

Friendships Built on Truth

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. That is the message of Proverbs 17:17. Yet, even with that specific knowledge, so many Christians relate to each other in generalities. Few believers ever allow the truth to penetrate their souls and captivate them for the cause of specific obedience in the area of friendships. God wants us to develop friendships that can stand in the midst of affliction and distress—friendships that are built upon a solid foundation.

Paul the apostle understood the cause of Christ to which he was called. His life became rich with the friends who stood with him in the midst of difficulties. Together, great things happened, and the Gospel message spread throughout the Roman Empire.

In this booklet, we will discuss how important it is to build our friendships upon specific truth—categorical doctrine from the Word of

God. Armed with specific truth, a Christian can love at all times and always believe the best, giving mercy and grace in every one of his relationships.

Chapter One

SPECIFICS FOR LIVING BEYOND GENERALITIES

“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word [(*rhema*)] that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words [(*rhema*)] that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

“And they remembered his words [(*rhema*)]” (Luke 24:8).

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words [(*logos*)] shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

Many born-again believers don't understand the difference between *logos* and *rhema*.

A *rhema* is a personal communication from heaven. It has a specific purpose, and it is usually delivered at a critical time. A *rhema* comes directly from God with no interference and no

hindrances. It is God speaking to an individual's heart in a very personal way.

Logos refers to the inspired Word of God. Every word of Scripture was given to instruct, edify, and equip the believer as he walks with God. Still, *logos* represents Scripture in the generality of teaching.

In Matthew 4:4, Jesus Christ declared that man shall not live by bread alone but by words specifically spoken to the believer personally. This is not subjective thinking based on an emotional response. Rather, a *rhema* is a specific revelation from God's Word. For instance, in a response to prayer, in a time of need I may receive a *rhema*, a specific word from God for what to do at that time. It is not hearing voices. It is a faith-hearer receiving the Word of God in specifics. In Matthew 4:4, God is telling us that man must live by God's specific, personal, intimate, and objective revelation of the Word.

People may not get healed because they do not understand receiving a *rhema* for their situation. Yet, the Bible clearly states that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Specific doctrines are preached from the pulpit, presented to an audience, and they produce a specific illumination, a specific revelation with

an accurate inspiration that enables the soul of the recipient to live in that illumination. That is a *rhema*.

A rhema goes beyond generality. Some people in the congregation do not always receive a message from the pulpit. They may not allow the words that come forth to become a *rhema* for them. They sit in the audience and allow the Word of God to be only a general truth to them.

The Word of God preached from the pulpit you are called to sit under can be a *rhema* for your memory center, whether you need the words at that moment or not. You may not be dealing with a situation that applies today, but God knows that you may be dealing with something shortly. Perhaps it will be in a few days or a few months, but right now, God wants to connect with your memory center and have specific truth in your frame of reference so it is there when you need it for a situation.

The Teaching of the Spirit

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

In our Bible College, I want our teachers to be very careful with homework. I am not one who believes in giving a lot of homework. I would rather have my students consider the words spoken in the class and have those words become *rhema*—specific, applicable truth for their lives.

I remember how I learned the Word of God. During the daytime I drove my Cushman's Bakery delivery truck along my bread sales route, and in the evening I concentrated on memorizing passages from the Bible. I didn't have any academic assignments as homework, but I was learning the Book. In learning the Book, I would let God speak as I quoted chapter and verse, walking the floor of my kitchen. God then would reveal the meaning of the words as I meditated and prayerfully reflected upon the words I had just received.

This is how a preacher can learn how to deliver an excellent message extemporaneously. He can serve up something from God with just a moment of reflection. Of course, I absolutely believe in preparation—we must never, ever disregard that aspect of the process of developing messages. Yet, I believe a normal Christian should live a life of preparation in which the

Word of God becomes a day-by-day, moment-by-moment principle for him.

I will put in all kinds of study time, searching out things fervently and diligently. I dig deeply, and then I let the Holy Spirit teach me by inspiration through my memory center. In Ephesians 1:19, the Greek words for mighty (*ischus*) and power (*kratos*) describe this process of thinking. In application, *ischus* speaks of the supernatural memory God has developed in me, and *kratos* speaks of the expression of the truth that has been stored in that memory center. Simply put, the Spirit brings to my immediate memory the manifestation of the truth I have learned so that it can operate in that application in every area of my life.

Chapter Two

CAPTIVITED AND CONNECTED IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth” (Lamentations 3:27).

In obedience to God, the yoke is easy and the burden is light. Many Christians make mountains out of molehills. So many think they have difficult lives. Satan makes them believe they are living a lie.

Jesus’ yoke is easy and His burden is light. It is good for us to bear our yokes early in our days of growth. It is good for us to have trouble paying our bills sometimes, because we will

have to pray and maybe even go out and find extra work. We have to learn how to bear our responsibility (Galatians 6:4); therefore, at times, it is good to have problems. Otherwise, we would never know the provisions and resources that come by faith.

God likes to test the various kinds of teaching and the diversity of the Holy Spirit's thoughts we have received. That is why I like to teach without giving homework, to show students how to get the most out of every class. They can get so much out of the classes by developing a capacity for listening for God's *rhema* for them.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:3-6).

A *rhema* involves the Spirit quickening the knowledge that we have received in our human

spirit. Ephesians is a very beautiful book that describes the truth of how God saved us in eternity past. This epistle does not start with sinners being saved, but it starts with God choosing us in eternity past because He, having all knowledge, knew who would come to believe in Him.

Sin is not mentioned until chapter two of Ephesians. The epistle then goes on to describe how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit established the plan of redemption from eternity to eternity—from the foundation in eternity past, to be worked out until time is no more. Christ is always cleansing and sanctifying and restoring us until we grow into complete agreement with God's eternal will (see Ephesians 5:25-27).

A Prisoner to God's Purpose

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

“Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)”

(Ephesians 3:1-4).

Here, in an interesting description of himself, Paul was saying, "I am a prisoner, but not because I have committed a crime. I am a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ for the Gentiles, who need to hear the Gospel."

This is a practical, important application for the purpose of spiritual realization. God opened up the mystery of Paul's call to reach the Gentiles, and he considered himself a prisoner to this call on his life.

Called to Reveal Christ at Any Cost

"He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Proverbs 17:9).

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17).

Some of you may consider that your marriage is a prison, but for all the wrong reasons. Believe me, there are a lot of people who feel trapped by their marriages. They are hurting, and the pain and heartache and sadness just keep coming for them.

I know one man who felt like this and then entered into an affair. Yet, I was still a prisoner to my friendship to him. For the sake of love, for

the sake of the Cross, for the sake of the grace of God, I predetermined never to cease being this man's friend. As a prisoner to my friendship to him, I intended to be his friend for the rest of our lives—no matter what happens.

This is what a friend does. His friendship is built on the specific truth he has received from the Word of God. With marriages, this is particularly important. You had better make sure you are friends before you go to the altar. A friend loves at all times; and like a brother, a friend is born for adversity. It would be pretty hard for anyone to pursue the course of divorce if he really believed the truth of Proverbs 17:17.

Satan's Plan Is to Separate and Divide

One thing I really despise is when I hear about someone saying something to one who is weak and that conversation ends up separating friends. That is the beginning of what God calls a conspiracy. A conspiracy comes when a group of people find fault with the leader. Something bothers them. Something happened, and they cannot forgive and forget. This atmosphere breeds whisperers. As a result, friends are separated.

For those of us who have committed to

being friends no matter what happens, we cannot be separated, no matter how many matters are repeated. A great Christian leader has come under attack recently. Vicious articles have been written about him by supposed friends. To some degree, he has had to go on the defensive. Sadly, the people generating these attacks do not recognize the cause to which they were called.

Every effective, productive, fruitful ministry of God that reproduces Christ in people's lives will go through persecution. Satan, the father of all lies, does all he can to attack the truth and to separate friends with his vibrations through the atmosphere and the projections from his world system. So many people buy his lies and they become influenced and infected.

We recognize that our cause will bring us to a place where we are under attack. Yet, we know that in everything, Christ has gone before us.

I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and my commitment is based upon the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. My call is to proclaim the Glorious Gospel and to disciple believers. I understand my cause, and I build my friendships on the truth. Nothing can shake the foundation of this kind of friendship.

Chapter Three

WE HAVE A GREAT, BIG, WONDERFUL GOD

The greeting, “I Paul,” in Ephesians 3:1, is a demonstrative declaration of the authority of his office as the apostle to the Gentiles. Just the fact that he used his new name (his given name was Saul) represented his heart attitude as a leader. The word “Paul” literally means less than zero. He thought of himself that way because, as a Pharisee, he was responsible for injuring and killing many believers. Then Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, and he became Paul—less than nothing in his own eyes. “My name was changed because I am little, so little.”

Paul used his new name because he recognized the God-given authority of his office. Next, he refers to himself as “the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.” This was not the only time Paul referred to himself as a prisoner. In 2 Timothy 1:8 and Philemon 9, he calls him-

self a prisoner. In Philemon 13 and Colossians 4:3, he writes of his bonds. For Paul, preaching the Gospel meant suffering. Yet, he was held captive by God's cause to be a true friend and to share the Gospel to the Gentiles.

When my friendships are built on truth, then my measure of faith becomes something that edifies others and helps them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (see Romans 1:17; Romans 12:3).

Believe the Best for Others

Faith is the substance of the things I hope for, both for myself and for you. As a friend, I trust God for what He will do in your life as well as my own. I believe in His love toward you, I believe in His mercy, I believe in His grace. I believe in His forgiveness, no matter what you have done. The Holy Spirit sheds His love abroad in my heart and flows out of me to other people.

This should be especially true for mature Christians. The older I become, the smaller I should be in my own eyes. The more I learn, the less I know—and I don't mean this in a negative way. I mean this honestly, because Christ consistently and continually becomes a bigger God.

For me, He has become a big, phenomenal, wonderful, gracious God.

“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6).

As a frail sinner, if there is one thing I can do it is that I can please God with faith that serves by love. I can please God as I use faith in my marriage, in my study, in my exchanges with precious friends and members of the Body of Christ. When I am hurting, my faith will fight the doubts.

Quality Faith

“And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

“And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you” (Luke 17:5-6).

Our measure of faith is enough. We can build friendships upon truth if we will choose to live and abide in the incorruptible seed of 1 Peter 1:23. This gives us the right quality of faith. The measure of my faith is strengthened as I grow and exercise what I have already learned.

One of Jesus' true friends is the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15:21-28. She came asking for the healing of her demon-possessed daughter. First, Jesus was silent. Then, He told her that He was called only to the lost sheep of Israel. She kept on asking Him for help, and the next thing He said was, "I cannot cast Israel's bread to the dogs."

And she said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Matthew 15:27-28).

This woman never reacted. She firmly trusted the love of Jesus Christ. She never became discouraged. She understood that this Man was a friend to sinners, and she trusted that He would answer her prayer. She never trivialized the severity of the situation, but she acknowledged that Christ is a Friend to sinners, and she stood firmly on that foundation. In doing so, she discovered a friendship built on truth.

CONCLUSION

James 2:5 speaks of the riches of our faith manifested in the poor of this world. It is such a precious thing for someone to be rich in faith. It is a great thing for God's people to get on their knees and pray as much as possible. We can call each other and have great prayer times on the phone. Some will get together in their homes and churches to pray.

Faith grows. The Word of God flows. Friendships are made and are strengthened in the purpose and plan of God. People are added unto the Lord as members of His Body and ready to become part of the Bride of Christ.

As true friends in Christ, through specific revelation to our hearts, the truth is the foundation of everything we do. We will learn together the unsearchable, unchanging, indescribable, magnificent, majestic, marvelous grace of God. We will express mercy to each other, which means that we have an attitude that people who

have hurt us will not receive the punishment they deserve. Instead, we minister grace, which means that we express to them what none of us deserves—the perfect love of God.