

# DISCIPLINE FOR GODLINESS

## DISCIPLINE OF FRIENDSHIP

### A GREAT FRIENDSHIP

#### *Friendship's Commitment*

#### DISCIPLINE OF FRIENDSHIP

Today friendship has fallen on hard times. Few men have good friends, much less deep friendships. Individualism, autonomy, privatization, and isolation are culturally cachet, but deep, devoted, vulnerable friendship is not. This is a great tragedy for self, family, and the Church, because it is in relationships that we develop into what God wants us to be. But deep friendships and friendships in general (close friendships, good friendships, and casual friendships) are there to be made if we value them as we ought — and if we practice some simple disciplines of friendship.

#### *Prayer*

We must pray specifically for God's help in effecting inward changes that will expand our capacities for friendship. And we must pray for the opportunity to develop friendships. Such relational requests may not occur naturally to the minds of most men, but they are prayers which God delights to answer, as my own experience, and that of many other Christian men, amply testifies. Need some good friendships? Spiritual logic demands that prayer is the place to begin.

#### *Friendliness*

A wise old farmer was working beside the road when a family moving to a nearby town stopped and asked him if that town was "friendly." The farmer said he could not really say. But the people pressed him for an answer, so he asked them what the town was like that they came from. They answered that it was terrible — the people were rude and small-minded. The old farmer replied, "That is just how you will find this town."

No matter what our disposition, we need to work at friendliness. We need to be *consciously cheerful*. We need to *ask questions*. We need to *place ourselves in situations where friendships happen*. If you are a regular church attender but do no more than attend morning worship, you are depriving yourself and the church of the friendship so desperately needed by all. Men, we must place ourselves in the ways of friendship: an adult Sunday school class, a home Bible study, a men's Bible study, a men's breakfast group, men's retreats, and, especially, service in some ministry of the church. Women are so much better at this than men. We must learn from them to take the initiative.

## **Bible Study: Discipline for Godliness**

### **Discipleship Series:**

**Pastor Eddie Idefonso**

#### ***Work***

Few of the truly valuable things in life just happen. Usually when they do, it is because we recognize their value and go for it. You can have just about anything you want if you work for it. If you want to make a million dollars badly enough, you can very likely do it. If you want to earn a Ph.D. and are willing to pay the price, you can do it. We generally get what we set our sights on. It is the same with friendship. Those who have friends place importance on them. This is why women have more friends than men.

#### ***Affirmation***

If we will work at affirming others, we will have friends. Mark Twain said, “I can live for two months on a compliment.” He is right! I have a friend who sends me a note every two or three months that is meant to affirm me and encourage my steadfastness. Compliments have huge buoying power. Be liberal with honest affirmations, and you will have friends.

#### ***Listening***

Even more, men, if you will work at being a good listener, you will develop friends. The epigram “Eloquence is with the audience” is not only true of public speaking but of general conversation. Listen well, and you will be pronounced a “brilliant” conversationalist! What’s more, people will discover they are important to you, which is key to any friendship.

#### ***Acceptance***

Life is filled with small rejections — a sarcastic smile, innuendos, awkward silences, club atmospheres — so that many walk through the day with their guard up. If we discipline ourselves to be accepting, others will see the sparkle of our eyes, the tilt of our head, the ethos of our voice — and will know that acceptance is there. An open, accepting soul is like a well-lit home on a cold dark night.

#### ***Hospitality***

When we think of the Scriptural command to practice hospitality, we reflexively imagine a feminine mandate — “This is something my wife should excel at, or my mother, or my daughter. Women, hear God’s Word!” And they do, much to their souls’ benefit. But the command is for both genders. Men, you ought to take the initiative in practicing hospitality (see [1 Peter 4:9](#)), whether you are single or married. If you do, you will not only begin to build friendships, but may even host some “**angels without knowing it**” ([Hebrews 13:2](#)).

We must set ourselves against the cultural consensus and pursue and practice friendship if we are to be all God wants us to be. God’s Word demands a countercultural manliness which is capable of deep friendship. We need to put some holy sweat into our relationships, resist the lure of our architecture with its moats, drawbridges, and descending doors, and overcome the technology of autonomy — the isolating lure of our televisions and VCR’s. Most of all, we must overcome our privatized hearts — for Christianity is a relationship with God *and His people*. God’s truth is most effectively learned and lived in relationships. Friendships hold the promise of grace!