

Friendship

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1. Description

Friendship is a state of mutual trust and support between people, a two-way street.

Friendship is a bond, a magical connection between people who care about each other. Friends are the ones who laugh with you when you're happy and stand by you when you're sad. They're the special people who make life's journey a lot more fun. Friends are like superheroes without capes.

A true friend cares, shares, and is always honest. Friendship is one bond that never ceases and lives on even if people are not physically close to each other. From sharing happy moments to sad ones, friends are the life support that helps one get through the most enjoyable and difficult circumstances.

Friendships leap-frog time. Months, even years, may pass yet when they meet, it was like yesterday they said 'farewell', 'goodbye' or 'ciao'.

I never use "family and friends" – as though these two categories are mutually exclusive. I use "Friends – which should include your family."

You choose your friends, and they choose you. As God chose me on Eriskay (Ref AJTE Vol 1)

Sometimes we need someone to have fun with. But now and again we need a friend to support us through a tough time. Friends should never: put you down, make fun of you, your religion, sexuality or culture and never put you in danger or make you feel unsafe.

There are two Homosexual physical friendships that I know well. They are as good as any heterosexual marriage I have come across. There is my nephew-Godson Rob and Alex his spouse. And there is a wonderful couple – Roger and Ron – in Croydon that have been together for decades – well before their relationship ceased to be criminal.

NB On-line friends are not real friends.

In Cicero's(106-43BCE) 'de amicitia' we are told that:

Friendship is nothing else than entire fellow-feeling as to all things, human and divine, with mutual good-will and affection.

It is virtue itself that produces and sustains friendship, nor without virtue can friendship by any possibility exist.

Friendships are 'Unions of mutual benefit.'

in friendship there is nothing feigned, nothing pretended, and whatever there is in it is both genuine and spontaneous.

Friendships are eternal.

Friends neither ask of a friend what is wrong, nor do what is wrong at a friend's request.

We demand of friends only what is right, and that we do for the sake of friends only what is right.

In unsure fortune a sure friend is seen.

Friendship puts a man on an equality with his inferior.

It belongs to friendship both to admonish and to be admonished, and to do the former freely, yet not harshly,

2. Symbols

St. John The Evangelist, the patron saint of love, loyalty, friendships - and authors is often depicted in art as an eagle, symbolizing "the height he rose to in his gospel."

Yellow roses are the quintessential friendship flower.

Traditionally, the olive tree is a symbol of peace and friendship, this association began in ancient Greece, as early as the fifth century bce.

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To set the mood, here are some statements on friendship I have come across.

“My best friend is the man who in wishing me well wishes it for my sake.”
Aristotle(384-322 bce)

“There is nothing on this earth more to be prized than true friendship.”
Thomas Aquinas(1225-74)

“The only way to have a friend is to be one.” Ralph Waldo Emerson(1803-82)

“Truly great friends are hard to find, difficult to leave, and impossible to forget.”
George Wythe Randolph (1818 – 67)

“A friend is someone who knows all about you and still loves you.”
Elbert Hubbard (1856 – 1915)

“My best friend is the one who brings out the best in me.” Henry Ford(1863-1947)

“Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.”
Marcel Proust(1871-1922)

“Don't make friends who are comfortable to be with. Make friends who will force you to lever yourself up.”
Thomas J. Watson(1874-1956)

“The most beautiful discovery true friends make is that they can grow separately without growing apart.”
Elisabeth Brennan, born Foley(1887-1967)

“A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.”
Walter Winchell(1897-1972)

“It’s the friends you can call up at 4 a.m. that matter.” Marlene Dietrich(1901-92)

“Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born.” Anais Nin(1903-77)

“Life is partly what we make it, and partly what it is made by the friends we choose.”
Tennessee Williams(1911-83)

“For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others; for beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness; and for poise, walk with the knowledge that you are never alone.”
Audrey Hepburn(1929-93).

“There’s not a word yet for old friends who’ve just met.” Jim Henson(1936-90)

“Friendship is the hardest thing in the world to explain. It’s not something you learn in school. But if you haven’t learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven’t learned anything.”
Muhammad Ali(1942-2016).

A friend can tell you things you don’t want to tell yourself.” Frances Ward Weller

“A friend is someone who understands your past, believes in your future, and accepts you just the way you are.” Unknown.

“True friends aren’t the ones who make your problems disappear. They are the ones who won’t disappear when you’re facing problems.” Unknown

““Everyone hears what you say. Friends listen to what you say. Best friends listen to what you don’t say.” Unknown

Dear reader, do you agree with all of these? If not, which ones leave you cold?

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Aelred of Rievaulx((1110–67) defines friendship as 'agreement on all things sacred and profane, accompanied by good will and love,' a definition he borrowed from Cicero. Ideally, friendship becomes a form of charity when it meets with a reciprocal response, so it is based on mutuality.

Aelred develops this theme by classifying three kinds of friendship: the carnal, the worldly, and the spiritual. “The carnal is created by a conspiracy in vice, the worldly is enkindled by hope of gain, and the spiritual is cemented among the righteous by a likeness of lifestyles and interests”.

At each level, friendship is nurtured by a common love, and as the object of love increases in worth (from base things to divine things) so the quality of friendship is raised. The highest kind of friendship is a selfless communion of hearts: “Now the spiritual, which we call true friendship, is desired . . . for its own natural worth and for the affections of the human heart, so that its fruit and reward is nothing but itself”.

Friendship is thus an excellent description of the Christian life. Ultimately, we are called to become “friends of God”. Abraham was a “friend of God” (*James* 2:23); Jesus called his disciples his friends (*John* 15:15); and in this vein Luke the Evangelist addressed his two books (*Luke-Acts*) to a Theophilus, ‘Friend of God’.

Aristotle observed that friendship is only possible between equals, and so Dominicans like Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart have drawn the conclusion that Jesus’ friendship with us draws us, astonishingly, into a relationship of a certain equality with God.

As God the Son humbly took on our lowly human nature, so he invites us into a relationship of glorious and divine love with him. This divine love is often labelled in Greek as *agape* (*caritas* in Latin), but St Thomas boldly employs the term for friendship, *philia* (*amicitia* in Latin).

C.S. Lewis(1898-1963),in his ‘Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life’ wrote,

“The First [Friend] is the alter ego, the man who first reveals to you that you are not alone in the world by turning out (beyond hope) to share all your most secret delights. There is nothing to be overcome in making him your friend; he and you join like raindrops on a window. But the Second Friend is the man who disagrees with you about everything. He is not so much the alter ego as the anti-self.

Of course, he shares your interests; otherwise he would not become your friend at all. But he has approached them all at a different angle. He has read all the right books but has got the wrong thing out of every one. It is as if he spoke your language but mispronounced it. How can he be so nearly right and yet, invariably, just not right? He is as fascinating (and infuriating) as a woman.

When you set out to correct his heresies, you will find that he forsooth to correct yours! And then you go at it, hammer and tongs, far into the night, night after night, or walking through fine country that neither gives a glance to, each learning the weight of the other's punches, and often more like mutually respectful enemies than friends. Actually (though it never seems so at the time) you modify one another's thought; out of this perpetual dogfight a community of mind and a deep affection emerge.”

C S Lewis, in his *The Four Loves*, wrote, “we picture lovers face to face but friends side by side; their eyes look ahead.”

Antoine St-Exupéry (1900-44) made it clear that “Love does not consist of gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction.”

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3. Music

"Ode to Joy" (German: "An die Freude") is an ode written in the summer of 1785 by German poet, playwright, and historian Friedrich Schiller.

"Ode to Joy" – All will be brothers - is best known for its use by Ludwig van Beethoven in the final (fourth) movement of his Ninth Symphony, completed in 1824.

An die Freude

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum!
Deine Zauber binden wieder
Was die Mode streng geteilt;
Alle Menschen werden Brüder
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

Wem der große Wurf gelungen
Eines Freundes Freund zu sein;
Wer ein holdes Weib errungen
Mische seinen Jubel ein!
Ja, wer auch nur eine Seele
Sein nennt auf dem Erdenrund!
Und wer's nie gekonnt, der stehle
Weinend sich aus diesem Bund!

Freude trinken alle Wesen
An den Brüsten der Natur;
Alle Guten, alle Bösen
Folgen ihrer Rosenspur.
Küsse gab sie uns und Reben,
Einen Freund, geprüft im Tod;
Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben
und der Cherub steht vor Gott.

Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen
Durch des Himmels prächt'gen Plan
Laufet, Brüder, eure Bahn,
Freudig, wie ein Held zum Siegen.

Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt!
Brüder, über'm Sternenzelt
Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.
Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?
Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?
Such' ihn über'm Sternenzelt!
Über Sternen muß er wohnen!

Ode to Joy

Joy, thou shining spark of God,
Daughter of Elysium,
With fiery rapture, goddess,
We approach thy shrine!
Your magic reunites those
Whom stern custom has parted;
All men will become brothers
Under your protective wing.

Let the man who has had the fortune
To be a helper to his friend,
And the man who has won a noble woman,
Join in our chorus of jubilation!
Yes, even if he holds but one soul
As his own in all the world!
But let the man who knows nothing of this
Steal away alone and in sorrow.

All the world's creatures draw
Draughts of joy from nature;
Both the just and the unjust
Follow in her gentle footsteps.
She gave us kisses and wine
And a friend loyal unto death;
She gave the joy of life to the lowliest,
And to the angels who dwell with God.

Joyous, as His suns speed
Through the glorious order of Heaven,
Hasten, brothers, on your way
Exultant as a knight victorious.

Be embraced, all ye millions!
With a kiss for all the world!
Brothers, beyond the stars
Surely dwells a loving Father.
Do you kneel before Him, oh millions?
Do you feel the Creator's presence?
Seek Him beyond the stars!
He must dwell beyond the stars.

“In My Life,” The Beatles.

There are places I'll remember
All my life, though some have changed
Some forever, not for better
Some have gone and some remain

All these places had their moments
With lovers and friends, I still can recall
Some are dead and some are living
In my life, I've loved them all

But all these friends and lovers
There is no one compares with you
And these memories lose their meaning
When I think of love as something new

Though I know I'll never lose affection
For people and things that went before
I know I'll often stop and think about them
In my life, I love you more.

“God Only Knows,” The Beach Boys

Verse 1

I may not always love you
But long as there are stars above you
You never need to doubt it
I'll make you so sure about it

God only knows what I'd be without you

Verse 2

If you should ever leave me
Well, life would still go on, believe me
The world could show nothing to me
So what good would living do me?

God only knows what I'd be without you

Verse 3

Ooh, ooh
Do, do, do, do, do, do, do

Bow, buh-bow, buh-bow, buh-bow (Do, do, do, do)
Buh-bow, buh-bow, buh-bow (Do, do, do, do, do, do)
Buh-bow, buh-bow, buh-bow, buh-bow (Do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do)

God only knows what I'd be without you

“Super Trouper,” ABBA

Super trouper beams are gonna blind me
But I won't feel blue
Like I always do
'Cause somewhere in the crowd there's you

I was sick and tired of everything
When I called you last night from Glasgow
All I do is eat and sleep and sing
Wishing every show was the last show (wishing every show was the last show)
So imagine I was glad to hear you're coming (glad to hear you're coming)
Suddenly I feel all right (and suddenly it's gonna be)
And it's gonna be so different when I'm on the stage tonight

Tonight the super trouper lights are gonna find me
Shining like the sun (super trouper)
Smiling, having fun (super trouper)
Feeling like a number one

Tonight the super trouper beams are gonna blind me (super trouper)
But I won't feel blue (super trouper)
Like I always do (super trouper)
'Cause somewhere in the crowd there's you

Facing twenty-thousand of your friends
How can anyone be so lonely?
Part of a success that never ends
Still I'm thinking about you only (still I'm thinking about you only)
There are moments when I think I'm going crazy (think I'm going crazy)
But it's gonna be alright (you'll soon be changing everything)
Everything will be so different when I'm on the stage tonight

Tonight the super trouper lights are gonna find me (super trouper)
Shining like the sun (super trouper)
Smiling, having fun (super trouper)
Feeling like a number one

Tonight the super trouper beams are gonna blind me (super trouper)
But I won't feel blue (super trouper)
Like I always do (super trouper)
'Cause somewhere in the crowd there's you

So I'll be there when you arrive
The sight of you will prove to me I'm still alive

And when you take me in your arms and hold me tight
I know it's gonna mean so much tonight

Tonight the super trouper lights are gonna find me (super trouper)
Shining like the sun (super trouper)
Smiling, having fun (super trouper)
Feeling like a number one

Tonight the super trouper beams are gonna blind me (super trouper)
But I won't feel blue (super trouper)
Like I always do (super trouper)
'Cause somewhere in the crowd there's you

Super trouper lights are gonna find me
Shining like the sun (super trouper)
Smiling, having fun (super trouper)
Feeling like a number one

Tonight the super trouper beams are gonna blind me (super trouper)
But I won't feel blue (super trouper)
Like I always do (super trouper)

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When people say they feel unworthy of being close to Jesus in their heart,
I remind them of three events:

1. John the Baptist felt unworthy to baptise Jesus (Mt 3,13-15)
 2. The Roman centurion felt unworthy to have Jesus visit his home (Mt 8,8)
 3. In Lk 5,8 Simon Peter feels unworthy just to be in Jesus' presence.
- However, Jesus, who would call everyone 'friend' (Jn15,15) dismisses their objections.

This is why the early Christians used "the friends" as a synonym for the Church (3 John 1:15).

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4. A few famous - the first four are Platonic - friendships.

Platonic friendships – which can be very close - are characterized by mutual care, support, and enjoyment of each other's company but without a romantic or sexual component.

1. St Paul and St Timothy.

St Paul's friendship with St Luke clearly seems to have been important to both of them..

Their relationship appears in the New Testament in the Acts of the Apostles, and it emerges in a subtle way. Luke, the author of Acts, simply begins to use the first-person plural pronoun, we, in his narration, because now he's traveling with Paul. It's subtle, but stunning in its subtlety. It's the clear marker of the beginning of a friendship.

Paul, for his part, mentions Luke often. Perhaps the earliest mention, chronologically, is in the apostle's Letter to Philemon, which ends with a name-drop of Luke among Paul's "fellow workers."

In his Letter to the Colossians Paul takes it up a notch, referring to Luke as his "dear friend" and "doctor."

In the second of Paul's letters to Timothy, after naming those who have deserted him, he says poignantly, "Luke alone is with me" (2 Timothy 4:11).

Paul's relationship with Luke was unique. He refers to Timothy and Titus as sons (1 Timothy 1:18; Titus 1:4). But Luke is a friend, beloved and loyal. He is the other half of "we." He alone remains.

Together they accomplished what no man could do alone. Luke wrote the two longest books in the New Testament, the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Paul wrote more New Testament books than anyone else — 13 or 14, depending on how you count.

Luke's Gospel weighs in at 19,482 words, and Acts at 18,451 words, for a total of 37,933 words. Paul's 13 letters total 32,407 words.

Thus, Paul and Luke together wrote at least 70,340 out of the 138,020 words in the New Testament.

Together they wrote more than half of this book that the Church has designated to be inspired by God.

And we should never doubt that theirs was a true collaboration. Since the early Church, readers have referred to Luke's Gospel as "Paul's," because the narrative so perfectly enacts the theology we find in his letters.

The friendship of Luke and Paul was the dynamo that powered the Church's growth in its first generation. That was God's providential purpose in bringing them together: because Paul and Luke together accomplished what they could never have done separately.

This is the power of friendship in God's plan.

Paul first met his best friend during his second missionary journey, which began in late Autumn 49 A.D. After visiting and preaching the gospel in Tarsus and Derbe with fellow evangelist Silas, He met Timothy in Lystra where he likely discovered his father was a Greek (a Gentile) but his mother was a Jewess (2Tim. 1:5). Both her (Eunice) and her mother (Lois) had converted to Christianity.

Timothy joined Paul on his journeys, and their relationship grew to the point that Paul called Timothy "my true son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2).

His relationship with Paul was close and Paul entrusted him with missions of great importance. Timothy's name appears as the co-author on 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Paul wrote to the Philippians about Timothy, "I have no one like him" (Philippians 2:19–23).

"I am a Jew . . . brought up here in Jerusalem as a student of Gamaliel. I persecuted to the death the people who followed this Way (the teachings of Jesus Christ). I arrested men and women and threw them into prison . . . (Acts 22:3 - 4).

Saul (Paul), even after becoming a Christian, still retained a personality that was polarizing and intense, which made being his friend a bit difficult. It would take time for the apostle to mellow out a bit in order for a closer relationship between him and Timothy to form.

Paul, just a few months before his martyrdom while he was a prisoner in Rome, wrote his last epistle. This personal letter was dedicated to his friend Timothy. In this epistle he expressed his respect and love for his fellow evangelist and traveling companion.

I thank him (God) as I remember you always in my prayers night and day. I remember your tears, and I want to see you very much, so that I may be filled with joy. I remember the sincere faith you have, the kind of faith that your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice also had. I am sure that you have it also (2Tim. 1:3 - 5).

Paul died through beheading around May of 68 A.D. Tradition states his good friend Timothy died a martyr, 29 years later, in 97 A.D.

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2. St Francis (1181/2 - 1226) of and St Clare (1194-1253) of Assisi

While Francis guided his growing order of Little Brothers, he assigned Clare as the leader of the Poor Ladies. When Francis felt most alone in the world, most persecuted and misunderstood, it was Clare he would turn to for clarity, wisdom, and a love stripped of sentimentality.

Francis and Clare's founding charism was characterised by non-violence and peace, which for them was a way of life, and expressed in their relationships. They were peace-givers and peace-makers.

The spirit behind Francis and Clare's passionate and singlehearted following of Christ is expressed well in the following:

"Francis and Clare's founding charism was characterised by: their deep relationship with God-Creator, with the crucified Christ, and with the Spirit; a relationship in freedom and equality, with all the brothers and sisters, without distinction. Clare's Rule and writings are a powerful witness to her sisterly love and concern for all her sisters, and 'to build up a bond of unity among them'. Francis' relationship with creation was truly one of brotherhood and sisterhood, and has marked history."

"Francis and Clare's founding charism was characterised by their option for 'Lady Poverty' which was expressed in their identification with the poor Christ, and for Francis, with the poor: the marginalised, the outcast in his society, especially the lepers. Their minority stance had social implications, for they moved away from the 'centre' to the periphery. Francis, by being inserted among the poor, challenged openly the political, social and economic power structures.

Francis and Clare's founding charism was characterised by non-violence and peace, which for them was a way of life, and expressed in their relationships. They were peace-givers and peace-makers. Francis' greeting to all peoples was: "Pace e Bene." This greeting of peace and goodness was a wish and an invitation. He sincerely wanted all those whom he met to have peace in their hearts and to experience only goodness....It is said of Clare that she reflected peace through all that she said and did in her community at San Damiano."

(Excerpts from 'Living Justice – As Artisans of Peace' Franciscans International publication)

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3. St Teresa of Avila (1515-82) and St John of the Cross (1542-91).

Despite an age gap of 27 years, different personalities, and different societal backgrounds, they were united by a common desire to live out their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to the fullest and to inspire others to do the same.

After whirlwind adolescent years, Teresa joined the Carmelite Order. To her great dismay this rule of life was not as she expected. She struggled immensely with the lack of amount of time for personal, silent prayer.

Fellow Carmelite St. John of the Cross, her confessor and spiritual director, who was also troubled by the order's laxity. This pair of friends encouraged each other in the spiritual life and grew to be great friends.

St. Teresa of Avila would teasingly call St. John of the Cross "half-a-friar" because he stood barely five feet tall.) They relied on each other and, of course, relied on God.

Both were mystics and authored impactful Catholic works: St. Teresa's *The Interior Castle* and St. John's *The Dark Night of the Soul*. What mostly bound them together in friendship, though, was a shared desire to transform the Carmelite order by recovering the original austere rule of life that had been abandoned.

Reforming a religious order came with a great deal of difficulty, and both saints suffered immensely as a result. St. John of the Cross was even imprisoned for nine months and regularly beaten! But they did not despair.

Confiding in each other and in their radical faith they created a new branch of the Carmelite order, the Order of the Discalced Carmelites (O.C.D.) And together they were successful in establishing more than 20 O.C.D. convents and monasteries! As St. Teresa of Avila once described their friendship, "What a wonderful thing it is for two souls to understand each other, for they neither lack something to say, nor grow tired."

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4. St Ignatius of Loyola(1491-1556) and St Francis Xavier(1506-1552)

Francis Xavier first met Ignatius of Loyola when they were roommates at the University of Paris. Like Ignatius Francis was a Spanish nobleman. He was at first not particularly enamoured with Ignatius, being rather jealous of the newcomer's popularity. However, soon, they became best friends. Their friendship ultimately led to Francis, in 1534, becoming one of the first seven Jesuits.

It must have been heart-breaking to part ways when St. Francis Xavier was missioned to India. "Francis, leave this place and set the world on fire!" These were the last words that St. Ignatius of Loyola spoke to St. Francis Xavier who then travelled to India, Indonesia, Japan and China where he lived, worked and died as a missionary.

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Queen Victoria(1837-1901) and Abdul Karim – The Munshi (1863-1909).

Victoria appointed him to be her Indian Secretary, showered him with honours, and obtained a land grant for him in India. The close platonic relationship between Karim and the Queen led to friction within the Royal Household, the other members of which felt themselves to be superior to him.

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Mark Twain - Real name Samuel Langhorne Clemens(1835-1910) and Hellen Keller(1880-1968; American author and educator who was blind and deaf) formed a very close and lasting friendship that may have been one of the most important relationships in either figure's lives.

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Winston(1874-1965) and Clementine(née Hozier; 1885 - 1977) Churchill.

Clementine Churchill was the ideal wife for Winston. As a child, she too had experienced a difficult family life and straitened circumstances (as she would in her marriage) and had the resilience to see the couple through their difficult – and, at times, harrowing – family crises and ever-present financial anxieties.

That they loved each other deeply, however, was rarely in doubt. On one occasion after Clementine had swept off in a fury, Churchill mischievously declared himself "the most unhappy of men", only for the staff who had witnessed the incident to burst out laughing.

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Frank Sinatra(1915-98) and J.F Kennedy(1917-63) One was on his way to the White House. The other was the king of Hollywood. It was a match made in heaven.

In early February 1960, Massachusetts Senator and presidential candidate John F. Kennedy checked in to the Sands Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas to catch one of the legendary performances of Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack.

Amid the show, Sinatra stepped forward to point out Kennedy, seated next to the stage, and introduced him as the "next president of the United States."

It marked a public intersection of politics and entertainment that was rare for the time and highlighted a bond between the two luminaries that reached its peak over a wild campaign season.

The crooner and the candidate had already been friends for a few years. It's unclear when they first met, but they shared a connection through the marriage of JFK's sister Pat to actor and Rat Packer Peter Lawford, and by the end of the 1950s they were well acquainted.

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Ravi Shankar(1920-2012) and George Harrison(1943-58)

Ravi Shankar's unexpected friendship with Beatles guitarist George Harrison brought Indian classical music to the world and changed global music forever. It all started with a sitar. The 10-year-old Ravi Shankar discovered his love for the instrument in 1930.

Twenty-three years older than Harrison, Shankar described their relationship as, variously, that of father and son (with each one adopting either role); close friends and brothers; and teacher and student.

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5. In a marriage

Get to know each other well before tying the knot.

Though I know occasionally – as in the case of Rita and Robert Benson, there was, from Robert's side, instant love at first sight.

While doing his military service in Germany, his commanding officer sent him to the local ATS barracks to find some girls for their Christmas party. There, as soon as he clapped his eyes on Rita, he said he knew, she was the one he would marry. And they stayed deeply in love right up to the death of Rita.

Notes I use when preaching a wedding homily.

A marriage is a sacrament in which God – who is love – becomes an outward sign of an inward grace or gift.

Love – to be real – has to be there across the PIES

The Physical includes tidying things up. (Remember the laundry basket? "Darling, there are no clean shirts in the cupboard." "That's because there were no dirty ones in the linen basket.")

The Intellectual should always be ACE: Affirming Consoling and Encouraging

As Father, Son, Holy Spirit. So husband, wife and family.

Equality! It is a merger NOT an acquisition.

Appreciate AND respect the other.

Mutual gift of husband and wife.(Which hand clapped first?)

I – you – become a We.

Wed to make the other happy, joyful.

Forgive: wash white, not whitewash. NEVER “That was 15 years ago” “Yes, but you did it.”

Problem? Seek Solution in prayer and with genuine – positive – friends.!

Rely on community – friends’ – cohesive – support.

Imperfect? Of course. You are human. “Better together than apart”

Resilience. “Falling down is not as important as getting up. Growing wiser.

Gentle with the other’s dreams.

Humour – vital adhesive.

“Darling, if you ever left me, could I come with you?”

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Share dreams. Mutually complement skills. Agree to share fairly chores and responsibilities around home and garden. Change as fitness changes with age or accident.

6. Friendship Breakdowns

Sometimes friends fall out. Usually they make up again soon, but arguments can sometimes be more serious.

What do with friends who turn out to be dishonest?

Favouritism, promoting friends above more deserving members of your team.

Grooming? Cannot trust someone with secrets

7. Marriage Fractures

A relationship breakdown is not an overnight event but rather a gradual erosion of the mutual respect, understanding, and love that once characterized the partnership. The significance of understanding a relationship breakdown lies in its widespread impact, affecting the couple and their families, children, and social networks. The emotional toll can be profound, leading to stress, depression, and a decrease in overall life satisfaction for those involved.

In today's fast-paced and often stressful society, relationships are under constant pressure, making them vulnerable to breakdowns. The immediate need for recognizing the signs of such a decline and implementing coping strategies cannot be overstated. Early intervention

can help couples navigate through difficulties, resolve underlying conflicts, and, where possible, restore the strength and vitality of their relationship.

To minimise the risk of relationship breakdowns, it is healthy to have in place boundaries; such as not drinking in the evening alone with another of the opposite sex.

Moreover, for those relationships that may not survive, understanding the dynamics of breakdowns can provide invaluable insights for managing the separation process more amicably and preparing for healthier relationships in the future.

In my life two married women, Anne Nightingale, and Mary Howard became – through no known fault of mine – too emotionally close that it was wise for me to cease to see them. Their marriages survived.

There is no single reason why a relationship begins to break down. However, once a relationship does start to break down, there is a predictable sequence of events that tends to occur. Highly regarded psychologist and researcher John Gottman, Ph.D., suggests that there are four stages to this sequence, which he has labelled "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse."

These include, 1) criticism of values and hopes, 2) contempt for behaviour - such as remembering to put the toilet seat down after use, alcohol overuse, drugs, smoking even - which, even though not expressed openly rots the foundation of a relationship, 3) defensiveness, and 4) stonewalling – as the partners start avoiding one another to reduce their conflicts.

To de-escalate conflicts, try:

A) Active listening: One of the most effective techniques in resolving conflicts is practicing active listening. This involves fully concentrating on what your partner is saying, understanding their message, responding thoughtfully, and remembering their points. It's about making your partner feel heard and validated, even if you disagree with their perspective.

B) Use "I" statements: Express your feelings and needs using "I" statements rather than "you" statements to avoid placing blame or making your partner feel defensive. For example, say, "I feel upset when..." instead of "You make me upset by..."

In preparing couples for marriage, I suggest they might include in their timetables a monthly meeting- typically last Saturday morning of the month – in which each can say what upset them that month. (By the way, it works!)

C) Take a time-out: If emotions start to escalate, taking a time-out can be beneficial. Agreeing with your partner in advance about this strategy allows both parties to cool down,

D) Seek to understand before being understood: Make a genuine effort to understand your partner's point of view and concerns before pushing your own. This shift in focus can lead to empathy and compromise.

E) Focus on the issue, not the person: Target the specific behaviour or situation causing the conflict instead of criticizing the person. Discussing how a particular action made you feel rather than attacking your partner's character keeps the conversation productive.

There was a marriage that broke down because it was too perfect. Over a long walk and conversation, the husband said the road to his death was too straight – and thus frightening. He needed, he insisted, twists and turns to distract him from being able to see the end. Weird? Yes. But true

.Research has shown that a happy marriage brings joy and fulfilment but also has significant benefits for your health. Studies found that individuals in happy marriages tend to have better overall health compared to those who are single. They often live longer, have a lower risk for depression, and have fewer strokes and heart attacks. Furthermore, they have a higher chance to survive a major surgical procedure."

The context in which you address conflicts is almost as important as how you communicate during the conflict. The right timing and setting can significantly influence the outcome of a disagreement.

Divorce in the United States (I do not have access to stats in the UK)

A national survey in 2005 remains the most recent large-scale report about the leading causes of divorce in the nation.

The survey found that the 12 top reasons for divorce, from most to least common, are:

1. lack of commitment – 73.2%
2. constant arguing or conflict – 55%
3. infidelity – 54.6%. This leads to feelings of betrayal, anger, and resentment, which can destroy a relationship. Effects of infidelity may include anxiety, depression, trauma, trust challenges, shame, guilt, and social withdrawal.
4. marrying too young – 45.7%
5. Unrealistic expectations about partner or marriage – 45.3%. Including unrealistic expectations about how the household will run, where you will live, and how you will be treated as a spouse. – and assuming “things will be better after you’re married” may be a warning sign of unrealistic expectations placed on the marriage.
6. inequality between partners – 43.7%
7. inadequate preparation for marriage – 41.1%

8. domestic violence - 29.1%
9. financial problems – 28.4%. Having a hard time making ends meet or having a partner who overextends spending may cause stress in a marriage.
10. conflict about domestic work -21.6%
11. lack of family support – 18.7% . If your family doesn't agree with your marriage or your partner, the rift you feel may contribute to feelings of isolation and loneliness, as well as a sense of grief for the lost connections.
12. religious differences – 13.2% Lack of respect for a spouse's faith can, long term, be lethal to a relationship.

A smaller-scale study, “Trusted Source” in 2013 revealed that lack of commitment, infidelity, and conflict and arguing were indeed the leading causes of divorce in the United States.

Fewer couples are marrying as so many marriages fail – and fewer take their Christian faith seriously.

In the UK, the proportion of adults who have never married or been in a civil partnership has increased every decade from 26.3% in 1991 to 37.9% in 2021, whereas the proportion of adults who are married or in a civil partnership (including separated) has fallen from 58.4% in 1991 to 46.9% in 2021.

8. Benefits of friendships.

Made to the image and likeness of God – who is trinitarian – our lives are god-like and thus at their possible best when we live with friends.

When we are born, we get associated with mother and hopefully a whole family. We connect very quickly with people with whom our interests match. Infants are playful by nature. They always look for the company with whom they can play and explore their curious nature. Hence, when they meet any other infant of their age they connect easily over their common interest of playing.

In school, we make friends over our common PIES interests. For example, students who like playing sports like cricket connect quickly and they become friends. Friends meet and discuss their common interests and nurture their interests together. Friends in school help each other in understanding the class activities, and homework. They often exchange notes and reference materials among themselves. Close friends may even pray together and share their love of God and the saints.

Common interests can be nefarious – as in the case of Hitler and Goering , who became close friends thanks to their common fascism.

During our college life, we get independence in taking many decisions on our own. Also, many live in a hostel and are hence away from their family. Studying together, staying together, nurturing interest together, adjusting to conflicts with each other, helping each other all these makes the bond of us stronger.

A friend highlights mistakes and guides us in many ways. They also motivate us to realize our full potential. Also, we can easily discuss and share such issues and thoughts with our friends which we cannot share with our parents.

In our professional life also, friends also help us handle failure positively and multiply our joy of success. During midlife, we have huge responsibilities for family, job, etc. Discussing professional and personal stress with our friends makes us feel relaxed. They are our mental support and when we are in crisis, a good friend joins hand and helps in solving the problem.

Because of the nuclear family structure of the current society in old age, people mostly stay alone. Friends hang out and travel together to explore various places and enjoy several hobbies together. Friends thus eliminate boredom and loneliness from life. They add colour to life. They become big support for any help needed.

A friend is a person who helps and supports us. They help us come out of distress and grow in life.

Friendship is not only between two people. We become friends with animals around us. Hence, we tend to keep pets. Pets eliminate boredom and stress from our life. Spending time with pets give us immense joy.

In our lifetime we choose our own friends. The journey of life becomes memorable because of friends. Friendship is a lovely relation without which life seems dull. It is the relationship with our friends that teaches us to share, love, care and most importantly helps us to fight odds and be successful. Having true friends acts as a boon. Friends increase the sense of belongingness and generate a feel-good factor. We all thrive and look for at least one that friend who at times criticizes and appreciates too. Emotional and psychological attachments are important and can only be experienced with friends.

Friendship is one of the greatest bonds anyone can ever wish for. Lucky are those who have friends they can trust. Friendship is a devoted relationship between two individuals. They both feel immense care and love for each other. Usually, a friendship is shared by two people who have similar interests and feelings.

You meet many along the way of life but only some stay with you forever. Those are your real friends who stay by your side through thick and thin. Friendship is the most beautiful gift you can present to anyone. It is one which stays with a person forever.

A person is acquainted with many persons in their life. There are colleagues, allies-in-life and acquaintances, which enrich our life. However, the closest ones become our friends. You may have a large friend circle in school or college, but you know you can only count on one or two people with whom you share true friendship.

When I was a teacher – and school chaplain – and I heard a lad boast that he had hundreds of friends, I used to say, “No, you don’t. You may have met hundreds of people, but there’s no way you can really know more than a handful of people. You’d be lucky if you had three or four real friends.”

As real friends take time, it is not possible to have too many of these. Acquaintances and colleagues may be many. Real friends are always few.

We all have a “circle of friends,” a group with whom we play golf, attend church, go to dinner, or share a common interest, like fishing or football. Often, however, these are there for the good times.

Years ago, I came close to a wealthy man who, to discover who his real friends were, pretended he had gone bankrupt. He soon discovered that in fact – apart from me – he had five.

As read in The Good Book, “Wealth attracts many friends, but even the closest friend of the poor person deserts them” (Proverbs 19:4).

When things go sour and you really feel lousy, do you have a friend you can tell?

Do you have a friend you can express any honest thought to without fear of appearing foolish?

Do you have a friend who will let you talk through a problem without giving you advice? Someone who will just be a sounding board?

Will your friend risk your disapproval to suggest you may be getting off track in your priorities?

If you had a moral failure, do you know your friend would stand with you?

Is there a friend with whom you feel you are facing life together? A friend to talk over the struggles of life that are unique to men?

Do you have a friend you believe you can trust, that if you share confidential thoughts they will stay confidential?

When you are vulnerable and transparent with your friend, are you convinced he will not think less of you?

Do you meet with a friend weekly or fortnightly for fellowship and prayer, and possibly for accountability?

We sincerely want to have close friends, yet we fear letting someone get too close. We worry that if someone really got to know us, they wouldn’t like us. As someone starts to get too close, we find ourselves withdrawing - we change the subject, or figure out how to say goodbye.

We need approval, to be accepted by another person, but we fear the opposite—that we will be rejected. So, we keep our distance. If we don't become vulnerable with someone, then we safely avoid the risk of rejection.

Few types of emotional pain cut as deeply or wound as savagely as that of betrayal by a friend. The consequences may not be catastrophic, but the trust level may be difficult to repair. Everyone, it seems, has at least one confidant - one other person they feel comfortable telling your secret.

Benjamin Franklin captured the idea when he said, “Three people can keep a secret, as long as two of them are dead.”

Friends are mutually attracted across the PIES. When there are mutual benefits – such as mutual support with complementary qualities.

If you are finding things difficult, talking things through with a friend can help you understand how you are feeling and what support you might need. It might even be that they just sit and listen. A friend can be there for you by listening to how you are feeling and keep you company to remind you that you are not alone.

Give practical support. For example, if you are nervous about going to a party, friends can help you by going to the party with you, messaging you to see how you are getting on or helping you find a quiet space.

Friends can take your mind off what might be making you feel low or stressed.

Friends that know you well might recognise if you are struggling or not feeling your best and can check-in to see if you need support.

In my experiences, homosexual marriages can be as wonderful as their heterosexual variety. There are two outstanding ones I have get to know rather well. There is Roger and Ron, a wonderfully generous and lovely couple together for decades risked arrest until law changed in 1967. And there is my nephew and godson, Rob and his spouse Alex.