

## **“How to Build Authentic Friendships”**

Text: Hebrews 10:24

September 14, 2008

Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church ([www.pbpc.org](http://www.pbpc.org))

Oakland, California

Rev. Chris Geline

An illustration: *A new Christian did not wish to go to church and so he was sent to a wise old man in the village. The man let him in and without saying a word he ushered him to a large, open, coal fire in the room. In silence they stared at the fire for some minutes, and, suddenly the old man lifted out a piece of coal from the fire, placing it on the hearth with his tongs. Very quickly the isolated piece of coal died, until it was nothing more than an ugly grey cinder. He then picked it up again and placed it with the others back in the fire. It quickly glowed red again - as bright as all the others. The new Christian looked at the old man with a tear in his eye; "I think you have answered my question," he said.*

### **Prayer!**

One of the ways that Satan will try to defeat you is by keeping you isolated. He knows the Bible says that two are better than one for two reasons: One, they have a good reward for their toil and two, if one should fall the other is there to pick them up. Jesus says that where two are three are gathered in His name, He is with them. We are called to be together, to build relationships with one another.

This morning I want us to look at “How to Build Authentic Friendships”. How do we go from having a life full of acquaintances to going a little bit deeper in our relationships?

You were made for relationships. The Bible says, *“It is not good for a person to be alone.”* In other words, we were made for each other. Life is not a solo act. And you need friends. The Bible says this in Acts 2:44, *“All the believers met together constantly and shared everything with each other.”* Circle *“met together”* and circle *“shared.”* Notice two things – one, you can’t develop friendships without meeting together. And two, you can’t develop friendships without sharing. Now, the more frequently you meet together, the closer you’re going to get.

- Do you ever see some people that have really deep friendships; they have long-term friendships, 20, 30 years, something like that. And you go, wow, how lucky. Kind of envious. How lucky they are to have a deep friend like that. And I say to you, it is not luck at all. It is a choice. You choose to develop friendships by making time for them.
- Do you know why most people are lonely? They don’t make time for friendships. They are too busy achieving; they are too busy working; they are too busy doing other things. They are not willing to put the time

into it. You have to meet together. You have to get together. And until you start saying this is going to be a priority in your life, you're not going to develop any deep friends. They don't just happen. They happen because you chose to make the time for them.

- Example - Jesus: 72, 12, 3
- Example - Marg: graduation, wedding, once a year, Laura

And you can't develop friendships without sharing. It says they "*shared everything.*" Now, those of you who are parents know one of the fundamental lessons children have to learn is learning to share. Every little child has to learn to share. And God says you know what? In the family of God I want you to learn to share with other believers. So what are we suppose to share? Well, the Bible is full of instructions on things we as Christians are to share with each other. Let me mention three.

### **I. Number one, the Bible says we are to share our experiences.**

- A. Experiences. The Bible says people learn from one another "*just as iron sharpens iron.*" Have you ever heard of that phrase, "it's wise to learn from experience?" Well, it is wise to learn from the experiences of other people, because you don't have time to make all the mistakes yourself. You see, if everything you learn in life you learn personally by trial and error, you're going to go through a lot of problems unnecessarily and about the time you figure it all out, you're dead. You don't have time to learn everything on your own. So God says you can learn a lot quicker if you learn from the experiences of others.
- B. Nobody knows everything. You see, we're all ignorant, just on different subjects. So you know some things I don't know and I know some things you don't know. And the person next to you knows some things neither of us knows. And the Bible says that you can learn from anybody if you just learn to ask the right questions. So we're to share our experiences with each other. Think of all the wealth of knowledge sitting here right now in this church family in this service, and how much we could learn from each other if we just spent time together.
  - 1. Illustration - Jack in L.A.

### **II. Second, the Bible says we are to share our homes.**

- A. We're to share our homes. The Bible says in 1 Peter 4:9, "*Open up your homes to each other.*" It doesn't say if they are really nice ones, open them up. It just says open them up. They don't have to be really nice. It just says open up your home. Why does God say that? Why are we to share our homes? I'll tell you why, because you cannot fellowship in a crowd. You can only fellowship in a small group. Or one on one.
- B. We're not going to do any fellowshiping here today. It's impossible to fellowship with this many people. We can worship together. We can celebrate together. We can learn together. But no fellowship will

take place in this service. You're going to walk out of here not knowing anybody better than you do right now. Fellowship only takes place in the small group. And that's why the Bible says open up your homes to each other. That's where you really get to know people.

- C. Did you know in the first 300 years of Christianity, there were no church buildings? All church meetings were held in homes. All of them. There were no buildings. And that, by the way was the fastest period of growth for the church. One the reasons I keep saying, "Go get in a small group" is because that's a Biblical principle. Christians are supposed to meet in homes.
- D. I read an article the other day that says they discovered one of the reasons why the sense of community is not very strong in suburban areas. What do you think it is? They say that people live next door to their neighbors for years and never even know them. They said one of the major culprits is automatic garage doors. Because when you come home, you open up the garage door; you pull in; you close it and walk in your house without ever seeing your neighbor. Before there were garages – and that was before World War II – people actually had to park outside and walk across a big lawn. (Nobody has a big front lawn anymore.) And so you could see people and you spend a lot of time seeing them, but you don't see them any more. You can drive in and leave – go to and from your house and never see your neighbors. So that's why the Bible says, "Open up your homes." Do it intentionally.
  - Illustration - Lonnie Ellis

### **III. Not only are we to share our experiences in our homes, the Bible says, No. 3, we're to share our problems.**

- A. We're not meant to face our problems alone. The Bible says share each other's troubles and problems. You know, when you share a joy, it is doubled; and when you share a problem, it's cut in half!
- B. The Bible says, "*weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.*" Sometimes in a small group you die of laughter and sometimes you're all shedding a tear. Why? Depends on what is going on in your group during the week. You don't have to fix everybody's problem. God hasn't told you to do that. It just says share them. This means lend a listening ear. You don't have to fix – in fact, a lot of time trying to fix a problem doesn't help. It's just sitting there going, "Boy I feel for you," "been there," "I understand," "that's tough." It's just sharing sympathy and experience.
  - 1. Illustration - Inland Northwest pastors small group

Now, you're never going to go to this level of fellowship until you get into a small group. That's why the Bible says this in Hebrews 10:25, "*Let us not give up the habit of meeting together. Instead, let us encourage one another.*" The primary purpose of a group is to encourage each other. And it says, "*Don't give up the habit.*"

Small groups in our church family are called Life Groups. Each of you needs to be in a Life Group, not only so you can grow in your relationships with others but also with God. It's a three-legged stool: one leg is for Bible study, one is for sharing and the other is for prayer. Each one is dependent on the other. And our current Life Groups are focusing on building God's five purposes into our lives through the study "Experiencing Christ Together."

We currently have seven Life Groups which you can join. They're all open. Sign-ups will take place after the service at the back table. If this is your first time trying a Life Group, let me give you some advice. Sign up for one and try it. If it isn't a good fit for you, try one of the others. It's like trying out a new restaurant. If you don't like it, do you stop trying new restaurants? No. You keep trying.

You need to be in Life Group. Why? God created you for relationship and Life Groups provide that opportunity for you to have them.

**PRAY!**