



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

Friendship

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Late last year I began reading a new book on John Calvin edited by Dr. Derek Thomas. This book has been delightful reading on Sunday afternoons, and I have learned new information about this great Reformer.

Recently I was reading a chapter written by Dr. Godfrey on Calvin’s friends, and I came across a thoughtful definition of friendship. Godfrey quoted the ancient Roman Cicero in his treatise on friendship entitled *De Amicitia* as follows:

For friendship is nothing else than an accord in all things, human and divine, conjoined with mutual goodwill and affection. . . . What is sweeter than to have someone with whom you may dare discuss anything as if you were communing with yourself? . . . For friendship adds a brighter radiance to prosperity and lessens the burden of adversity by dividing and sharing it.

When we think about our true friends, we can sometimes experience that “mutual goodwill and affection.” When we have good times, our friends help us celebrate. When we go through difficulty, a friend can help bear the burden in love.

Perhaps you’ve had those sorts of friends in your life – people with whom you can share your joys and sorrows – someone who truly cares for you and accepts you for who you are. A friend is one who knows you well enough to understand you, and is willing to speak the truth in love to you. A friend will stay by your side, even when everyone else

deserts you.

The Scriptures give us examples of this sort of friendship. Jonathan and David come to mind as two men of noble character. They were devoted to one another and made a covenant with one another. When Jonathan’s father Saul was hunting David and seeking to slay him, Jonathan took David’s side and came to David in the wilderness in Horesh. Likewise, when Jonathan died David lamented his passing and honored his memory. Years later David sought to show kindness to

Jonathan by honoring Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s crippled son. Friendship can and often does exist on a human level. But as even Cicero realized, it can also have a divine element. Proverbs 18:24 says that *A man of too many friends comes to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

Such a friend who sticks closer than a brother is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is truer and more

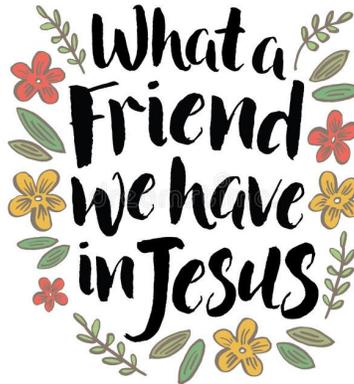
faithful than any human friend we’ve ever encountered. His knowledge of us is perfect, thorough and exhaustive. His concern for us is sincere and compassionate. His willingness to help us in time of need is unquestionable, and His power to do the very best things for our good is infinite.

The Lord Jesus showed us the full extent of His love and the true nature of His when He laid down His life upon the cross for our sins. We had a

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Mnemonics...

- 2/9 Session Meeting
- 2/12 Taco and Game Night
- 2/20 Men and Boys Leadership Breakfast

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Chapter 9: Thoughts about Thought

VERY little of this paper is to be set down to the account of John Ploughman, for our minister, as I may say, found the horses and held the plow handles; the plowman only put in a smack of the whip every now and then, just to keep folks awake. "Two heads are better than one," said the woman when she took her dog with her to market: begging his pardon, our minister is the woman, and the only sensible head in the whole affair. He is a man who is used to giving his people many things of a very different sort from anything which a plowman is likely to turn out of his wallet; but I have, at his request, dropped in a few homely proverbs into his thoughts, as he says, "by way of salt", which is his very kind way of putting it. I only hope I have not spoiled his writing with my rough expressions. If he thinks well of it, I should like a few more of his pieces to tack my sayings to; and the public shall always be honestly told whether the remarks are to be considered as altogether "John Ploughman's Talk," or as the writing of two characters rolled into one.

There are not so many hours in a year as there may be thoughts in an hour. Thoughts fly in flocks, like starlings, and swarm like bees. Like the withered leaves in autumn, there is no counting them; and like links in a chain, one draws on another. What a restless being man is! His thoughts dance up and down like midges in a summer's evening. Like a clock full of wheels with the pendulum in full swing, his mind moves as fast as time flies. This makes thinking such an important business. Many littles make much; and so many light thoughts make a great weight of sin. A grain of sand is light enough, but Solomon tells us that a heap of sand is heavy. When there are so many children the mother better look well after them. We ought to mind our thoughts, for if they turn to be our enemies, they will be too many for us and will drag us down to ruin. Thoughts from heaven, like birds in spring, will fill our souls with music; but thoughts of evil will sting us like vipers.

There is a notion abroad that thought is free; but I remember reading that, although thoughts are toll-free, they are not hell-free; and that saying quite agrees with the good old Book. We cannot be summoned before an early court for thinking, but depend upon it we shall have to be tried for it at the Last Judgment. Evil thoughts are the marrow of sin, the malt that sin is brewed from, the tinder which catches the sparks of the devil's temptations, the churn in which the milk of imagination is churned into purpose and plan, the nest in which all evil birds lay their eggs. Be certain, then, that as sure as fire burns brushwood as well as logs, God will punish thoughts of sin as well as deeds of sin.

Let no one suppose that thoughts are not known to the Lord, for He has a window into the closest closet of the soul, a window to which there are no shutters. As we watch bees in a glass hive, so does the eye of the Lord see us. The Bible says, "Hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?" Man is all outside to God. With heaven there are no secrets. That which is done in the private chamber of the heart is as public as the streets before the all-seeing eye.

But some will say that they cannot help having bad thoughts. That may be, but the question is: do they hate them or not? We cannot keep thieves from looking in at our windows, but if we open our doors to them and receive them joyfully, we are as bad as they. We cannot help the birds flying over our heads, but we may keep them from building their nests in our hair. Vain thoughts will knock at the door, but we must not open to them. Though sinful thoughts rise, they must not reign. He who turns a morsel over and over in his mouth does so because he likes the flavor, and he who meditates upon evil loves it and is ripe to commit it. Think of the devil, and he will appear; turn your thoughts towards sins and your hands will soon follow. Snails leave their slime behind them, and so do vain thoughts. An arrow may fly through the air, and leave no trace; but an ill thought always leaves a trail like a serpent. Where there is much traffic of bad thinking, there will be much mire and dirt; every wave of wicked thought adds something to the corruption which rots upon the shore of life. It is dreadful to think that a vile imagination, once indulged, gets the key of our minds and can get in again very easily, whether we will it or not, and can so return as to bring seven other spirits with it more wicked than itself. What may follow, no one knows. Nurse sin on the knees of thought, and it will grow into a giant. Dip rope in naphtha, and how it will blaze when fire gets to it. Lay a man soaked in depraved thought, and he is ready to flame up into open sin as soon as the opportunity occurs. This shows us the wisdom of watching, every day, the thoughts and imaginations of our hearts. Good thoughts are blessed guests and should be heartily welcomed, well fed, and much sought.

TACO AND GAME NIGHT

On Friday, Feb. 12th we're going to be having a taco and game night at church. This is a wonderful opportunity to invite friends and family for an evening of good food and great fellowship!



“Fill the earth with your songs of
gratitude.”

C.H. Spurgeon



February Birthdays

Monika Doro

1st

Jim Onnink

25th

Dan TenPas

3rd

Penny Harden

26th

Gail Buyze

14th

Arenda Onnink

28th

Emily Will

25th



NEW CHURCH DIRECTORY

We will be updating our church directory. If you receive a notice in your mailbox, please make any necessary updates and get them back to Ellen by the end of February!

SOCIAL FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

There will be a social fellowship committee meeting on Feb. 22nd at the Arndt's home at 6:30pm.



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

February 2021

Grace OPC

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8 Session Meeting	9 10	11	12 Taco and Game Night	13	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 Men and Boys Leadership Breakfast
21	22 Social Fellowship Committee Meeting	23	24	25	26	27
28 Lord's Supper						



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Tie Dye Cookies

Ingredients:

3 ½ cups all-purpose flour*, plus more for dusting

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

¾ cup unsalted butter, softened

4 ounces cream cheese

1 cup granulated sugar

¼ cup unsweetened applesauce

1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract

½ teaspoon almond extract

Assorted gel food coloring

Sanding sugar, for rolling



*If you don't plan on eating raw dough or letting kiddos play with it, you can skip heating the flour and will only need 3 cups, plus more for dusting.

Directions:

1. To heat the flour, place it in a microwave safe bowl and microwave in 30 second increments, stirring after each, until an instant read thermometer stuck into a few different spots of the flour reaches 180° F. Let cool.
2. Preheat the oven to 375° F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together 3 cups of the flour, salt, baking powder and baking soda.
4. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream together the butter, cream cheese and granulated sugar until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the applesauce and mix until combined. Mix in the vanilla and almond extracts. Add the dry ingredients and mix until combined. Divide the dough among 3 bowls and add food coloring, keeping the colors separate. Wearing disposable gloves, knead in the color by hand, or stir it in with a spatula, until homogenous. If you don't have gloves, you can use a zip-top plastic bag.
5. You can play with and bake the dough now (dust with a little more flour if it gets sticky) or you can put in an airtight container and refrigerate for an hour or overnight to play with and bake later.
6. Roll dough into balls picking up different colors to create desired tie-dye pattern. Roll in sanding sugar, place on the prepared baking sheet and gently press down using your hand. Repeat with the remaining dough, placing finished cookies an inch apart. Bake until very lightly browned on the bottom but still gooey on the inside, about 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool slightly and enjoy!



Showing forth the
excellencies of Jesus
Christ

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Spurgeon Corner

“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” 2 Corinthians 1:5

There is a blessed proportion. The Ruler of Providence bears a pair of scales—in this side he puts his people’s trials, and in that he puts their consolations. When the scale of trial is nearly empty, you will always find the scale of consolation in nearly the same condition; and when the scale

of trials is full, you will find the scale of consolation just as heavy. When the black clouds gather most, the light is the more brightly revealed to us. When the night lowers and the tempest is coming on, the Heavenly Captain is always closest to his crew. It is a blessed thing, that when we are most cast down, then it is that we are most lifted up by the consolations of the Spirit. One reason is, because *trials make more room for consolation*. Great hearts can only be made by great troubles. The spade of trouble digs the reservoir of comfort deeper, and makes more room for consolation. God comes into our heart—he finds it full—he begins to break our comforts and to make it empty; then there is more room for grace. The humbler a man lies, the more comfort he will always have, because he will be more fitted to receive it. Another reason why we are often most happy in our troubles, is this—*then we have the closest dealings with God*. When the barn is full, man can live without God: when the purse is bursting with gold, we try to do without so much prayer. But once take our *gourds* away, and we want our *God*; once cleanse the idols out of the house, then we are compelled to honour Jehovah. “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.” There is no cry so good as that which comes from the bottom of the mountains; no prayer half so hearty as that which comes up from the depths of the soul, through deep trials and afflictions. Hence they bring us to God, and we are happier; for nearness to God is happiness. Come, troubled believer, fret not over your heavy troubles, for they are the heralds of weighty mercies.

Morning, February 12th, C.H. Spurgeon

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mountain of guilt that we could not overcome. We deserved to die and were doomed to hell. At just the right time, when we were still acting as His enemies, Jesus our friend died upon the cross to purchase our redemption – forgiveness full and free.

And this becomes our song: *What a friend we have in Jesus / all our sins and griefs to bear / What a privilege to carry / everything to God in prayer.* Or think of this one: *Jesus! What a friend for sinners! Jesus! Lover of my soul; Friends may fail me, foes assail me, he my Savior, makes me whole.*

Because of His perfect friendship toward us, exhibited in the cross of Calvary, we can be real and true friends to our brothers and sisters in

Christ. We can act in true friendship toward fellow Christians. His friendship toward us enables our friendship with one another.

As we continue together as a church, let us explore the depths of Jesus’ friendship toward us. And let us each cultivate true friendships with one another as Christians. As each of us give of ourselves in kindness toward others, we become the loving community that is a little picture of heaven on earth. This is what the church should be, and become – a community of friends living under the care of our great Heavenly Friend.