

If A Man Would Have Friends....

Introduction:

Greetings everyone in the mighty name of Jesus! Praise the Lord ye mighty saints of the most high God! Praise the Lord everybody! I thank God and this congregation for the opportunity to bring forth the word of the Lord this morning.

We live in a day when the world is more crowded than ever before. Population control is the hue and cry of the world governments. Birth control, abortion, war, these are the means used to reduce the worlds populations by the powers that be.

Yet for all such propositions of overcrowding, overpopulation, and overwhelming throngs of people threatening to overcome the world's resources. In the midst of all this, can a man still find a friend in this world? Can a man find someone who will stick closer than a Brother? Where in the world can a man find a friend?

Text:

Proverbs 18:24 A man *that hath* friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend *that* sticketh closer than a brother.

Body:

We walk through the Shopping Malls in the midst of the busy crowd. The pushing, the shoving, the rudeness, and yes even the bad breath and body odor. Yet even in the hustle and bustle of this maddening scene of flesh and earthly goods, if we are not among our friends we're still alone.

Surrounded by untold numbers of people from all walks of life, from all races, creeds, and colors,; in this jumble of God Almighty's creation, if we're not among friends we're still alone.

- Alone to feel our pain.
- Alone to feel our loneliness
- Alone to ourselves and to our surroundings.
- Alone, alone, alone, all alone.

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Have you ever been somewhere that you didn't know someone, anyone? Maybe at a Church Camp Meeting or at a Single's Meeting, or perhaps your first day in a new Church? How did you feel until someone came up to you and introduced themselves to you? Did you feel alone? Even though you were in the midst of a group of people of whom you had no fear, did you feel alone? Did you wish that a friend was there with you?

Think about how the world must feel if we who are born again believers in the most high God. If we One God, Apostolic, Tongue Talking, Holy Rollers, can sometimes feel alone. How must they feel? There's a lost and dying world out there, and we can win souls just by being friendly.

There is a teeming sea of humanity outside our church doors that is in dire need of that friend who sticks closer than a brother.

- People without any hope
- People without a vision
- People without a friend.

- Oh today that we would get a vision of the lost.
- That we would get a desire to win lost souls.
- That we would search our hearts and seek the mind of Christ.
- That we would know how to reach these lost and lonely souls.
- That we would dare to be a friend to someone who is lost.
- That we would be a friend to those who are seeking God.

I say unto you this day that there is a way that any one of us can reach the lost. It really doesn't take a whole lot of effort either. All you have to do is be that friend to someone.

- Go up to that visitor that just walked in the door!
- Have a smile on your face when you walk through the middle of the Mall.
- Have a kind word for the frustrated cashier who's just had to put up with the rude customer.
- Invite people to church that don't quite fit your idea of proper Christians.
- Invite everybody to church for that matter!

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Jesus said to go out into the highways and the hedges and compel them to come. Who are we to think we are better judges of character than Jesus?

The word compel comes from the Greek verb Anagkazo (**An-ang-kad-zo**) which means to necessitate, to compel or constrain. This word doesn't mean to wish someone would come to church with you. It doesn't mean that you are to tell somebody else to bring someone to church with them.

It means you are to convince someone that they need to come to church with you. Invite, summon, call, solicit, ask, bid, but whatever it takes convince and compel them to come to church. Don't give up on them; don't ever quit witnessing to them.

But please remember this; the way you act is your best witness. You can't win your neighbor to Christ if you're constantly griping at him about his lawn. You can't win your neighbor to Christ if you don't take care of your own lawn! They'll think why should I go to church with them, they're slob. You may not have much, but take good care of what the Lord has given you stewardship over.

- Don't play your music loud at night, even if it is anointed.
- Don't let your dogs bark all night. It may not bother you but it does others.
- Be willing to help your neighbor.
- Mow their lawn for them sometime.
- Invite them over for dinner
- You get the idea

If we want to win our neighbors to Christ we have to be friendly to them. Even if they aren't lovable we still need to be friendly with them as much as it's in our power to do so. You won't convince too many of your enemies that they need Christ if you aren't acting Christ-like in your own neighborhood.

I want to stick my nose in where it probably doesn't belong right now but here goes anyway. I have heard over and over again from friends, coworkers, and relatives about their supposedly Christian neighbors yelling and screaming at each other at the top of their lungs. I'm not married, but still it seems to me that there has to be a better way to solve your problems and settle your arguments than yelling and screaming at each other. Anything that ruins your witness can't

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be right! Now I figure I'll be tested in this area someday and possibly have a lot more sympathy for some of you at that time, but not today.

Pause

Our text stated that: A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly. If you have friends and want to keep them, you have to remain friendly to them. If you quit being friendly to them, after a while they will cease to be your friends.

If you're rude to them a few too many times, if you ignore them a few too many times, they'll cease to be your friends. If we as the body of Christ can lose friends through mistreatment, how much harder will it be to win the world to Christ if we don't treat them as friends?

These people may have been mistreated by a world that only thinks of itself. They've been shut out or forced to do repulsive things in order to be popular. In many churches you have people who think that they have to do things they would prefer not to in order to remain friends with people in the church. I'm not talking about standards of dress, and standards are good, they're right in the sight of God. I'm talking about cliques! If you want to be a part of this group you have to ignore "Brother So and So" or "Sister What's her name". You can't be my friend and hers, or his too. There's no place for that in the Church. This church doesn't have that problem, Thank you Jesus! This is an awesome group of people for such a small church, I thank God for each and every one of you each and every day. But in the future as we grow numerically I don't ever want it to become a problem either.

Then of course there is Brother or Sister Friendly. This person is always friendly, always has a smile or a kind word for someone. This is the very person that most people usually make fun of. There's just something about them that they don't like. They're just too friendly! They're just too happy! They must be some kind of a Dork! Maybe they are a Dork, but God would rather have a church full of Dorks that are friendly, loving examples of Him than a church full of people that don't have enough faith and love for God to reach out to others.

I don't care how cool you think you are. If you're too cool to be friendly to people, you can hang around with all your cool buddies in the lake of fire on

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judgement day. After all, if you are too cool to reach out to people for God. Then you are just too cool to go to heaven and live forever with all those Dorks who made it.

Here's one for you. Did you ever think that maybe it's your fault they're a Dork? If they were to hang around you so called cool people maybe they would learn better social skills. I can tell you from personal experience that if you get ostracized enough you just start staying away from people.

You need to look around you for those people you see sitting all alone. Reach out to that person! That person may need reassurance that God loves them. Sometimes more than that they need someone in flesh to show them the love of Christ.

- Won't you be that person today?
- Won't you make up in your mind that you're going to be a friendly person?
- Won't you pray and ask Jesus to help you become bolder in your relationships with others?
- Won't you be the first one to greet the visitor to your services?

When people in the world come into this church are you going to look at them and turn the other way, or are you going to show them the love of Christ? How about before they come to the church? Do you remember the story when the man asked Christ who his neighbor was? Let me refresh your memory:

Luke 10:29-37

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him,

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Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Samaritans in those days were considered dogs by the Jews. They wouldn't even speak to them. If Jesus said that a man considered to be a dog was the neighbor, because he had compassion on those who were hurting. How can we who are the chosen of God be any less helpful and friendly to those who are lost? We have too much pride some times. We need to remember where we came from. It hasn't been so long ago that some of us were sinners. Even now I'm just a sinner saved by grace.

Romans 11:24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

How can you justify not seeking the lost? Have you had compassion on a sinner lately? Have you given a dime or a quarter or a dollar to a beggar lately? Peter and John were in the habit of giving to the beggars by the Church doors. They didn't badmouth them. They gave what they had, and the best part was when they gave them Jesus.

Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

When was the last time you gave someone Jesus? I don't like to be panhandled by an alcoholic any more than you do. But what if it was you out there? What would you think then? So overwhelmed by sin that you can't even keep a job. No food, no one to turn to, no where to go, living on the streets in most cases.

- Wouldn't you want someone to help?
- Wouldn't you need someone to show you Jesus?
- Wouldn't you need some compassion for your situation?

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I dare say that you would. I dare say that you would want someone to show themselves as a friend to you in your time of need. To give you a hand up, not a hand out. That's what Peter and John did to the man begging alms. They gave him a hand up.

Lift up your Brother or Sister today. Reach out to them, show them love, be a friend to them. Show them the love of Christ dwells in your heart and that you are willing to share it with them. To spend it on them. You can only get so full of love you know. Then you have to pour some out before you can get more given to you.

Jesus didn't go out just to the lovely and the lovable. He went out and healed the sick, fed the hungry, saved the thief on the cross, and condemned the Pharisee's. Yes, He condemned the Pharisee's! You know them, those self righteous, self serving, self exalting, hypocrites! You know, those people just like us.....

Do you really think we're that much different than them? I don't think so. They were the upholders of the standards in their day. Which was the right thing to do, and Christ never condemned them for it. They were the followers of God's word in their day, which was the right thing to do. They spoke about God on street corners, which was the right thing to do. They fasted and prayed, which was the right thing to do. They were faithful to be in the temple, which was the right thing to do.

Still sounds like us doesn't it? How then are we different from them? I'll tell you how! We're different from the Pharisee's because of our attitude and our spirit in these very same matters. We have Godly standards of dress as the word directs us.. But we know that these standards alone won't save us. We won't get into heaven just by keeping a high standard. Let's look at the book of Ephesians for a minute:

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Let's go to James for a minute:

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James 2:17-20 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Therefore keeping the standards of dress that the bible requires is just the evidence of our faith. According to Romans chapter 12, it is our “reasonable service”. They don’t give us bragging rights, they just show our humility and love for Jesus by our obedience to them.

Did you know that Martin Luther, the founder of the Lutheran church wanted to cut the book of James out of the bible because it conflicted with his doctrine. God forbid! If everyone who had a conflict with the word of God cut parts out of the bible there wouldn’t be much of it left.

Realistically people have done just that because they have refused to preach the whole bible, to be submissive to the word of God. They still want to rule themselves instead of letting God have control of their lives. Be glad you have a pastor that’s not afraid to preach the truth to you; and not just partial truth but the whole truth. That truth will save your soul from a burning Hell! I don’t know about you, but I really don’t want to go to Hell, not even for a visit!!!

We as Apostolic/Pentecostals are different from the Pharisees in that we preach the truth out of a heart of love for the lost. Not out of spite or self-aggrandizement. We preach it on the street corners because we want everyone to be saved, not because we want to be heard. We fast and we pray because we want to know God’s will, not because we want things from God. We are faithful to be in the house of God because we love God, not just because the word says to do so, **and it does say so!**

- But are we anymore friendly than the Pharisees were?
- How can we tell?
- What will manifest itself if we strive to be as friendly as Jesus and his disciples?
- I’ll tell you what: Souls!

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- Souls will be saved!
- Souls will be loved into holiness.
- Our church will grow, and we as individuals will grow!

Close:

As the musicians come, I'm going to close. But I just want to ask you a few more questions before I do.

- Have you been a friend to the unfriendly lately?
- Have you shown love to someone unlovable lately?
- Have you been a Christian instead of a Pharisee lately?
- How about a child of God?
- Have you been showing the love of Christ to people in the church or just ignoring them?

In the book of James again we read:

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

We have widows and fatherless in our own churches. We need to show love to them as well as the sinner.

If you have answered no to any of the questions I just asked, I want you to come down to this altar right now.

I'm not worried a bit about anyone of you that comes down to this altar. If you're coming down it means that God is still working in your life. That you're still tender hearted. It's the people that stay in their seats that worry me. Because they are either cold in their hearts toward God, or they don't love the rest of you enough to come and pray with you. Don't get me wrong, I know some of you are not physically able to do certain things anymore. But for those of you that can and won't. I worry about your souls.

If there are any in here tonight that need Jesus in your hearts, come down to this altar and let us love you into the Kingdom of God.

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- Let Jesus fill you with his spirit!
- Let his love fill you to overflowing!
- Don't resist the tugging on your heart right now!
- Please come down and receive Jesus as your savior tonight!
- Don't leave here like you came!
- Don't leave with the loneliness still in your heart!
- Give it all to Jesus!

If you have all you need from Jesus then I want you to come down to this altar and pray for those that do need something from Christ. You don't have to be a spiritual giant to pray for someone, just willing

Remember if a man would have friends, he must first show himself friendly. Come down to this altar and make some new friends tonight. Reach out to Jesus and find that friend that sticketh closer than a brother!