to work out in when they aren't really working out.

I could see this on a T-shirt with Snoopy and Woodstock. You could definitely cross-stitch this sucker right on one of those pillows that's on your bed that nobody ever uses....you know the ones you just pile up in the floor right before you get in...Single dudes...you probably have NO CLUE what I'm talking about, but if marriage is in your future...warning... she is going to bring a truckload of meaningless pillows into your life....and they will be full of sayings like this.

In fact, do we have anyone who's willing to take all my sermon points and cross stitch them into pillows....? If so...THAT'S EXACTLY WHY YOU DON'T HAVE FRIENDS!!!!

ANYWAY....

This phrase is like saying "Love wins". You'll get a lot of agreement from a lot of different people on that statement...but if we don't really work it into real life and talk about its implications...its just superficial fluff...just like those pillows.

So lets get really specific about why I would describe a true friend this way...and what it actually means....because I think you'll find that it makes you pretty uncomfortable.

Take a look at what Jesus says in verse 15. He says, "Because I have loved you with this eternal friendship love, I am letting you into the depth of who I am. I'm letting you on on what my Father has told me."

### **Psalm 25:14**

**The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.**

This Hebrew word there for friendship is the word "Sod". It means "secret". The word for friendship is the same as the word for "secret"

To image God in our friendships means letting people into the depths of what your heart feels and wants. It means confession. It means opening up. Look at this. Friendship with the Lord is when he makes known to him his covenant.

### **John 15:15**

**No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.**

Jesus is the fulfillment of Psalm 25:14. Jesus comes loving us before we could love him, and letting us in on everything the Father is doing to make and keep a promise to save us from our suppression of the truth.

Jesus opened up the secrets of God's heart for us...so we could open up our hearts to each other.

We live in a very self-protective society. One that closes people out so they don't hurt us. See, if I never let you in...if I never show you my weakness, confess my sin, come to you and ask you to help me...then you can never use that weakness against me.

Many of you have been hurt by people close to you...and you think the answer is to close up your heart...to never really share with people what's going on in your heart. I'm telling you, that's not the answer. It's self-protection. And the irony is that self-protection will destroy you.

Because you'll never truly be able to have friends...which means you'll never experience real love. Real love can only happen when you're naked. (please don't tweet that out of context).

You remember in Genesis 2 in the garden, the man and woman were Naked and Unashamed? That meant that they were completely honest with each other. To be naked in an emotional and spiritual sense means to drop the façade. It means to be exposed. It means to let someone in. I mean, when you are naked physically in front of someone, you can't lie anymore about what you look like physically.

And when you are naked emotionally and spiritually in front of someone...you can no longer lie about what you really worship...or put a happy face on your depression ...or act fearless when you are riddled with anxiety. You can't claim to be righteous when you are suppressing the truth by your unrighteousness.

So now, look down at the list of friends. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to delete or cross off anybody that you aren't letting in. Likewise, I want you to cross off anybody whose not willing to let you in to their heart.

This is not saying that you need these people out of your life, I just want you to be honest with yourself about who your friends are. If your friendship has limits...if certain subjects are off limits...you don't have a true friend.

And listen...not everybody can be your friend. You are going to be limited in the number of friends you have. Don't be nervous...this is not a "Billy Madison People-to-kill" list...and you aren't trading these folks in for hamburgers...it's simply taking stock of your relationships.

Real friends don't just let you in, they also lift you up. If you stop at just letting each other into your heart, you still don't have a friendship. You have a therapy session.

Friends also lift each other up. Take a look at what Jesus says.

### **John 15:13**

He says, "The greatest love you can have is to lay down your life...for your friends." Jesus is so committed to us as friends, he went to hell and back for his friends. This Jesus says, is the deepest kind of love there is. Remember the list of friends I gave you at the very beginning of the sermon? Think about how many of those characters in literature, movies, and TV..in some way, sacrificed themselves for their friend.

Since this idea of friendship is ingrained into us because we bear God's image, we can't get away from it.

One of my all time favorite movie scenes is in the second Star Trek movie...not the new ones...the ones from the 80s. Spock goes into this radioactive chamber to save the crew of the Enterprise...and Admiral Kirk comes down too late to save him, but just in time to have one last conversation with him.

And just before Spock dies he says the line that even as a 5 year old kid...made me weep. He puts his hand on the glass of that radioactive chamber and he dies to keep the rest of his team alive he says, "Jim, I have been ...and always shall be ...your friend. ...Live long ...and prosper."

In that scene, Spock is living a part of biblical friendship. Laying down your life to lift your friends up. Giving yourself away so that others live long and prosper.

Do you see why this phrase doesn't really work as a cross stitch pillow? Because cross-stitched pillows look pretty silly next to crosses. And being a true friend means bearing a cross...it means dying so friends can live.

Trading friends for hamburgers is about the furthest thing you could imagine from God's definition of friendship.

Friendship is the most dangerous thing in the world you could be involved in. But you'll never truly live without it.

You have to burn your reflex to self-protect. You have to get naked and die for someone else.

You see why this can't go on a T-shirt? Can you imagine Snoopy and Woodstock under the words "Real Friends Get Naked and Die for each other." Look, You want to know who your friends are?

Find the ones who give to you at great cost to themselves. Find the people that aren't seeking something from you...but something FOR YOU. Don't look for the people who are dying to be your friend...they are probably looking for something FROM YOU. Find the people who are dying for you BECAUSE they are your friend....

Look what Jesus says in the next verse.

### **John 15:14**

**“You are my friends if you do what I command you.”**

Don't mistake what Jesus is saying here. He's not saying, “Do what I command and then you'll be my friends.”

This whole section about friendship love is in the middle of Jesus' instruction to his disciples about “abiding in the Vine”. Jesus comes to them and says, “I am the vine, and you are the branches.” In other words, If you are connected to me. If you receive the love have for you...it will result in obedience...it will result in you looking like me.

See, Jesus received the love of his Father and bore fruit in obedience...all the way to the cross. Now, Jesus says, he has loved us with that same love, so we will obey his command...all the way to dying to ourselves to love others.

See, all obedience is a kind of death. In order to obey a command that comes from outside of me, I have to die to something else I might rather do.

Lets think through this with money. Self-protection says, “The safest thing for me to do is hold on to the money I get for myself, because if I don't look out for me, who else is?” “If I give my money away for someone else, I'll get burned.” But Jesus says, “Its better to give than receive.” Jesus told the rich young ruler, “Give away what you have” Zacchaeus, who stole from people for a living, after he met Jesus, ended up paying back 4 times what he owed.

Jesus was constantly telling people how they treated the poor was indicative of their heart condition. So, in order to follow Jesus' commands, I have die. I have to give away this thing, money, financial security, that makes me feel safe and alive.

And there is only one way to do that. I have to be attached to the vine. The only way to give money...or my life away...is to be sure that Jesus has given me something I can't lose. That he is a true friend. That when I expose myself by giving away my idol of financial security...that he won't let me down.

That's where I have to see he laid down his life for me. If I'm not sure of that...if I'm not absolutely sure that when I strip away my security in money...that he's not there to catch me...well, I won't do what he commands.



See, all obedience to Jesus has me dying in some kind of way so someone else can live... but actually, in that death, I find a better kind of life. One where I'm not enslaved to money. One where I can't be manipulated by money. One where anxiety over finances doesn't ruin my life. One where I'm not driven and motivated by financial...rather...the love of Christ compels me. And that applies to a thousand different ways God calls us to die to ourselves.

In short, the only way to be a true friend, is to be willing to lose so our friends win. And the only way to do that, is to see that Jesus died so we could have life. So, look back at that list of friends. Now, I want you to cross off any people that you don't think would greatly sacrifice in order for you to have life...and delete anybody that you wouldn't lay your life down for. Is your list getting smaller?

See, when you have friends that let you in, and lift you up at their own expense...You'll find that you can't help being moved forward by them.

I told you that you aren't just made for friendships...but you are made BY your friendships. That's what this last one means.

### **John 15:16-17**

**You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.**

After Jesus says, "I've let you in, and I'm laying down my life to lift you up, he says, "Now I'm moving you forward on a mission."

He says, "I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit...and whatever you ask the Father in my name...for this mission of bearing fruit...he'll give it to you. I am commanding these things to you SO THAT you will love one another.

See, Jesus isn't just generically letting us in...and generically lifting us up...he is doing it for the specific purpose of moving us forward. He is pointing us in a direction, with a vision, on a mission. He is doing it to change us. To make us look more like him.

Everything he did for us was intentional. He chose us. He appointed us...for the purpose of BEARING FRUIT. In this context...that means he loved us SO THAT we would love each other with this deep, Godly, Friendship love.

See, whether you realize it or not, your friends are shaping you. And their mission for you may not be as specific as Jesus' is for his friends...but I guarantee its shaping you. Its moving you somewhere...the question is...is it moving you forward in the right direction?

## **Proverbs 13:20**

**Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.**

You know what this passage means? It means, if you show me the list of your friends, I can show you your future. You are either on your way to becoming wise...or on your way to foolishly suffering harm.

In fact, look down at list right now. Who is shaping you? If these are your friends...you've got the list right in your hand.

What direction are you headed with these friends? Are you being shaped to love as God loves. Are you being pushed toward his mission...or is something else happening to you?

Look, if last night 3 or 4 of your friends stoned or drunk...that's where you're headed (if you aren't there already). If 3 or 4 of your friends, are just kind of floating through life with no purpose...well, that's what you'll most likely do, too. And, if 3 or 4 of those friends are deeply pursuing a relationship with God...chances are...that's the direction you're headed too.

See, here's the thing about friends...they are made side by side, not face to face. So many of choose our friends...and by the way, our spouses too...based on compatibility. You know, we want friends just for friendship sake. Can this person make me laugh, make me feel good, be nice to me? But that's not what friendship is about. That's friendship for friendship sake. But just like if you get married for marriage sake...you'll marriage will fall apart, so if you make friends for the sake of having friends...you're friendships will fall apart.

Friends are about a mission to make each other. Friends point each other in a direction, side by side, pursuing a life where they become more and more chiseled and crafted into God's image.

That's why I say friends are made side by side, not face to face. They are shoulder to shoulder, aiming at something together. Not eye to eye talking about how wonderful the other person is. Take a look at the way Solomon puts it Proverbs 27.

## **Proverbs 27:5-6; 9, 17**

**Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.**

**Oil and perfume make the heart glad and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.**

**Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.**

Do you see what this wisdom is getting at? Friends that only ever look each other in the eye and gush about how awesome the other is aren't really friends. The sweetness of a friend comes from one who is willing to challenge you, sharpen you, counsel you even when those words wound you temporarily.

Look if you only look for friendship for the sake of having a good feeling...if you only seek community for the sake of community, ...it will fall apart on you. BUT, if you are willing to enter into a mission with someone...side by side...you'll not be afraid to receive rebuke and counsel in order to sharpen and change you. Because you'll know those are the faithful cuts of a surgeon who is trying to save you, to move you forward...not the cuts of an enemy who is trying to kill you, or hold you back.

Listen, you are made for friendships that make you. And you'll only ever have that if you have friends that let you in, lift you up, and move you forward.

So look down at list again. Are the friends on that list moving you forward? Are they on the same mission as you? Are they lovingly going to give you wise counsel and rebuke? Are they going to sharpen you? Your future is going to look like the friends on this paper.

So now, I want you to cross off anybody on this list who isn't you moving forward to look more like God...who isn't sharpening you to love others like God has loved you in Christ.

So...what are you left with? Who's left on your list? For many of you...it may be between 0 and 1 person. But don't lose heart...The truth is, when Jesus himself looked at his list...all of his names would have been crossed off too.

3) Jesus died to make enemies his friends.

One of the most controversial commands Jesus ever gave was "Love your enemies." That doesn't sound controversial to us today...because we've made it into a cross-stitch pillow phrase. But it's not a cross-stitch phrase...it's a cross-bearing phrase. It doesn't come stuffed with feathers...it comes with painful splinters.

To love someone who doesn't love you isn't just hard...it feels like death. Jesus did everything right. He was the perfect friend. He had 12 disciples that he let in. He was always pulling them in and telling them his deepest secret.

### **Mark 9:31**

**for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise."**

That he was going to suffer and die...and then resurrect. It was his heaviest burden. And he shared it. He let them in. But they didn't listen...they didn't understand him.

He let them in.

...and Jesus lifted them up. He changed Simon's name to Peter and told him "You are a Rock...the kind of Rock I'm going to build my church on." When they were afraid of a storm...he calmed it for them. When they had questions...he answered them. When they wept, he wept with them...and even when Lazarus died...he raised them from the dead.

And Jesus most certainly moved them forward. He gave them the commands for their good. He gave them the teaching from the heart of God. He took them deep into the Scriptures showing them the true meaning of the law. If anyone pointed his friends in the right direction, offering loving counsel and rebuke...it was Jesus.

But it turned out, they weren't his friends. They didn't do what he commanded. In fact, when he invited them to participate in his mission to save the world, by praying for him in a garden the night before he died....they fell asleep.

When he needed them, they abandoned him.

## **Matthew 26:50**

**Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.**

In fact, when Judas betrayed Jesus...he called him friend. Then, even as they saw him dying on a cross...the other disciples didn't come to his rescue... instead, they self-protected...so they wouldn't have to die with him.

Jesus had to cross every. Single. Name. off his list. No friends.

And as it was happening...his deepest, most profound friendship was being severed. On the cross, he was being separated from his Father. From the deep friendship love by which you and I were made. He cried out, "WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME"...

...and in that moment...he was dying for his enemies. Yes, the Roman guards that nailed him there. Yes, the Pharisees and Scribes that hated him...But...even the disciples that called him Lord....

...and even you and me...the truth suppressors...the betrayers...the one's who claim our allegiance to this God, but who turn our backs on him every time we suppress the truth that we are made for his glory and love...and not the lesser gods we worship...like sex, money, power, or even...relationships.

On the cross...he was dying for every "friend" that he had to cross off his list.

So that you and I could be called "Friends of God".

And when he resurrected...They were changed. See, Jesus didn't need the stone to be rolled away to get out. The stone was rolled away from the tomb because he was letting his enemies in on his secret...to make them his friends. He Let in the tomb to see he wasn't there. That he defeated death. To see he laid his life down for them.

And that moved them forward...read Acts lately? How do you go from being a cowards to boldly proclaiming Jesus in front of thousands of people. Many of whom were hostile.

They became his friends. They finally let him in...His Holy Spirit filled them. They became willing to die...and eventually did so... to make his name famous...And they were radically moved forward into the world on mission...loving others and proclaiming the gospel.

So what do you do now? Well, first, do you believe this? Because if you see the love that Jesus displayed on the cross...you'll be changed. And you'll be empowered to love others the way he loved you. You'll have the motivation and the Spirit to move you forward...on a mission to love like he loved.

...and the great news is, Jesus called you to friendship. He called you to his church. This is who the church is. A group of friends on a mission to make known the love of this God that turns enemies to friends. You need real friends in your life. And that is the gift of the church. How many people on your list on mission with you...here...locally...in the community you live in? You need that.

And now, what about those people on your list? Should you trade them in for a hamburger? No. Even though they may not be a friend to you...Even though maybe you shouldn't get your counsel from them...you can you go and die for them. Is God calling you to love them like a friend...even if they haven't' been a friend to you? The only way to do that is to constantly look to the God who was your friend, even when you were his enemy.