

The Seasons of Friendships

In my last post, **The Seasons of a Man's Life**, I suggested there are seasons of a man's life when a God Buddy can help navigate the difficult transition periods and big decisions. There are also seasons for our friendships, which will also change just as the seasons come and go.

Recently, my original GB, Bill Johnson moved to another part of the country to be closer to family. We spoke over a beer before he left about how/if our relationship would change. We agreed that our relationship will, in fact, be different but we would just have to work a little bit harder at it and talk over the phone more frequently.

Friendships Also Change

In his book *Friendships That Run Deep*, author Keith R. Anderson writes that there are seasons of fertility, growth & freshness for our friendships but also seasons of decay, decline, and stale monotony. There are also seasons of sunshine and blue skies where you both are in sync. But there will be seasons of storms, in which there is turbulence between the two of you.

We have three types
of friends in life:
Friends for a reason,
friends for a season,
and friends for a lifetime.

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Anderson says good friendships are not measured by the “minutes” but by the “moments” that are part of each of these seasons, he describes in his book:

- **Seasons of Beginnings** – Anderson uses Jesus’ teachings about the four seeds in the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23) to describe how some of his friendships began:
 1. A chance encounter “on the pathway” of thin soil but never really got started.
 2. One that grew quickly and held great promise but was never given the proper care to mature, deepen its roots, and grow.
 3. A friendship choked out by the thorny distractions of what he calls “too muchisms”: too much to do, too much to work on, too much to think about, or too much happening to give the relationship the time and care it needed
 4. The closer friendship that found its way into the deep, fertile soil in which the relationship is cared for, fed and watered leading to a fruitful bounty that was multiple times more than the seed planted.

- **Seasons of Growth** – This is when his friend and he learned to share their hearts and became content *being friends*, not just *doing friendship*. The initial information-gathering is a way of safely and slowly unmasking until deeper conversations occur. Otherwise, the friendship stays shallow.
- **Seasons of Transition** – Friendships often change when a guy gets married and it's "just not convenient" to get together as much. This stage takes work. Friends in transition talk about new expectations and are realistic. Adjustments take time and effort from both of you.
- **Seasons of Change** – Remember the movie *The Big Chill* about a group of college friends figuring out which season their friendships reside? Some picked up right where they left off but some were left behind living in the "glory days" (see Bruce Springsteen song lyrics). Understand that some friendships are merely functional for a season. Life's roads divide us and the journeys send us to different places.
- **Seasons of Parting** – Anderson suggests transitions typically involve 3 distinct stages: death, chaos and new life that we should learn to celebrate and see them as bridges to new life.
- **Seasons of Hospitality and Letting Go** – Anderson uses the German word *Gastfreundschaft*, which literally translated is "friends for the guest". Like a guest, he suggests using the stages of Housecleaning (preparing), Invitation & Welcome (creating a safe and confidential

space), Listening & Storytelling (requiring attentive listening), and Limits are Recognized (when to move on to the next phase or move to closure).

- **Seasons of Closure** – This is when you discern whether the friendship is still worth investing time or continuing to take risks. You ask if you are holding on “for old times sake” but should reinvest your energy elsewhere.

Keep Jesus in Your Friendships

One of my best friends from high school and I just don't connect anymore. With the passage of time, we have simply just grown apart. We became more involved in our families and in our respective careers. I moved to a different town, and he stayed in our hometown. Something caused this change and I'm not sure why. We tried to reconnect several times but our relationship changed and may ever return.



Seasons vary, circumstances
change, feelings fluctuate,
friendships cool, friends die, but
Christ is ever the same.

Octavius Winslow

Octavius Winslow, a prominent 19th-century evangelical preacher in England and America

Honestly, it's hard to lose a long-time friend. At the end of the day, if someone doesn't want to be in your life anymore,

you may be better off without them anyway, especially if you do not share the same values or commitment.

The God Buddy Principle

It's inevitable that your friendships will change over time, which is sometimes hard to accept. But those at the God Buddy level are worth some extra effort and will last longer.

So learn to trust Jesus and allow Him into the center of your GB relationships. Unlike your acquaintances, He promised to be the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Jesus may just also have some other purposes for bringing other God Buddies into your lives anyway!