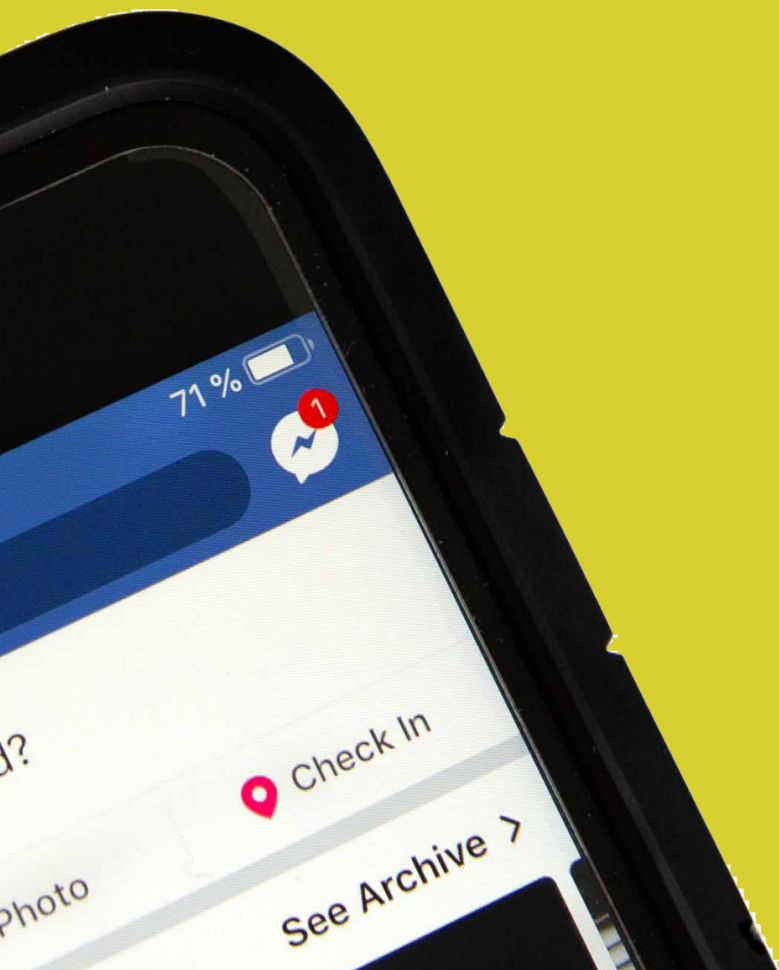


Faithful Friends *in a Facebook World*



A STUDY ON FAITHFULNESS IN FRIENDSHIPS

In today's society, the word "friend" is often used as a verb. Facebook has taught us that, right? We often say, "Can you friend me?" or "I was friended by three people this week." Maybe we should also be using the word "friend" as a verb in our non-virtual lives.

So, what does it mean to truly friend someone? And how can we make these friendships last longer than some of our Facebook friendships that often appear out of nowhere and get hidden soon after. We need to build friendships that will endure not only for a Facebook minute, but for a lifetime. Let's look to the Scriptures for some examples of friends who were faithful.

MOSES AND AARON

Click on Moses' profile to see how he and Aaron showed us a good example of a partnership with their friendship.

Read: Exodus 4:10-16. What did Moses claim as his weakness?

Who did God use to fill that need?

Have you ever felt inadequate when asked to speak? Maybe it was a devotion you shared with your ladies' group. Or maybe it was teaching a Sunday School class with energetic eight-year-olds. Or possibly it was just sharing your faith in a spontaneous conversation with a friend over coffee. Do you remember how you felt? Maybe you didn't know which words to use, or how to put them together to say what your heart was feeling.

Describe a time when you felt inadequate about speaking, whether to a group or to an individual.

Look at Exodus 4:10-11. God gave Moses a wonderful reminder. He said, "Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?"

Fill in the blank about what God says to Moses in verse 12:

"Now therefore go, and I will be thy _____, and teach thee what thou shalt say."

God has often used friends to give me the words I needed to speak when I was unsure of myself or as Moses felt... "not eloquent." While Facebook friends' posts offer a lot of help, God has also used my real-life friends over the years to be that mouth. Many times I have found wisdom in talking to a friend, like my missionary teammate in Spain, Lea Edgmon. Time and time again her wisdom has helped me think through situations and gain insight into what I needed to say. God used her to fill my mouth with the words I needed to share. She's been my *Aaron*, taking over in my weakness and showing true partnership of a friend.

Can you think of a friend (or friends) who have partnered with you when you felt inadequate? Spend some time thanking God for them, and then take a moment to send them a quick note, email, or a Facebook message letting them know just how much you appreciate them.

DAVID AND JONATHAN

What if we could friend David or Jonathan? In 1 Samuel 18:3-4, we see that they model a friendship we rarely see in today's society. Read these verses, paying careful attention to David and Jonathan's sacrificial friendship.

When someone loves *as his own soul*, there is a commitment to doing the very best for that person. Looking out for them. Thinking of them before self. In the Facebook world, we try to make ourselves look good. What can I post that will get more "likes"? Very rarely do we look out for someone else. But Jonathan defies the Facebook frenzy as he makes friends with a very unlikely person based on their circumstances.

Verse 4 gives us a closer look at how much Jonathan loved David. What things did he give to David?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Look again at the fifth object...his girdle. As ladies, we don't often give our girdles away because Spanx is something valuable to us. We need it to make sure we look good in our clothes. In Jonathan and David's time, their girdles were probably nothing like our Spanx today, but it was still valuable. And Jonathan shared his girdle with David. What a gift!

While this gift was just a small symbol of their friendship, we can read the rest of their story throughout the books of Samuel to see how their friendship was forged even deeper, often in the midst of troublesome times.

Do you have a friend in your life who loves you sacrificially? If so, describe your friendship.

Are you loving someone sacrificially the way Jonathan loved David?

Jonathan and David had many things that could have kept them from being friends. Jonathan was a prince. David a shepherd boy. Jonathan was probably around 50 years old, while David was likely

in his 20s. But their common bond was their love for God and their faith in Him. They remained faithful to each other, despite many obstacles that could have separated them.

JESUS AND US

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39).

This is probably a very familiar verse to you, but take a few moments to read it out loud. Think about each phrase. Read it again. Let each word wash over your soul. *Nothing* can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. *Nothing*. There is nowhere we can go that He won't be with us. Not even in the very darkest places of our own minds where we sometimes allow ourselves to fall. Even there, He is our Friend.

Re-write this verse using your own fears as the first few lines. It could read something like this:

“Nor my child's sickness, nor bankruptcy, nor a scary cancer diagnosis, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“Nor _____, nor _____,
nor _____, shall be able to separate us from the
love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Write out John 15:13.

What does this verse say to you?

Our greatest example of a friendship is Jesus Christ. He loved us (his friends) so much that he gave His life for us. How many of us can say this of our earthly friendships? How many of us are willing to give up our own comfort, our free time, our desires, our resources...for a friend in need?

Think about a friend in your life who could use your help right now. Spend some time in prayer asking God to show you how you can help her in a way that is meaningful. And follow up on this within the next week. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). What are you willing to lay down for a friend this week?

FIVE WAYS TO HAVE FAITHFUL FRIENDSHIPS:

1. Walk with friends through the good and bad times.

When I was in my 20s, Tim and I lived in Nashville, Tennessee, and rented a duplex apartment from Bert and Dianne Tippett. We were newlyweds. They were grandparents. Many mornings Mrs. Tippett and I would walk together. We both had busy schedules, so it had to happen VERY early. We would brave the cold temperatures and the dark streets to get in our exercise. I found the Hebrew saying to be true... "Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light." Mrs. Tippett was not only a good companion in our dark morning walks, but she was also a friend who was faithful to listen, give advice, and mentor me as a young wife in the early days of marriage and ministry. Two ladies. Two different generations. One friendship that has impacted me deeply over the years.

2. Use the "like" button as often as possible.

Encourage! Encourage! Encourage! Our words of affirmation can change lives. One small "I love you" or "I appreciate you" goes a long way.

3. Take the time to build deep relationships, even if it's a sacrifice.


Jonathan loved David, even with the knowledge that David would take his place as the next king of Israel. Swallowing his own pride and ambitions, he loved David with a sacrificial love.

4. When your “memories” pop up from years past, take some time to look through them.

Don't you just love seeing photos from three, four, or five years ago come up in your Facebook feed? It reminds you of that wonderful meal at Christmastime, how much your kids or grandkids have changed, or just a photo of you and a special friend. These memories are a part of what makes our friendships so special. We all need to take time to look back at God's goodness to us through the years, and be thankful for the friends that He has given us.

5. Don't let the “urgent” get in the way of the “important.”

If you have Facebook messenger, you probably get notices on your phone when someone sends you a message. It's tempting to pick up your phone each time it dings, but sometimes we are with friends who need us to stay focused on them. Let the “important” people who are right in front of you take precedence over the things that can wait.

The next time you log in to Facebook, remember these principles and use them in both your virtual and real-life friendships. Friend-ing someone isn't a click of a button on your iPhone or laptop, but a continual daily commitment to being a friend like Jonathan or Aaron or even Jesus himself. 

About the Writer: Kristi Johnson and her husband, Tim, have spent the last 20 years in Spain serving as church planters with IM. Kristi enjoys having coffee with friends, finding great bargains on sale racks, and capturing the world through the lens of her camera. But her all-time favorite pastime is being with Tim, Alejandro, and Ana while they explore new cities and exciting foods.