

DISCIPLINE FOR GODLINESS

DISCIPLINE OF FRIENDSHIP

THERE HAS BEEN an interesting development in suburban architecture. Long gone are the days when homes all had large front porches, with easy access to the front door, enabling one to become quickly acquainted with others in the neighborhood.

In the 1990s we have architecture which speaks more directly to our current values. The most prominent part of a house seems to be the two- or three-car garage. Inside are huge bathrooms with skylights and walk-in closets larger than the bedroom I grew up in. Modern architecture employs small living and dining rooms and now smaller kitchens as well, because entertaining is no longer a priority. Today's homes boast smaller yards and an increasing incidence of high fences.

The old adage that "a man's house is his castle" is coming true today. His castle's moat is his front lawn, the drawbridge his driveway, and the portcullis his automatic garage door through which he passes with electronic heraldry. Once inside, he removes his armor and attends to house and hearth until daybreak, when he assumes his executive armament and, briefcase in hand, mounts his steed — perhaps a Bronco or a Mustang — presses the button, and rides off to the wars.

Today's homes reflect our modern values of individualism, isolation, and privatization.

*There is this cave
In the air behind my body
That nobody is going to touch
A cloister, a silence
Closing around a blossom of fire.*

It is no longer unusual to not even know the families immediately surrounding one's own house! The average American family moves four times, even when the job does not force it. People move from house to house looking for the elusive "something." We lack roots, continuity, and community — all of which is to say that friendship, especially deep friendship, has fallen on hard times.

This is especially true for men. **Alan Loy McGinnis**, author of the best-selling *The Friendship Factor*, says that America's leading psychologists and therapists estimate that only 10 percent of all men ever have any real friends. The decade-long research of 5,000 men and women by **Michael McGill**, published in 1985, corroborates this. He reports:

Bible Study: Discipline for Godliness

Discipleship Series:

Pastor Eddie Idefonso

“To say that men have no intimate friends seems on the surface too harsh.... But the data indicates that it is not far from the truth. Even the most intimate of friendships (of which there are few) rarely approach the depth of disclosure a woman commonly has with many other women.... Men do not value friendship. Why is this? we wonder.”

We all know that men, by nature, are not as relational as women. Men’s friendships typically center around activities, while women’s revolve around sharing. Men do not reveal their feelings or weaknesses as readily as women. They gear themselves for the marketplace, and typically understand friendships as acquaintances made along the way, rather than as relationships. Also, men fear being suspected of deviant behavior if they have an obviously close friendship with another man. And, of course, there are some who suffer from the John Wayne delusion that “real men do not need other people.”

Tragically, those who think this way rob themselves, their wives, their children, and the Church because they will never be all God wants them to be.

Such thinking ignores the wisdom of both Scripture and life. Soon after Adam’s creation, God said, “**It is not good for the man to be alone**” ([Genesis 2:18](#)). While this relates directly to the creation of Eve, it is also a primary ontological statement about the nature of man, who is, whether he admits it or not, a relational being. His growth and significance are worked out in relationships.

Christ is our example. His ministry was centered in deep friendships with the Twelve, whom He repeatedly called “**friends**” ([John 15:13–15](#)), and there was also the inner circle of three with whom He formed an even deeper friendship and to whom He bared His heart.

Being a Christian is a relationship with the Triune God through Christ and with His Body, the Church. God becomes our Father; we become eternal brothers and sisters. Relationship! The warning to not “**give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing**” ([Hebrews 10:25](#)) was, and is, a call to relationships and friendships with other believers. Friendship is not optional.

Men, if you are married, your wife must be your most *intimate* friend, but to say, “my wife is my best friend” can be a cop-out. You also need Christian male friends who have a same-sex understanding of the serpentine passages of your heart, who will not only offer counsel and pray for you, but will also hold you accountable to your commitments and responsibilities when necessary. Next we will consider a prime example of this kind of friend.