

TRUE FRIENDSHIP AND MISSION

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The letter below is something that Hannah wrote some years ago to our Missional Community at the time to describe what God was teaching her about the importance of true friendship with non-Christians. If we as Christians will not invest the time and make the sacrifices necessary to orient our lives around the lives of lost people, then we will be unable to be faithful disciples who are making other disciples, as Jesus commanded.

Hey MC family,

Been wanting to share some thoughts with you that God has been speaking to my heart about mission for some time now, but it keeps not quite working out during MC, so I decided to write an email to you.

About 1 1/2 years after we moved to Tacoma, we went to San Diego for three weeks to visit my family. While there, I kept thinking about my new friend, Karen ... I missed her and felt the Spirit nudging me to call her and let her know. So I did - turns out she had been wanting to give me a call because she missed me as well, but her husband was teasing her about leaving me alone on vacation ;-) That moment on the phone was a connection point for us - this realization that we really had a friendship here we both valued.

I remember clearly, after I got off the phone, the Spirit saying to me...

"JESUS WAS A FRIEND OF SINNERS. I LOVE THIS. I WANT MORE OF THIS IN YOUR LIFE. THIS IS A CRUCIAL PIECE IN YOU BECOMING MORE LIKE CHRIST."

I can be pretty dense and read Scriptures I've read my whole life... they sound good in my head and I think I have an understanding, but really I don't know what in the world God means these truths to look like in the nitty gritty of daily life. So, after that moment on the phone with Karen, for several days, the Spirit gave me some new definitions for what He wants it to look like for me to be "a friend of sinners". Two ideas stuck.

- First, in a real friendship, you live enough life together that if one of you were to go away on vacation, you would look forward to getting together when you got home... in other words, you would miss each other.
- Second, if I am a true friend to someone and they feel loved by me, when asked who their closest friends are, I would be named among them.

Now, this happens pretty easily for us with Christian friends, but not so easy with those that are not yet part of God's family.

During that time, God gave me this idea that next year when we go on vacation, He would love for me to have 4 or 5 people at that level of friendship in my life... people that do not yet know Him. It didn't feel condemning or even convicting in any way - it felt more like He was giving me a little glimpse into His dream for my life in the near future. Though it



seemed really clear at the time, as the months passed, I kinda forgot about this conversation between Him and I.

Then, this last June, when we were in San Diego for 2 1/2 weeks for my sister's wedding, towards the end of our time there, I was texting an unbelieving friend up here to say hi, and it all came rushing back... these conversations I had had with the Lord over a year earlier. I realized that during vacation I had been in touch with a handful of my unbelieving friends, mostly through texting. My eyes filled with tears and I realized that by God's grace, He had brought me into more authentic friendships with women who I earnestly hope will know Him someday. And He emphasized to me how pleasing this was to Him!

It has been exciting for me to experience deep friendships opening up opportunities to share Gospel truth. I think part of this is because there is a level of trust built, but part of it is just that you are walking through life with people – sharing in the day to day.

It has been on my heart to share this with you, my MC family, but before that I asked the Lord to help me understand what processes have led me into these quality friendships with unbelievers. Three things came to mind...

PURSUIT

I thought back to how each of these friendships developed and realized that with each of these women, I really pursued them with God's help. Almost like the Spirit just kept nagging me and nagging me about certain people until I would give in... leave that pile of laundry that really needed to be folded, go find my phone and call them again for the umpteenth time to see if they want to get together :-). Each of these friendships required a lot of pursuit on my part on the front end, but after the friendship was stronger, it became mutual. **He reminded me of how He has pursued us and continues to pursue us daily. When we do this with others, it is a picture of what He is like.**

SACRIFICE

The sacrifice of our time and our lives, so that unbelievers are a huge priority. I hesitate to even use the word "sacrifice", because one of the rewards of mission (people coming to faith in Christ) is a joy so great that it reminds me of the crazy kind of joy Todd and I have felt each time our babies were born... **so the joy far outweighs the sacrifice. And yet, in my life, true mission really feels like sacrifice much of the time.** For one thing, there is the hard work before and after of having people in our home. It also affects our calendar and especially our weekends – it has been a growing process but also very encouraging for me to see that we now often plan our weekends around when our non-believing friends can get together.

We make sure we have time just as a family as well, but we tend to structure that around mission. It might also require the pure giving of time in some way. For instance, months ago I started doing laundry each week for my friend, Shelly, and her three kids. I have loved serving her but I have had to be willing to give a little extra time to laundry! Also, when I make it a priority to spend time with unbelievers during my week, I have less time



to hang out with believing friends of mine. That is just the reality of time. If I'm not really intentional, then all of my social time can end up with Christian friends. Though this may not seem like a big deal, **if our days and weeks continue on like this, then all of the sudden it will be 30 years from now and we will realize that we have had friendships with believers and merely been acquaintances with unbelievers. That would be a tragedy!**

LOVE

It is easy for me to have deep love for you all, my brothers and sisters in Christ, but it isn't always so easy to experience that with others. But I have noticed that as these friendships have grown, I have been surprised by the love that has grown in me towards these friends - I believe God has poured this into my heart as I have been obedient to mission in my life. I smile sometimes when I think of how different I am than some of my friends (I don't grow marijuana in my backyard like my friend, Angie), and it reminds me that this is God's doing in my heart!

So, I don't know what this email means for you guys, but I have felt a strong leading from the Spirit to write it. Will you pray about these ideas and ask what the Spirit would say to you? Maybe ask Him to show you how He wants to make unbelievers a greater priority in your life. **I have been asking for years and still ask God to break my heart for lost people (literally, I ask Him to bring me to tears over their lostness apart from Him) - to make my heart so much more like His towards those that don't yet know Him.** And, to help me to really live this out in the uniqueness of my personality and gifting, and in our marriage and family.

Let's talk about this on Thursday... I love you all and we love living life with you. I have told many people lately (believers and unbelievers) how thankful I am for you, my missional community. You all have blessed our family deeply.

Much love,

Hannah Morr

