

Deep Friendships Last

I want to finish this mini-series of 3 posts about **The Seasons of Friendships** by letting you know that a God Buddy relationship can last for a very long time— even into eternity when you go deep as Jesus did with His friends.

Keith Anderson starts the last chapter of his book, *Friendships That Run Deep* with the statement: **“Friendships that go deep will last.”**

He suggests that all of our biblical perspectives for deep friendships can be recognized in the relationship between Peter and Jesus.

As you may know, the apostle Peter was a man that was not content standing on the sidelines. He always wanted to be in the thick of things. He was incredibly passionate and full of energy. Peter did not always think before he spoke and often acted on impulse.

But Peter stepped out of the boat on faith after meeting Jesus. Peter was one of Christ’s inner circle along with James, and John. Peter specifically, defended his friend, Jesus, with a sword when confronted by the Roman soldiers. They were always at Jesus’ side; ready for action if needed.

For Jesus, the trio of Peter, James, and John were not always easy to be around. But they were very moldable. Jesus took this trio aside for teaching, fellowship, and support. They were not always easy to be around and often fought among themselves.



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Most importantly, Jesus never abandoned them, just as He promised (Deuteronomy 31:6). He went deep with the disciples, especially this inner circle as He:

1. Unmasked His truest identity.
2. Choose to give intentional loyalty and invited them to share responsibility as one of the Twelve disciples.
3. Walked through seasons of faith and unfaith, growth and setbacks.
4. Listened well.
5. Encouraged.

6. Forgave them.

So for Anderson, our deepest friendships are easier to navigate when we include Jesus in the relationship and go deep with each other.

Your Inner Circle

Keith Anderson also writes that only a small handful of people in our lives are candidates for our inner circle of most trusted and necessary friends which he calls "soul friends". This is a term was coined by Kenneth Leech, an English Anglican priest and Christian socialist who says in his book of the same name, that "Soul Friends" are friends "whose concerns go far beyond the superficial and banal issues of everyday life".

Anderson says, your soul friends are those who create the space and "open a doorway into the private places of your heart and soul."



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Soul friendships are more than casual, functional or circumstantial. It is deeply spiritual and intensely personal, which probably explains why it is so rare.

Soul friends actually want to go deeper with others— deep into issues of the spirit or soul to help us see the deeply spiritual texture of the seemingly trivial events of our life.

Anderson says, soul friends, will take you deeper than you can ever go on your own.

Soul Friends become God Buddies

So I will suggest to you that God Buddies need to go deep in order to have long-lasting friendships that share the secrets of their soul, even when those secrets are not easy to disclose.

Fredrick Buecher provides an even better description in his book, *Telling Secrets*:

“When we hunger for perhaps more than anything else is to be known in our full humanness and yet, that is often just what we fear more than anything else. It is important to tell at least from time to time the secret of who we truly and fully are...because otherwise, we run the risk of losing track of who we truly and fully are and little by little come to accept instead the highly edited version which we put forth in hope that the world will find it more acceptable than the real thing.”

–Fredrich Buehner, Telling Secrets (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991) pp 2-3.

This level of showing your humanness, comes as you progress through the 5 levels of communication that author John Powell describes in his book, *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?*:



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1. **Cliche level** of small talk. The level of risk is superficial: Did you see last night's game?
2. **Fact level** of revealing information or personal competence. It tells others what you know. The risk is low although the content may be more complex.
3. **Opinion level** shares what you think, usually safe topics or impersonal issues.
4. **Emotional level** takes a major step toward transparency and vulnerability because you tell others what you feel. It has to do with dreams and fears, pain and passion, joy and sorrow. It's when you begin to unmask and give part of who you are.
5. **Transparent level** requires enormous trust and involved the greatest amount of risk to your own self-protection.

The apostle James told the early Christians (and tells us today!) to move past the first three levels and "confess your sins to one another." (James 5:16)

The God Buddy Principle

So just how do you go deeper to help your friendship last? Ask deeper questions!

As I wrote in *The Traits of a GB Relationship*, you must first

develop trust and confidentiality before demonstrating transparency, vulnerability, and authenticity. You also use good listening skills and show empathy, then wrap it all together and go deep surrounded with non-judgmental acceptance and unconditional love.

So here are a few questions I tend to ask:



- **“How’s your thought-life been this week?”** or **“Have you been ‘good’ this week?”** or **“When were you most tempted this week?”** when someone has shared with me a struggle with pornography.
- **“How is it going between you and your wife?”** when you know of a marriage struggle.
- **“How much time did you work this week?”** and **“Where did you spend your free time...with your family, watching TV, or on our cell phone?”** when you are asking about priorities.
- **“How is your prayer life?”** and **“Did you worship in church this week?”** for spiritual issues. You can even go deeper into their faith issues with **“How have you spent**

your time with God this week?" and "Have you read God's Word consistently this week?" and "What has God been teaching you?"

Of course, there's the superficial **"How you doing?"** greeting so many people use these days. I'd suggest that if your God Buddy (or any friend for that matter) replies with "oh, OK", you respond with **"Really? Just ok?"** followed by **"How about a cup of coffee?"** if they are open to telling you more.

So take the risk to go deeper with your God Buddy and ask deeper questions. This will lead to a level of authenticity that will help your relationship last, even into eternity.