

# Food for Thought

## Unhealthy Friendships

*Excerpts adapted from an article on "Friendships" by Reverend B. David Holm*

### Background Reading

In its genuine sense friendship is a love of what is good and true in our companions. And with such friendship comes a longing to aid and further that which is good and true *in* our friends. True friendships are wonderful things, and the person who does not have them is poor indeed, for without them life would lose much of its delight.

But some friendships are very unhealthy. They are not true friendships, but are actually forms of love of the world and love of self. In extreme cases, they may even be disguised hatreds.

The most obvious unhealthy friendship is the friendship that is formed between two or more people because they delight in the same evil things. A certain perverted joy is felt when such a person is able to stir up the evils in his friend. This type of friendship is in complete opposition to true friendship, which loves the good and truth in our friends.

Another unhealthy friendship is a relationship of "I like you because you like me." This is the delight of receiving flattery, and is certainly a form of self-love. Such friendships can also become so intense that the one person practically identifies with the other. The two become so close that they utterly depend on each other and exclude all others from their life—ignoring them completely—and by this hurting many. They even tend to hurt each other because the one is jealous of any other relationships the other might have. And if they go to the extreme they are unwilling to leave the other one in freedom.

Such a companionship is never a true friendship, for true friendship never hurts anyone, and true friends want each other to be in complete freedom. In the final analysis a friendship like this is not friendship but hatred, for the friend is loved only as long as he allows the other one to control him, and if he rebels he is hated.

### Discussion Ideas

1. Can you think of examples of unhealthy friendships from movies you have seen or books you have read? How did these relationships end up affecting the characters in the story?

2. What about examples of true friendship, where the friends look for and love the good in the other person? How do these relationships affect their lives?
3. Are there unhealthy friendships in your life?
4. Looking at the first paragraph, is there a way that you could transform an unhealthy friendship into a true friendship? Or at least into a harmless relationship?
5. The line between positive and negative friendships is sometimes obvious and sometimes difficult to see. Are there ways that we can work on distinguishing between true friendships and harmful friendships in our own lives?