

# Why Christian Leaders Need More Friends

Friendship has been proven to boost our health, decrease anxiety and depression, increase our lifespan, and more. And yet rates of it are declining in the West. Why? In this session, Sheridan unpacks some of the reasons friendship gets side-lined in both culture and the church, why many Christian leaders have impoverished friendship circles, and two convictions that can transform the friendship problem.

**Sheridan Voysey** is an author, speaker and broadcaster who regularly appears on the BBC and other international networks. The author of eight books, his next multiplatform project, Friendship Lab, will launch soon. [www.sheridanvoysey.com](http://www.sheridanvoysey.com)

## I. The Problem

A. Friendship is in decline in the West

B. In culture, *philia* is pushed out by *eros*

C. In church, *philia* is pushed out by *agápē*

Does Matthew 5:46-47 rule out preferential, reciprocal friendship?

See also:

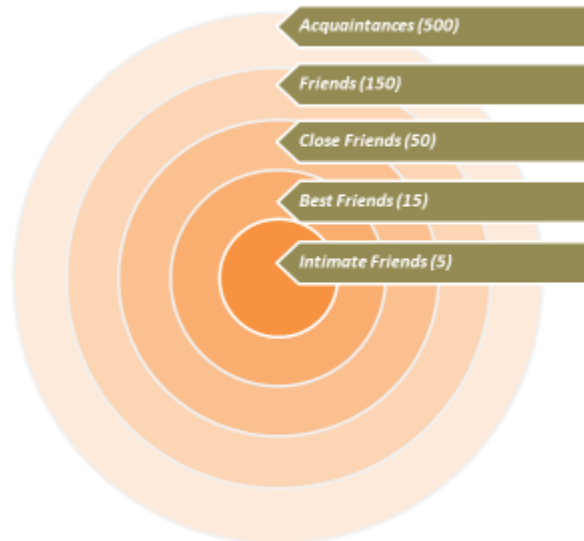
- Luke 12:4 / John 15:15
- John 11:11
- Acts 19:31, 27:3
- 3 John

## II. What is a Friend?

A. Definition: A friend is someone I can:

- Talk to
- Depend on
- Grow with
- Enjoy

B. The circles of friendship:



Adapted from RIM Dunbar, *An Anatomy of Friendship*  
(Trends in Cognitive Science, Jan 2018)

C. Christian workers and friendship

D. The benefits of friendship

### III. The Solution

#### A. Recognise friendship as a sacred calling

- God the Father rescues friendship from idolatry (Psalm 103:1-5)
- Jesus rescues friendship from insularity (Galatians 3:23)
- Holy Spirit rescues friendship from implosion (Galatians 5:22-26)
- John 15:12-17

#### B. Intentionally cultivate our connections:



Adapted from William K Rawlins, *Friendship Matters* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1992)

### IV. Reflection

#### A. Reflecting on my friendship connections:

- Who could I move from 1 to 2 by finding out more about them?
- Who could I move from 2 to 3 through an invitation to coffee, movie, dinner?
- Who could I move from 3 to 4 through more regular contact?
- Who could I move from 4 to 5 through more time and self-disclosure?
- Do I have any waning friendships I could reinvigorate?

## Resources

**Friendship Lab:** [Please join my newsletter](#) for updates on this new project

**Fast Friends:** [A series of 36 questions](#) designed to forge new friendships

**Fast Friends for Kids:** [A youth-friendly edition](#) to help form friendships in class

**Books:** Liz Carmichael, *Friendship: Interpreting Christian Love*; Robin Dunbar, *Friends: Understanding the Power of Our Most Important Relationships*; Gilbert C. Meilaender, *Friendship: A Study in Theological Ethics*; Caroline J. Simon, *The Disciplined Heart: Love, Destiny and Imagination*