



True Friendship

FaithBuilder 2 | Lesson 29 | Loving Others

Lesson Overview

1. Two Responses

A father's mistake is seen by his sons. How do they respond?

2. The faults of our friends

How should we respond to others' faults? Should we overlook them, or talk to them about what we see? pp.1-2

3. Making Judgments

How would the Lord view the kinds of judgments people make daily? p.3

New Church Concept Judging Others

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Luke 6:37-38

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." John 7:24

Two responses

Read the following story. Notice how Noah's sons respond in this situation.

Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. Genesis 9:20-23

1. How might Ham's response have hurt his father?
2. How did Shem and Japheth's actions help their father?
3. What are some of the ways people respond others' mistakes?

The faults of our friends*

How are we to react to the faults of others? This is a very real and challenging question in friendship. We are probably aware of the "bad sides" of our closest friends, and we probably know just what traits irritate us. Is the right thing to ignore their faults and see only their virtues, or, as a true friend, should we call their attention to the weaknesses we notice?

The Writings teach that we should look to the good of another person. That is, we should promote his or her good. And we should have people's good in mind particularly when we deal with their bad side. We are to wish well and do good to enemies, strangers, and evil people as well as to friends, relatives, and good people. But charity is to be exercised toward each in a different way. We might infer from this that we may exercise charity to our friends in one way with respect to their good sides and in another way with respect to their bad sides. Of course, we are not to go around making judgments or finding faults, but what about what the Writings refer to as "indirect benefits"?

Indirect benefits are things like warning, disapproving, disciplining, etc. The examples of using indirect benefits that we are given describe parents and children, judges and people who break the law, and defenders to an enemy. In these cases it is part of a person's business to correct another, but in our friendly associations

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we should recognize the dangers in assuming the role of trying to change others. All too often when we correct a friend it has three unfortunate effects: 1) It gives us an unhealthy feeling of superiority and brings spirits who delight in criticism and punishment closer to us. 2) It causes our friends become defensive and makes them less likely to recognize their faults. 3) It strains friendships and distances us from others.

We have all seen people boost their egos by pointing out other people's faults in the name of "helping" them. We have observed the "tactful hint" that just wasn't enough. Yet, even in the face of these dangers we should recognize uses when they do arise and happen to be truly our business. Sometimes we must risk popularity in order to be a true friend. We can do no greater disservice to a friend than to encourage friendship by giving the impression that anything another person does is fine with us. When we give the friendly wink to what we know is wrong, we are turning traitor to our companions.

It is difficult to make rules in the tricky business of helping friends, but the Writings give some general guidelines. Before deciding how to make our friendship helpful, we should concern ourselves that it should first not be in any way harmful. Far more important than showing disapproval of a friend's choices is to be sure that we do *not show approval*. *Avoiding a bad influence* is a lot more to the point than trying to exercise a good influence. When we start trying to turn others to better habits through comments or even by example, we run into the dangers of seeming arrogant and ineffective.

In trying to make friendships useful perhaps the soundest principle is to be positive and supportive. Instead of finding faults and discouraging foolish behaviors we ought to *expect* the best of our friends. If we are sincere, they will know we expect the best. If we are sincere, we will not be praisers or ego feeders, but encouragers who are sometimes a little tough. Minor storms and arguments between us may even improve our friendships instead of destroying them. Where people join together to perform uses in this spirit, friendship becomes a joy and an inspiration.

Discussion

1. How highly do you value morality and honesty in a friend?
2. Since all good is from the Lord, what would be signs of good in yourself?
3. Do people tend to look more for the good or more for the flaws in others?
4. If another person acts unkindly to you, is it harder to look to the good in them? Why is this?
5. How would your life be different if your friends looked for the good in you?
6. Would it be easy or hard to keep negative thoughts about others to yourself? Could it be useful to share negative thoughts in some situations?

New Church Concept Charity to the Neighbor

The life of charity consists in wishing well and doing well to the neighbor; in acting in every work justly and equitably, from what is good and true, and similarly in discharging every duty. In one word, the life of charity consists in the performance of uses. *Apocalypse Explained* 325.4

The life of charity consists in thinking kindly of another and in wishing him well. *Arcana Coelestia* 2284.5

People with whom no charity is present think nothing else than evil of the neighbor and speak nothing but evil. If they say anything good it is for the sake of themselves or of one with whom they seek to curry favor under an outward show of friendship. But people in whom charity is present think nothing else than good of the neighbor and speak nothing but good, and this not for their own sake or that of him with whom they seek to curry favor, but from the Lord thus at work within charity. *Arcana Coelestia* 1088.2

The essence of charity is good, which is use, and the objects of charity...are the neighbor. *Doctrine of Charity* Preface

Since charity consists in having an affection for what is good, it also consists in feelings of mercy for those in distress. The good of charity holds such feelings within it because it comes down from the Lord's love towards the whole human race. *Arcana Coelestia* 5132.2

Making Judgments

How would the Lord view each of the following judgments?

1. Judi said with a pleasant tone of voice, “Sorry, but I can’t come to your party” but thought to herself, “I would never go to one of your parties, because you’re a complete loser.”
2. “Let’s do something other than go to your house, too often we end up sitting around and watching programs that I’d rather not see.”
3. “That guy acts weird. I won’t have anything to do with him.”
4. “I’d be glad to try to study for the test with you, but if we end up spending too much time doing other things, I’ll need to leave early.”
5. Joe had an unpleasant feeling about some of Tim’s habits but always told himself he should be more accepting of his friend.
6. Sue noted that she spent more time than she really wanted to each day picking out the perfect clothes to wear and decided to change this habit.
7. Nobody listens to me. They all pick on me—everyone is so mean.
8. It’s hard to be friends with her. She never believes what I say and always criticizes me.