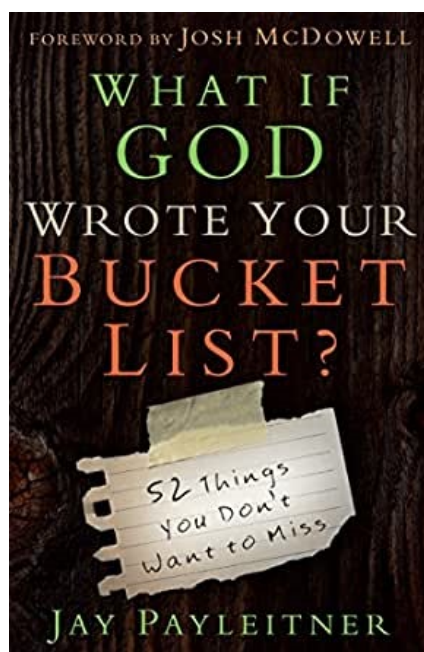


What if God Wrote Your Buddy List?

This week is a guest post from best-selling author and speaker, Jay Payleitner. I met Jay a few years ago and have picked his brain on a few occasions about my blog and my eventual book about God Buddies. I hope you enjoy his take about God writing out the list of your closest friends.

– Rich, your Chief God Buddy



It's pretty clear, some bucket list items deliver more long-term value, edification, and spiritual significance than others. As a matter of fact, I dedicated an entire book titled *What If God Wrote Your Bucket List?* to the idea of polishing and prioritizing your bucket list based on God's values.

One of the chapters suggests that God values human friendships.

Which leads to the question, ***“How many friends do you have? True friends?”***

I daresay that most people have had fewer than a dozen authentic friends over the course of their life. Perhaps even less than five.

To make my point, my intention was to begin this post by recounting the first names of the small number of individuals whom I consider to have been true friends over the years. Then on second thought, I realized doing such a thing so publicly might require just a bit too much soul-searching. May I simply say, gentlemen, you know who you are.

Actually, the Bible suggests that limiting the number of friends you have might be a good thing and that true friends are a blessing.

“A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother”

– *Proverbs 18:24 (NASB)*

So, can you name your friends who are closer than a sibling?

A working definition of friendship might be in order. But

let's move beyond the dictionary.

- “A true friend unbosoms freely, advises justly, assists readily, adventures boldly, takes all patiently, defends courageously, and continues a friend unchangeably” (William Penn, 1644–1718).
- “Friends are helpful not only because they will listen to us, but because they will laugh at us; through them, we learn a little objectivity, a little modesty, a little courtesy; we learn the rules of life and become better players of the game” (Will Durant, 1885–1981).
- “To give and receive advice—the former with freedom and yet without bitterness, the latter with patience and without irritation—is peculiarly appropriate to genuine friendship” (Cicero, 107–44 BC).

True friendship is rare because it requires more than time and proximity. It takes more than just hanging out. According to Penn, Durant, and Cicero, friendship requires trust, honesty, and vulnerability.



Photo by Matheus Ferrero on Unsplash

In the Old Testament, we find those traits in the famous friendship between David and Jonathan. Saul passed over his own son, Jonathan, and named David to be the next king. Still, that didn't place a wedge of envy or entitlement between them. Both men responded with humility and integrity.

Women need friends, too. Although they might already be better at establishing authentic and vulnerable friendships than guys. The book of Ruth recalls the friendship that grew between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, Naomi and Ruth. Together they suffered loss and traveled cross-country as widows. The two women stayed committed to each other and exchanged advice. That Old Testament book ends with a genealogy showing that Ruth became the great-grandmother of David.

Then, there are friendships that didn't work out quite so well.

In the book of Job, when Satan is allowed to destroy Job's family, fortune, and health, the frustrated man is visited by three so-called friends.



Job with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar

Their original intentions may have been compassionate, but the men demonstrated very little wisdom, loyalty, or empathy for Job, admonishing him with all the wrong explanations for his suffering. Those three men weren't friends at all!

The very first verse in the book of Psalms warns about being friends with anyone who ridicules or turns their back on God. *"Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked*

or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers.”

Jesus helped define friendship through the ideals of love and sacrifice this way:

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends”

–John 15:13 (NASB)

He is the living example of such love. And that truth still applies to his followers today.

Friendship, even when it’s difficult, has long-term rewards and is well worth pursuing. Friends trust each other enough to share and receive wisdom, advice, and correction with respect and humor. Friends share your joy and lighten your burdens.

Perhaps, the greatest benefit of friendship – as witnessed in the vision and ministry of God Buddies – is how a close trusting friendship opens the door to mutual accountability.

Iron sharpening iron. Just as one friend can honestly say, “Watch your tongue,” the other should be enabled to say, “Watch your temper.” Spoken in private, intimate words of gentle correction, appraisal, and admonition are received well.

That's how true, authentic friendships with your God Buddies can work when you let God in on the process.



Jay Payleitner

This guest post from best-selling author and national speaker, Jay Payleitner is excerpted in part from his book, *What If God Wrote Your Bucket List?*

Jay is a long-time affiliate with the National Center for Fathering and nationally-known motivational speaker for the Iron Sharpens Iron Network, marriage conferences, men's retreats, women's events, writers' conferences, and weekend services. Jay has sold more than a half-million copies of his books that include the bestselling *52 Things Kids Need from a Dad* and *365 Ways to Say "I Love You" to Your Kids*. His latest – and perhaps most important release – is *The Jesus Dare The Adventure You've Been Waiting for*.

Click [here](#) to listen to Jay's 7 episode podcast on *The Jesus Dare*.