

A True Friend



B. R. Hicks

A True Friend

by B. R. Hicks

Table of Contents

[Preface](#)

[Chapter One: The Ministry of a True Friend](#)

[I. A True Friend Fasts, Prays, and Humbles Himself.](#)

[II. A True Friend Wounds.](#)

[III. A True Friend Rejoices the Heart.](#)

[IV. A True Friend Sharpens the Countenance.](#)

[Chapter Two: The Nature of a True Friend](#)

[I. A True Friend's Mouth Is Sweet and Lovely.](#)

[II. A True Friend Has Compassion and Love for Publicans and Sinners.](#)

[III. A True Friend Is Humble Toward Oppressors.](#)

[IV. A True Friend Is Faithful to Exalt.](#)

[V. A True Friend Lays Down His Life for His Friends.](#)

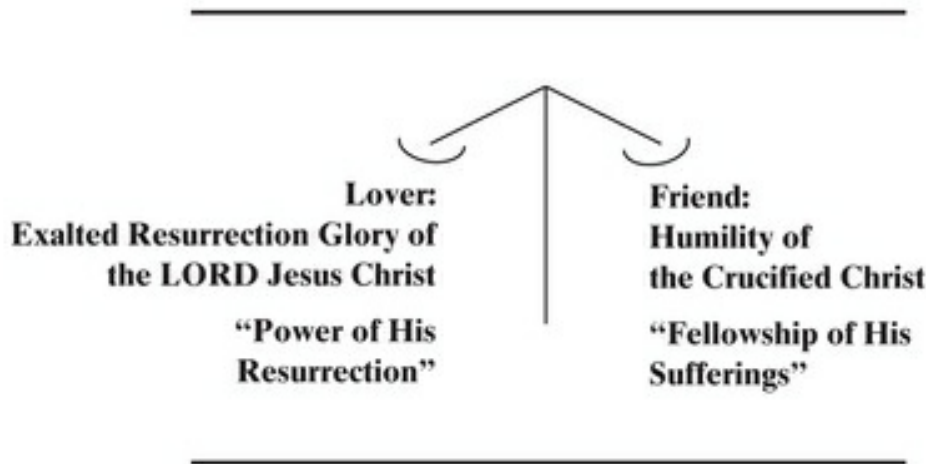
[VI. A True Friend Reveals Secrets of the Father.](#)

Preface

Marriage is the closest and most intimate relationship between two individuals. This natural union portrays the depths and heights of pleasure and satisfaction that God desires to share with those who marry their human wills to His divine Will. It is important, however, for Christians to realize that there are two ways to know the spiritual Bridegroom: as a Lover and as a Friend.

As a Lover, Christ feeds man's heart with His precious divine Love. As a Friend, Christ is a Companion to man's mind. Hence, Christ is able to satisfy all of man's feelings and thinkings. Those who want their spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ to be completely happy, successful, and balanced must know Him in both ways.

The Lover-side of Jesus Christ pertains to the Exaltation and Glory of the Risen Christ; His Friend-side pertains to the Humility of the Crucified Christ.



In the Book of Philippians, the Apostle Paul cried out to know the two sides of the LORD Jesus Christ.

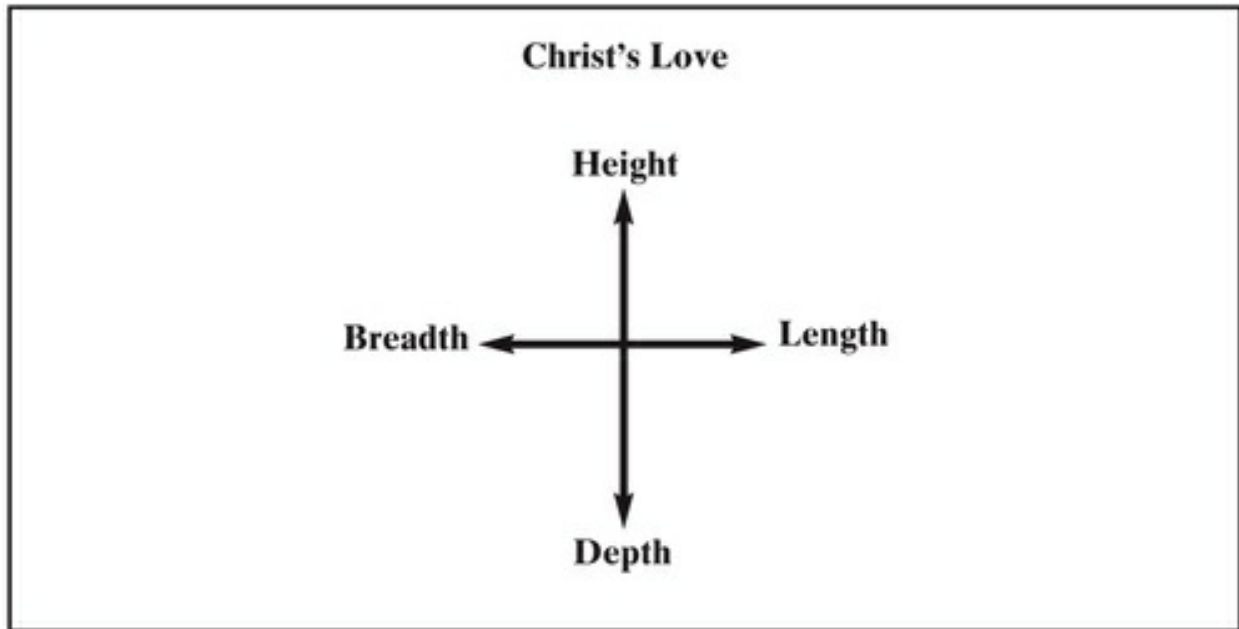
That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead (Philippians 3:10,11).

The Apostle Paul desired to know, experientially, the Power of the Risen Christ's Love. He desired to know Christ's strong feelings of Love that are combined with His Gratitude. Paul longed to experience Christ's regard for him through Christ's tender affections toward him. He wished to be filled with the loving Pleasure and Delight of the Risen Christ. Paul wanted the same tender attachment toward Christ that Christ had toward him.

The Resurrection Power of Christ's Love kills all the believer's enmity and hatred that might arise in his will against God's Master Plan and Purposive Will for his life. Friendship with the humble Crucified Christ kills the believer's desire for friendship with the world.

It takes the Lover Relationship with the Risen Christ and the Friend Relationship with the Crucified Christ to kill inbred sin in the human heart and will. It takes both the Lover and the Friend Natures of Christ Jesus to make believers conformable unto His Obedient Death. Believers are to die *to* sin as Christ died *for* sin. When the believer is crucified with Christ, his flesh and its affections are crucified, making the world crucified to him.

Paul desired that the Ephesian saints be rooted and grounded in Christ's Love so that they could comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height of the Love that Christ had poured out for them at the Cross.



The Cross is a demonstration of Christ's Giving-Love. It is a visible witness of Christ's Love for man while he was yet a sinner (Romans 5:8).

Every believer knows something about Christ's Love as a Bridegroom since each person gets a taste of this Love in his heart when he first comes to Christ. When Christ comes into a believer's heart, his heart is filled with such transcending Love from Christ that it seems his heart is being plucked out by the roots and being replaced by Christ's very Heart. The Power of Christ's Love is so strong that the believer's fleshly heart feels as though it were completely disintegrating.

The Lover-side of Jesus Christ is covered in the author's book, *The Song of Love...From the Song of Solomon.*^{*} Yet in no way, do we wish to minimize the Friend-side of our spiritual Bridegroom. Attainment of complete satisfaction of the spiritual Marriage Union between our heart and the Heart of Jesus Christ depends upon how fully we cultivate both our Lover Relationship with His Resurrection Power and our Friend Relationship with His Crucifixion and His Death. This lesson, in view of all the material available concerning Jesus as our Lover, is dedicated to revealing Jesus Christ as our Friend.

The Friend-side of Jesus Christ pertains to His Humility Truth. Jesus Christ is a Friend in Whose Virtue and Understanding we can trust. Jesus is a True Friend Who not only loves us but tells us gently of our faults and shortcomings. If we listen with gratitude, the humble Crucified Christ will help us amend our errors. Jesus, the True Friend, lovingly helps us to learn of His Virtues.

The Hebrew root word for *friend* is *raw-aw*, which means to associate with as a friend, a companion, to keep company with, devour, eat up, feed, pastor, shepherd. The entire definition has the connotation of associating together while partaking of food. In the Spanish language the word for *friend* is translated *companero*, which clearly confirms this type of fellowship. The prefix *com* means with, and *pan* means bread. Hence, a friend is a companion who is a breadfellow — someone who chews or eats bread with another person.

Many modern psychiatrists agree that some marriages are miserable for both parties simply because the couple are not friends. "Chewing bread" together around an ordinary table becomes strained and difficult when a married couple cannot talk nor communicate apart from the lover aspect. When the hot, fiery passion of romantic love cools into less fervent domestic love, each person feels unloved, misunderstood, and rejected if the friend relationship is nonexistent. All kinds of heartbreaking problems in a marriage have their origin in the nonexistence of the friend relationship.

Likewise, in our spiritual Marriage Relationship with Jesus Christ, we experience great sufferings when we do not know Him in the Friend Relationship. The glorious, fiery zeal of first love does not inflame our hearts constantly. We all wake up, sooner or later, to find our Lover has withdrawn Himself. This is a real testing period, beloved, but it must come if our relationship with Jesus Christ is ever to bud and blossom into a mature relationship with Him on the Friend-side of the Scales.

Some believers forsake Jesus Christ as soon as their fiery first love begins to die down. Other believers hold on to their sweet memories of their first love with Christ, while they continue going through a form of worship to Him; however, they feel no real union in their hearts with Him. They do not know Jesus as a True Friend; therefore, they are unable to share with Him in the day-to-day type of situation that would cause their souls to be aware, consciously, of His overwhelming Love.

The Risen Christ, as the Lover of our soul, joins our soul to the Crucified Christ, the Friend; and the Friend joins our soul back again to our Lover, the Resurrected Christ.

None of us can afford to look contemptuously upon someone else. We all have been guilty, at one time or another, of going into a spiritual pout because the Risen Christ had shut up His Bridegroom Love to us. When Christ's Love ceases to gush out of our hearts in mighty, overflowing rivers, we feel forlorn and forsaken because we know Him not as a Friend. We then share the sad, sorrowful feelings that Peter and Cleopas had when they were on the road to Emmaus, after Jesus' Crucifixion. Although Peter had seen the Resurrected Christ twice, he lacked the necessary substance to keep himself as a faithful friend to Jesus when the LORD's personal, loving presence and resurrection Glory were not visibly evident to him. Rather than seeking Christ, the Friend, to make him a fisher of men, Peter instigated his own carnal, friendly fishing party. However, all the combined fleshly, friendly efforts of the Disciples were futile; they failed to catch even one fish until Jesus Christ, the True Friend, appeared on the scene to direct their work (John 21:1-14).

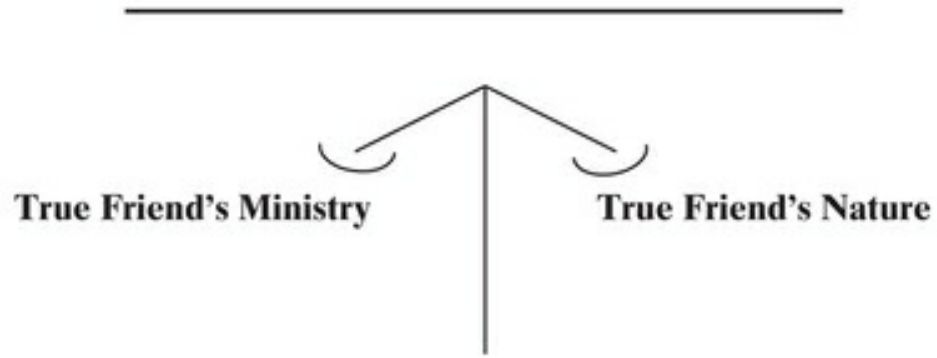
In like manner, it would be difficult to count the times we have "gone fishing" or "gone shopping" to keep from going into our prayer closet when our Bridegroom Love has not been flowing in our hearts. These actions are sure indications of an undeveloped relationship with Christ Jesus as our Friend.

The Devil always takes advantage of our spiritual ignorance by falsely accusing us. When he sees our hearts beginning to lose their awareness of Christ's Bridegroom Love, he begins his accusing work, saying, "You are backslidden. There is no use running on for God anymore. You already have missed out on the Prize; you never will be in the Bride. You do not feel Christ's Bridegroom Love anymore. In fact, you probably never did feel it. That preacher just stirred up your heart, and you got excited for nothing. All this business of growing up in Stature and being made One with Jesus Christ is just the work of an overactive imagination. Forget about it. Give up! Give up! Give up!"

This is the time to take a firm stand and witness for our Friend, Christ Jesus, by saying, "Devil, you are not fooling me. You have no part in this humility trail of Christ's Blood which is leading me from the Foot-realm to the Head-realm of His Spiritual Stature. I know this is my dispensation to become better acquainted with Jesus Christ as a Friend. It does not matter whether I feel the glory thrills of His risen, resurrection Love or not. I will keep walking and talking with Him. Until He comes and floods my soul again with His precious, divine Love, Jesus Christ is going to be my Friend, and I will be His friend."

A true friend to Christ will go into his prayer closet and faithfully pray in his own understanding, even when intercession and travail are not flowing strongly through him. Although he does not feel Christ's special Bridegroom Love, a true friend always desires to eat, "chew the Bread," with Jesus and to talk things over with Him. A true friend endeavours to keep the lines of communication open to Christ, his Friend.

Learning to know the Friend-side of Jesus Christ is just as important to the mature spiritual Marriage Relationship as the Lover-side of the Bridegroom is. The following chapters in this booklet will help us become better acquainted with the True Friend's Ministry and the True Friend's Nature.



As you, the reader, study about the True Friend's Ministry and the True Friend's Nature, my prayer is that you shall gain a greater appreciation for the Humility-side of the LORD Jesus Christ.

— The Author

* B. R. Hicks, [*The Song of Love...From the Song of Solomon*](#) (Jeffersonville, IN: Christ Gospel Churches Int'l, Inc., 1966).

Chapter One

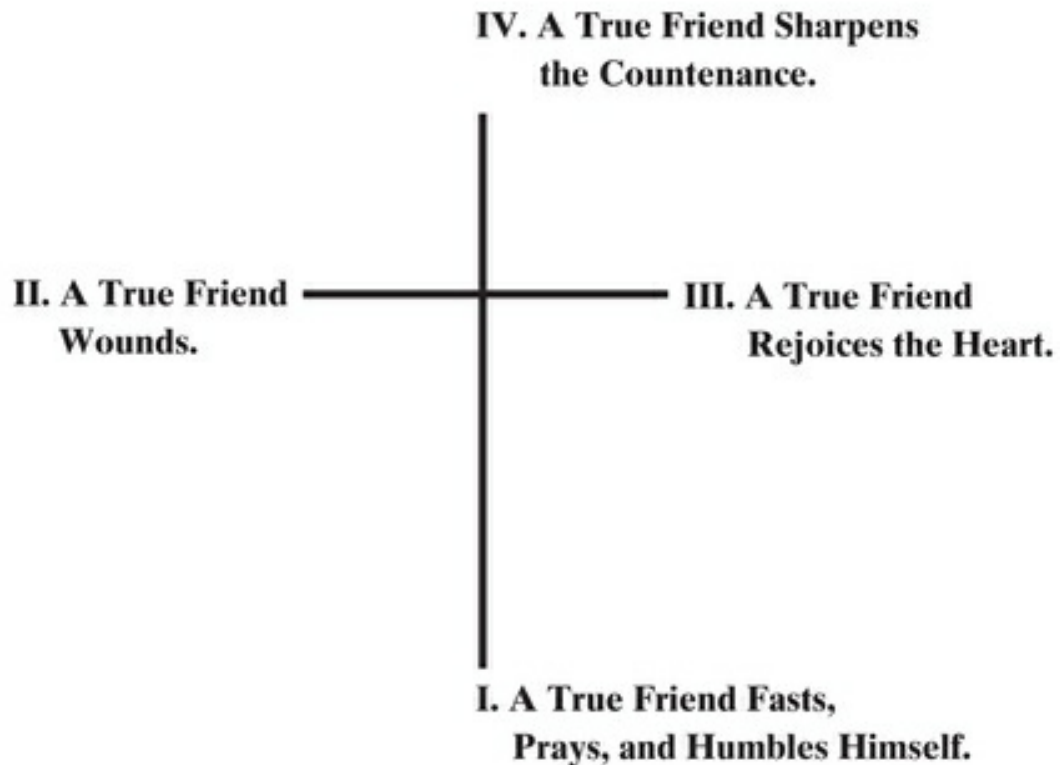
The Ministry of a True Friend

Many problems arise within families, churches, and even among people in the secular world because one or more of the parties involved do not understand nor appreciate the ministry of the friend-side of their relationship. Once we understand the ministry of a friend in the natural realm, we are in a better position to accept it and benefit from it. This is also true in regard to our relationship with the LORD Jesus Christ as a Friend. The more we understand, the better we are able to cooperate with and profit from His Ministry as a Friend to us.

The *Ministry* of Jesus as a True Friend is the first aspect of His Friend-relationship with us.

The LORD Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, has different ways of ministering His Friend-side to us. Sometimes He comes to us personally, either through His Revealed Word or through visions and dreams. However, there are other times He does not limit His Ministry to Himself by coming to us personally. Very frequently, He ministers to us through the hands of mortal human beings. When we understand this form of Ministry of our Friend, it helps us to cooperate more quickly with His Master Plan and Purposive Will for us.

The following Stature of Truth presents our True Friend's Ministry. The Truth in God's Word always follows the form of the Cross^{*}; hence, our study falls into the four points of the Cross.



I. A True Friend Fasts, Prays, and Humbles Himself.

When David fasted, prayed, and humbled himself in behalf of Saul, his enemy, he was a picture of Jesus Christ, the True Friend.

All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him? False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. **I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother** (Psalm 35:10-14).

David acknowledged that there was a grateful sense of relief in all his bones, in addition to the moral satisfactions of his soul, when the LORD God revealed Himself as a True Friend to him, and also when God helped David remain a true friend to Saul, in spite of Saul's enmity toward him. Witnesses of violence gave false testimonies against David in order to aid the unlawfulness of Saul, David's jealous persecutor. They falsely accused David of plotting against Saul's life (I Samuel 24:10). Saul's gross ingratitude to David, his true friend, brought bereavement to David's soul. Nevertheless, David afflicted or humbled his soul with fasting and prayer for his enemies. In past days, when David's enemies had been in distress, he had reacted with complete fasting, prayer, and humility in their behalf.

Notice what David said, "...And my prayer returned into mine own bosom." At first reading, it sounds as though God did not hear David's prayer, but this is not what the Scripture means. David was referring to the Spiritual Principle of Sowing and Reaping. David's knowledge of this Spiritual Principle prompted him to pray the same kind of prayer for his enemies that he would have prayed for his dearest friend, for his brother, or for his mother. Therefore, David reaped his good prayers because they returned to his own bosom. David's ministry as a true friend caused him to put on sackcloth (a visible sign of humbling and afflicting oneself), to fast (the experience of inner mortification), and to pray a prayer, which was a form of the "good reaping" returning into his own bosom.

David adopted outward signs of mourning, which consisted of his neglecting his personal appearance by not washing or trimming his hair. David proved himself to be a true friend when the libelous tongues of his enemies were like the fangs of a beast of prey, tearing his spiritual reputation to shreds.

Although David had not committed the identical sins committed by his enemies, he realized his guilt in other areas of his flesh. He was aware that if he prayed for God to rain instant judgment on these evildoers, he would reap his own judgmental praying. He knew that if the LORD judged his enemies, He would also be obligated to judge him instantly for all his transgressions. Therefore, David cried for the LORD to show Mercy to his enemies.

We need to be careful how we pray for others, even those who use their poisonous fangs to wound us and to use us spitefully. In our wrathful ignorance, we are apt to pray for our enemies, saying, "LORD, wound them. Kill them. Destroy them." Beloved, is this the kind of prayer we would like to have return to our bosom? No!

Notice how diametrically different our words are when we pray for ourselves. We always pray, "LORD, have Mercy on me. Be patient with me. Give me a little more time to make things right. Help me. Do whatever You have to do to assure me of being in the Bride. Push me; drag me; just don't let me miss the Prize." Thus, since we are going to reap our prayers and since they are going to return to our own bosom, it is good for us to pray merciful prayers of love for everyone.

A true friend is one who humbles himself outwardly and inwardly and prays for God to be merciful and to lead him, as well as his enemies, in the paths of righteousness. A true friend desires to grow in the LORD, regardless of whether God's Mercy puts him on the Blessing Side of His Scales or on the Judgment Side, in order to accomplish his growth to maturity. A true friend never pridefully nor presumptuously dictates to God as to how His Master Plan and Purposeful Will should be accomplished in either *his* life or in the lives of *others*. Knowing that God's Will and Way are Righteous, Holy, Just, and Perfect, a true friend leaves all the decisions to Christ the LORD.

II. A True Friend Wounds.

The wise man in the Book of Proverbs revealed that our True Friend will be faithful to wound with His verbal castigations in order to help us correct our faults.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful (Proverbs 27:6).

Part of our True Friend's Ministry is to wound. The Hebrew root word for *wound* is *paw-tsah*, which means to

split.

As a Friend, Jesus Christ sometimes has to use sharp, cutting words to split our darkness and penetrate our ignorance. It is good for us to be reprov'd and to have Jesus, our True Friend, tell us our faults, although, for the present, His words may be painful. It is better to be wounded, hurt, and injured by the Truth than to be covered over with the deceitful kisses of our enemy.

Christ, out of love for our souls, will not suffer sin to be in us and upon us. Christ, the True Friend, is a Physician Who is desirous of curing our diseases. Occasionally, the True Friend appears to us personally, saying, "The trouble with you is this." Then, He proceeds to tell us our faults and show us how we are missing the Mark of His Moral High Calling. He is faithful to split open our carnal flesh so that His Truth can penetrate deeply into the innermost crevices of our hearts.

Much of the time, however, He puts His sharp Sword of Truth into the hands of our pastor, our companion, or some other person. Hence, we must constantly resist the temptation to take a personal offense against the individual whom our True Friend has appointed to speak sharp, cutting words to us. Until our spiritual education has increased sufficiently to enable us to recognize our True Friend, we may even perceive these people, whom God is using, to be our enemies. Unfortunately, while we obstinately reject the friend whom Jesus is using to give us "the Truth that now is," we are also guilty of rejecting Jesus Christ and His Friendship. When we learn to accept all cutting words from people as the faithful wounds of our True Friend, Christ uses them to make some of our greatest steppingstones in our spiritual education and moral development. Then, what would have been stumbling stones to us becomes blessings to take us higher in Christ.

III. A True Friend Rejoices the Heart.

The third Ministry of the LORD as a True Friend rejoices our heart by its sweetness. The Advice or Counsel of our True Friend is like the sweet odours of ointment and perfume.

Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so *doth* the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel (Proverbs 27:9).

Christ's sincere Advice or Counsel diffuses a sweet odour to us, giving pleasure to all who can smell it. Our True Friend has a desire to be helpful to us in the midst of our ignorance and blindness.

Jesus, our True Friend, is our Instructive Example of how to be a true friend to others. We are not to counsel someone with the first thought that comes into our mind. We must minister sincerely to others with Christ's Wisdom, from the very depths of our heart. We do not fool most people. They can discern, easily, the difference between superficial sweetness and the deep, sincere sweetness of a true friend. We may give to others out of superficial sweetness so that they will be pacified and, then, move out of our way. But when we have a sincere heart of love, we give sweet counsel because we really want to help others.

It is a beautiful experience to look into someone's eyes and see that his heart is receptive to Christ's sweet Counsel that is being given to him from another person's heart. A person's spiritual perception can see when Christ's sweet Counsel is flowing out like a river of ointment to a bruised, bleeding heart to comfort, soothe, and heal it. It is easy to tell when Christ's sweet perfume is permeating another person's soul because his countenance immediately begins to reflect the generation of fresh hope and a new desire to press on toward God's Moral High Calling.

By paying close attention to how Christ, our True Friend, counsels us, we can learn how to deal with other people. His sweet Counsel will teach us how to be a sweet and true friend.

IV. A True Friend Sharpens the Countenance.

Just as one piece of iron sharpens another piece of iron, so does a true friend sharpen another person's mind in the study of God's Word.

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend (Proverbs 27:17).

Sharpening the mind or the countenance of a friend is our True Friend's fourth Ministry. The Hebrew word for *sharpen* is *khaw-dad*, which means to be sharp, severe, to be fierce, to be intensely eager, to be ardent, extremely

plain, simple, unornamental, strict, uncompromising.

This definition reveals both the pleasure and the advantage of true friends studying God's Word together. Wise and profitable discourses upon God's Word sharpen our wits, character, and moral development. Just as iron is made into a suitable and fit vessel by drastic contact with another piece of iron, so our hearts and wills are sharpened into profitable vessels by the Ministry of Christ, the True Friend.

Christ, our True Friend, sharpens our countenance with the sharp Sword of His Word. Matthew 11:12 says: "[T]he kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Every time Jesus Christ or one of His anointed servants reveals God's Word to us, the LORD cuts away more of our flesh, our ignorance, and the pride that surrounds our hearts. With each removal of some superfluous flesh, some darkened ignorance, and some obstinate pride, our minds are sharpened with a more intense, fierce desire and a more violent, strong determination to possess the Kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ sharpened His own Countenance by His violent, strong determination to go up to Jerusalem to give His Life on the Cross for sinful mankind. He steadfastly set His Face like flint to go up to Jerusalem in order to do God's Purposive Will. Christ's sharp Countenance was also visible to other people. As they looked upon His Face, they could see the severe, hard, violent, uncompromising attitude of His Heart shining out of His Eyes.

This is true, today, for Christians who have their hearts fixed on Christ and their minds steadfastly set to go on for God. In their faces is a severity, a sharpness, an intensity of desire radiating out of their eyes that is a visible witness of their steadfast determination not to be distracted from the Goal of God's Moral High Calling in Christ Jesus.

The definition of *sharpen* also means unornamental. A Holy Ghost sharpened countenance will not be embellished with the trappings and makeup of this present, evil world. A woman's countenance does not need to be downgraded with such inferior imitations. A countenance sharpened by God's Spirit and Word is a beautiful countenance.

When God instructed the Israelites to strip off their ornaments, He also called them a stiff-necked people (Exodus 33:5). If the Israelites truly had repented when they stripped off their outward ornaments, God would have sharpened their countenances with His Word, and they would have received an intense desire to possess their promised inheritance and to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan's Land. The fact that the vast majority of the Israelites died in the wilderness proves how little they had allowed God's Word to cut into their hearts and, therefore, how little their spiritual countenances had been sharpened.

Sometimes we are like the rebellious Israelites. We give up our outward ornaments when we are under pressure, but because we have not allowed our True Friend to cut away the obstinacy and rebellion in our hearts, there is no inward surrender worked in our hearts. Therefore, we do not possess a sharpened countenance to affect the hearts and lives of others.

Just as iron sharpens iron, so does our True Friend sharpen our countenance. A true friend who possesses the Sword of the Spirit, God's Quickened Word, will always lead hungry hearts into a sharpened, more intense desire to be in Christ's Bride.

Many times we crawl into our prayer closets on the Friendship Side of God's Scales, more conscious of our human, earthly problems than we are of Christ's sweet, divine Bridegroom Love. Yet as we begin to call out to Him in our spiritual poverty, our True Friend sends a revelation of His Truth into our hearts, cutting off our darkened understanding and bringing us out with quickened hearts, sharpened countenances, and a new, intense desire to obtain the Prize of being in His Bride.

After such a great spiritual experience, the troubles and sorrows we originally carried into our prayer closets suddenly look so small and so unimportant, as we view them through a sharpened countenance, that they appear as nothing in comparison to the great privilege of knowing Jesus Christ in His Fullness as a True Friend.

Beloved, being in the Bride of Jesus Christ is the Mark of God's Moral High Calling for us; therefore, it is the greatest Prize of all Time and Eternity. Nothing we suffer along the way is worthy to compare with the Glory which shall be ours when we stand with the Lamb on the top of Mount Zion, God's Holy Hill, and when we walk with Him on the Street of Gold in the New Jerusalem.

Since we cannot bypass the humility Friend-side of the Bridegroom, the Crucified Christ, let us learn to accept, quickly, His Ministry to us.

Our True Friend's Ministry includes the following four points: (1) a True Friend fasts, prays, and humbles himself; (2) a True Friend wounds; (3) a True Friend rejoices the heart by sweet counsel; and (4) a True Friend sharpens the countenance.

Our esteem for our True Friend's Ministry grows as our understanding of His Nature increases, for all His Works issue out of His Nature.

* For an explanation of the different diagrams used in this booklet, see: B. R. Hicks, [*Patterns And Forms In God's Word*](#) (Jeffersonville, IN: Christ Gospel Churches Int'l., Inc., 1999).

Chapter Two

The Nature of a True Friend

The inherent character or basic constitution, the essential essence, the innate disposition, the inner temperament, and inherent tendencies are revealed through the nature of a person or thing. Since God is a Living Being, we know that His Nature must reveal His inner Characteristics and Dispositions, which motivate and govern all His actions. Christ's Friend-Nature is clearly revealed in God's Word.

The first part of Christ's Nature as a True Friend is manifested in the sweetness and the loveliness of His Mouth.

I. A True Friend's Mouth Is Sweet and Lovely.

Christ, our True Friend, utters nothing but pleasant and profitable Words because His Mouth is Pure and Sweet.

His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem (Song of Solomon 5:16).

The Hebrew word for *mouth* is *khake*, which means a palate in the sense of tasting; or the inside of the mouth; the mouth itself as the organ of speech, taste, and kissing, from the root word *knaw-nak*, meaning to narrow, to initiate, or to discipline.

Our True Friend's sweet Mouth produces sweet, precious Words that are as pleasant and agreeable as honey. Even the Words of Discipline of our True Friend are smooth and sweet to us, His Spouse-Bride.

Christ's Words of Discipline on the Friend-side sometimes come to us in strange ways. Sometimes our True Friend speaks through our pastor, but frequently He also uses little, insignificant people to tell us where our lives can be improved by developing greater selfcontrol, greater orderliness, and greater efficiency in our work for Him. If we heed the Words of our True Friend, we will have a greater testimony for the LORD.

On such occasions, however, our unChristlike flesh is quick to think its proud thoughts and to voice its proud opinion: "I see nothing wrong with *that*. God has not convicted me." But in our hearts we really are saying, "Because of my superior spirituality, God would definitely speak to me, personally, if there were anything wrong with what I am doing."

This was my arrogant attitude when a little saint witnessed to me about the way God convicted her of mixed bathing. Since I loved to swim and to show off my great talent and ability in high diving, my first reaction was one of obstinate rejection. Yet because I had a basic desire to please the LORD, I decided to seek God about this. There was just one problem; I did it in a prideful spirit. I went to the LORD with an arrogant spirit, saying, "LORD, if there is anything wrong with mixed bathing You show it to *me*." Then, I ran out of my prayer closet before He had time to answer. My deceived heart smugly said, "See, the LORD does not care if I participate in mixed swimming. He did not say a word to me about it."

Although I had rejected Christ's sweet Words of Discipline that had come through one of His little ones, He mercifully brought His sweet Words of Discipline to me later. One day as I was swimming in the ocean with a mixed multitude, my True Friend brought His sweet Words of Discipline to my heart, causing my heart to be smitten with deep conviction. I repented — right there in the ocean — and vowed never to swim again with a mixed multitude, if my LORD would just forgive me for being so rebellious against His sweet Words of Discipline from His lovely Mouth.

It was not the Risen Bridegroom's Love and Glory that were in the sea that day; instead, it was the Discipline of the humble Crucified Christ, as a True Friend, loosing His icy conviction to sweep over my soul so that I could be restrained within the fence of His Purposive Will. How sweet and lovely He was to continue dealing with me in spite of my arrogant, proud ways. How sweet and lovely He was to keep disciplining me until He brought me to a place of total surrender to His Will in this matter.

The Psalmist also confirmed the sweetness of Christ's Words from His lovely Mouth.

More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: **sweeter also than honey** and the honeycomb (Psalm 19:10).

Christ's sweet Words of Discipline are more desirable, satisfying, and pleasant than any sensual, fleeting enjoyment. Being disciplined and controlled by our True Friend is the most sublime goal for us to desire and to attain.

In Psalm 119, David again declared Christ's Words to be smooth, pleasant, and agreeable.

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103).

What a great day of advancement it is in our spiritual education and moral development to find the Discipline of our True Friend sweeter than honey to our mouth! It is so wonderful to fall in love with Jesus Christ to the extent that our hearts say, "His every Word is sweet and lovely whether He speaks to me as a Lover or as a Friend."

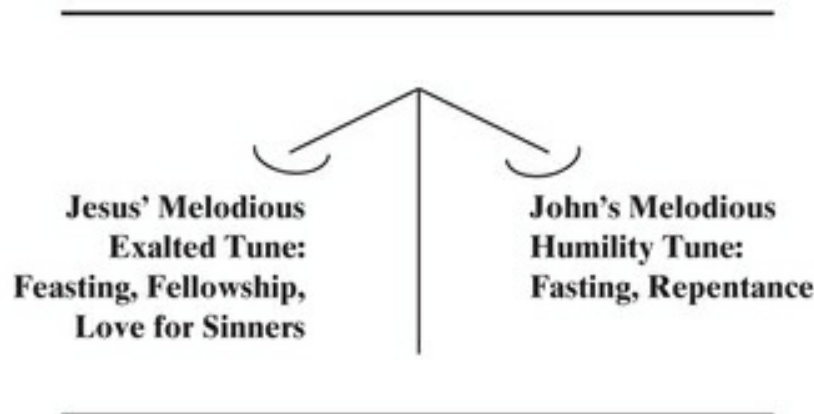
II. A True Friend Has Compassion and Love for Publicans and Sinners.

Jesus Christ, our True Friend, was an intimate associate of publicans, the collectors of public revenues, saloonkeepers, and innkeepers. He also was closely associated with sinners, wrongdoers, and those who willfully had violated God's Divine Law. Jesus humbled Himself and showed Himself to be a True Friend to offenders, transgressors, and trespassers.

But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, **a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children** (Matthew 11:16-19).

In addition to being sweet and lovely, Jesus Christ, our True Friend, had a joyful, compassionate, and loving Nature that allowed him to associate intimately with publicans and sinners on their social level. How contrary was His Nature to the nature of the miserable, unmerciful, and hateful Pharisees who demanded that all men come up to their particular degree of hypocritical spiritual attainment.

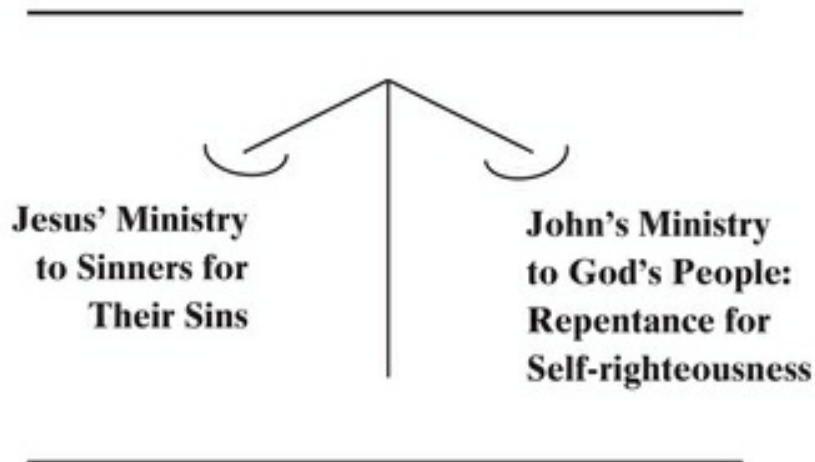
The Pharisees rejected the sincere, true Ministries of both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. God sent John and Jesus to deliver two diametrically different spiritual Messages to His people. The melody John played was a sorrowful tune of fasting and repentance. The melody Jesus played was a joyful tune of feasting, fellowship, and love for sinners.



John piped a humility tune of fasting and repentance, but the self-righteous Pharisees despised John's humility tune and refused to repent. When Jesus Christ played His exalted tune of feasting, fellowship, and love for sinners, they became angry enough to kill Him. Their hateful behaviour showed that they had no love for the humility tune of the Spirit in John; neither had they any love for the exalted tune of the Word in Christ Jesus.

John came preaching repentance to God's self-righteous people so that they could be prepared for the Coming of their Messiah, Jesus Christ. Then, Jesus came feasting, fellowshiping, and loving sinners in order to forgive them

and meet their souls' need.



Sinners cannot be reached with the same message that is preached to touch the hearts of believers. What a waste of time it would have been for Jesus to have told sinners to repent for their self-righteousness when they had not yet experienced an original repentance for their sins. This is why Jesus Christ communicated on the Friend-level with the publicans and sinners. While chewing natural bread with them, He broke the Living Bread of Truth for their Salvation that their souls needed in order for them to begin their growth in Christ's Spiritual Stature

The LORD also works with people in the same way today. If men's proud minds were allowed to set their own spiritual Table, they probably would choose to feast from only the exalting realms of God's Spirit and Word. But because Jesus Christ knows exactly the kind of sinful weeds that need to be removed from the garden of a person's heart in order for him to grow spiritually, the LORD plows and sows according to the person's need.

Jesus, as a Friend, comes down to our spiritual level in order to show us our need through feasting and fellowship with us and by loving us. At first the Friend's spiritual Humility Table of the Crucified Christ may not appear as glorious as the Lover's Exalted Table of the Risen Christ, but it is just as satisfying to our hearts when we are truly hungry to know God.

Let us not be guilty, as were the proud Pharisees, of rejecting God's humility tunes of His Spirit and of His Word. The Spirit plays Christ's humility tune of intercession and travail through us when we yield completely to Him so that we can feast on Christ's Sacrifices and fellowship His Sufferings. As a result of our feasting and fellowshiping with Christ on this level, our hearts are enlarged in the Grace, Gratitude, and Knowledge of our Friend, the LORD Jesus Christ. We should yield our hearts to the precious Holy Ghost and allow Him to open the fountains of our heads so that our tears can flow down to accompany the overflowing intercession and travail from our hearts.

At other times, Christ, the Heavenly Bridegroom, pipes a joyful, happy tune so that our feet can praise His Name in the dance (Psalm 149:3). Thus, we experience new victory and new Union with the divine Purposive Will of our blessed Christ. A heart full of love for the Bridegroom coerces us to rejoice over the LORD's exalted, Glorified Word and over His Humility Word. When we are in love with Christ, our Bridegroom, we love what He does and how He does it — at all times.

III. A True Friend Is Humble Toward Oppressors.

Christ, the sweet, lovely, joyful Friend, also has a humble Nature.

True humility is a lowly attitude in our hearts that makes us know Who God is and who we are. Christ Jesus, the True Friend, exhibited an humble attitude toward His oppressors, those who were cruelly overbearing, those who were hard to tolerate, and those who caused Him physical and mental distress.

Although humility is invisible in one sense, it is possible to recognize this quality because it always manifests itself in acts of meekness toward God's creatures — even toward the most tyrannical and unjust creatures.

Let us examine some of the ways in which Christ's Humility as a Friend were revealed.

A. A True Friend Displays Humility toward Rejecters of Judgment.

In the Parable of the *Labourers in the Vineyard*, Christ manifested the first degree of His Humility Nature as a Friend when He displayed His Humility toward people who rejected His righteous Judgment.

But he answered one of them, and said, **Friend, I do thee no wrong:** didst not thou agree with me for a penny? (Matthew 20:13).

Early in the morning the Householder (a picture of Jesus Christ) began hiring workers for His Vineyard. He went out again at the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour, and, finally, at the eleventh hour. The first labourers were the only ones who bargained for their wages; all the rest trusted the Householder to pay them what was fair and right.

At the end of the day, the Householder called in all the labourers and paid them for working in His Field. First, He paid those who had come to work at the eleventh hour. Then, He paid workers who had been hired at the ninth hour and the sixth hour. The third hour workers were paid next; and, finally, He paid the labourers who had agreed to work all day for a penny.

The amount the Householder paid to those who had agreed to work all day for a penny was the same amount that He paid to the eleventh hour workers. When the ones who had worked all day heard what the other workers had received, they tried to withdraw their original agreement of working for a penny. Instead of being grateful for their pay, their pride convinced them that they were worthy of more. As a result, they made open accusations against the Householder's Just Judgment.

The complainers had no reason to accuse the good Householder who had done no wrong to them. However, in their prideful, illnatured surmisings, they imagined that He had treated them unjustly. The Householder asserted His own Justice by saying "Friend, I do thee no wrong."

Christ, our Instructive Example of a True Friend, used soft words and firm arguments of Truth with these inferior, peevish, and provoking labourers.

Since Christ is LORD, His Words are incontestably True and Just. God forbid, then, that the creature should argue with his Creator (Romans 3:5,6). The Words of the True Friend should silence all man's murmurings against His Just Judgment.

God's bountiful dealings with others do not mean that He has done an injustice to us. We ought not to find fault with His Governance and Guidance of our own life nor with the lives of others.

The good Householder might justly have said, "You evil characters. You ungrateful wretches. Can you not remember how it was with you when I found you in the marketplace? You were povertystricken; and you would still be penniless if I had not mercifully provided you with work." But the Nature of our True Friend did not react this way. He addressed them as *friend*, showing forth the true Humility of His Friend Nature, after they so proudly and so falsely had accused Him. The Householder never considered these men as His enemies; He kept the right image in His Heart and Mind at all times. He never became angry with God for permitting persecution to come to Him. Although these men misjudged Him, He never stopped being grateful for the work they had done in His Vineyard.

What an instructive example of humility this Parable should be to our hearts. Often our actions reveal our proud heart, which is lacking in humility toward God and lacking in meekness toward our fellowman.

To illustrate this point, let us look at a typical situation between a pastor and one of his flock. Suppose that in Reverend Doe's congregation there is a sheep named Sister Lamb who has envy, jealousy, and strife in her heart. Realizing that these unChristlike attitudes must be cleansed out of her heart if she is to continue growing spiritually, the pastor begins to speak kindly to this little sheep. Now, suppose that instead of appreciating her pastor's counsel and judgment about her envy, jealousy, and strife, Sister Lamb decides that what the pastor says is not true, but that he is venting some personal hostility against her. Suppose she rejects his judgment and begins to tell the other sheep in the flock that Reverend Doe is a respecter of persons and that he has done her wrong. Then, the pastor will be faced with assuming either a "Christlike Humility Friend" Image in his spiritual mind or a "proud hostile image" in his carnal mind.

If the pastor loses his humility-friend image because of those who reject his judgment, and, then, begins to take on a proud hostile image, he will say, "Sister Lamb, I have never seen anyone so fleshly in my life. You will never go on for God because you are just too rebellious." No matter how hard he tries to project his angry thoughts from his proud, hostile image upon Sister Lamb, she never will accept his proud, hostile image. Consequently, Reverend Doe will continue carrying that same proud, hostile image with him unless he repents. If the pastor does not repent sufficiently to enable himself to lay hold of a new portion of the Humility-Friend Image of Christ Jesus, his relationship with God and with the entire congregation will be affected.

Two wrongs do not add up to one right. The good Householder in Christ's Parable did not allow the rebellious

rejection of the proud, first-hour labourers to compel Him to do wrong. In spite of the first-hour labourers' false accusation against His good Judgments, the good Householder maintained His Humility Friend Image.

Though this Parable, Christ, our Instructive Example, showed what to do and how to react in adverse circumstances. On the other hand, Moses was an instructive example in showing us what *not* to do and how *not* to react in adverse circumstances.

When, in the Old Testament days, the people thirsted in the wilderness, God commanded Moses to take up his Staff *again*. His Staff had been reposing in the Sanctuary for nearly forty years. Now, however, he was to take it in his hand and assemble the nation. The Rod reminded Moses of how God had wrought a miracle upon it, nearly forty years previously, as a testimony and as a credential to him of his mission. Therefore, it grievously hurt Moses to think that, after working so hard for so many years, he still had not won the confidence and trust of his people. In the midst of the adverse circumstances of the people's murmurings and false accusations against him, he bitterly allowed their wrongdoings to coerce him to do wrong also.

God had commanded Moses to address the Rock quietly, and it would give forth its Waters of Life. However, in the heat of his bitter anger, Moses deeply reproached the people and passionately struck the Rock. He moved in a diametrically opposite direction from God's Command. Moses allowed the intractability, conceit, and quarrelsomeness of the people to coerce him to profane the LORD's Name by impulsively and vehemently smiting the Rock with the Rod that had the LORD's Name upon it.

In the beginning, Moses did not rebel against God. But eventually, he allowed the people's rebellion to cause him to rebel. Moses should have told the people, "Friends, we will look to God's Mercy. He will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ." And he should have spoken quietly to the Rock, which would have given forth its Waters of Life, and the water would have run down freely to the poor, thirsty people. Instead, Moses allowed himself to be so controlled by his rebellious, hostile image of the people that he passionately and vehemently smote the Rock, the Christ (I Corinthians 10:1-4).

And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And **Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock** [overlaid with his bad image] *twice*: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts *also* (Numbers 20:10,11).

We cannot carry the image of others' rebellion around in our minds without their rebellion invading our own hearts and minds, which will cause us also to rebel against the LORD; and, then, our relationship with Him will be affected.

When, for instance, we get an ugly image of our companion, of our children, or of anyone else, we hurt and destroy ourselves. If we passionately and angrily call others rebellious, stubborn, and unmerciful all day, we will have to carry, on our own back, the ugly image that we have created of them.

Carrying the rebellious, stubborn, and unmerciful images we create definitely hinders our striding forward in our spiritual education and in our moral development. What unnecessary burdens these false, wicked images are!

We need not carry bad images of anyone, even those who reject our judgment, if we keep our "Humility Friend Image" of Christ Jesus crystal clear in our minds. Our Friend's Humility Nature has Power to create, within our minds, a beautiful, new prophetic image of all persons. Consequently, instead of being controlled by an ugly, hateful image of how a person is *presently*, we can, by faith, see the beautiful, lovely image that will be theirs *in the future*, after God has finished doing His Work in them.

B. A True Friend Displays Humility Toward an Unprepared Guest.

The second degree of Christ's Humility as a Friend was manifested on the occasion of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when He faced a guest's open defiance of His Person and His Will.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, **Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?** And he was speechless (Matthew 22:11,12).

In this Scripture, the King refers directly to the Father. We know the lesson also shows the Humility-Friend-side of Jesus Christ because Jesus said, "[H]e that hath seen me hath seen the Father;..." (John 14:9).

Jesus gave a Parable about the guests who were invited to a Wedding Feast. The King at the Feast was celebrating the Marriage of His Son, the LORD Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom. Wedding feasts are rich, glorious, and joyful for

all present. The guests at the Feast had been bidden and drawn there by God's Cords of Love.

An ancient Eastern wedding presented a picture of what God's Heavenly Wedding for His Son will be like; therefore, Jesus used it to display Spiritual Principles to those who were hungry to know the Truth.

According to Eastern customs, the host of a wedding furnished each of his guests with a wedding garment. But on this heavenly occasion, the guest had refused to prepare himself to wear the Wedding Garment that the King had provided for him. Having on the King's Wedding Garment was what made the guests acceptable to the King at the Wedding Supper. However, this arrogant guest was unprepared for the Wedding Feast. By refusing to prepare himself, he was unfit to wear the Wedding Garment that had been provided so freely by the King. Hence, the unprepared guest was guilty of flagrantly insulting the Father's Holy Person and His Holy Will. By impudently entering into the Marriage Feast without the King's provided Wedding Garment, the arrogant guest demonstrated his disdain and disrespect for God's Master Plan concerning the Wedding Garment. He boldly defied God's Purposive Will; therefore, God had to punish him and cast him out.

In spite of the impudent insult from the unprepared guest, the King did not defile himself by creating an ugly, bad image of this impudent guest; instead, He called him "friend." Nevertheless, the man deserved to be cast into outer darkness for his unparalleled, sinful impudence; thus, the King justly judged him.

This "Humility Friend" behaviour is diametrically different from the behaviour of the flesh when it is found in a similar situation. Pride will not take the low place in the face of open insolence. Without the Humility Nature of Christ, our True Friend, our flesh is apt to match insults with any person who dares to show us the least measure of disrespect. However, God's Word is a Lamp unto our feet and a Love-Light unto our pathway; it directs our steps to the heights of His Moral High Calling in Christ Jesus.

C. A True Friend Displays Humility to a Betrayer.

The third degree of Jesus Christ's Humility Nature as a Friend was displayed on the occasion of Judas' betrayal of Jesus' Love.

And Jesus said unto him [Judas Iscariot], Friend, **wherefore art thou come?** Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. (Matthew 26:50).

Judas' actions were a supreme test of Christ's Friend Nature. The betrayal kiss was not given by one of the half-interested multitude of followers or by one of the self-righteous Pharisees; rather it was given by one of those in Jesus' inner circle of familiar friends.

In one of his Psalms, King David foretold Judas' betrayal of the LORD Jesus Christ.

Yea, **mine own familiar friend**, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, **hath lifted up his heel against me** (Psalm 41:9).

The expression "mine own familiar friend" literally means "the man of my peace." It refers to relations of the friendliest nature.

Judas had eaten the LORD's Bread, both naturally and spiritually. Yet, he behaved himself perfidiously and disingenuously toward his LORD. Judas not only deserted Jesus Christ, but he insulted and kicked His Divinity by betraying Him with a kiss. A host is obligated to protect his guest, and the guest is honour bound not to injure his host. But Judas lifted up his heel against his Friend, the LORD Jesus Christ. However, Jesus did not corrupt His Humility Nature as a Friend just because Judas corrupted himself.

Jesus knew from the beginning who was going to betray him, but He did not create in His Holy Mind an adverse image of Judas and carry it around for three-and-one-half years. Jesus continually ministered to Judas out of His Humility-Friend Nature.

The Bible teaches us that as man thinketh in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7). In other words, as a man thinketh in his heart about his brother, so is he. If a person thinks his brother is a devil, then before long, the person himself will become like the devilish image he has looked upon. No one was more devilish than Judas. Jesus could have justifiably called him a devil when Judas betrayed Him with a kiss. But knowing that an evil image would defile Himself, the Spotless Sacrifice, Who was to be offered on the Cross of Calvary, Jesus called Judas *friend*, even in his moment of betrayal.

We have many things to learn theoretically in our spiritual education about how we should walk in this present world in order to be like our LORD, our Friend. But we cannot gain experiential knowledge while we are up on a

glory cloud in the overwhelming Presence of Christ's Bridegroom Love. The only way we can learn to grow in our moral development is by living among men and allowing the LORD Jesus Christ, our Friend, to teach us about His lowly Humility Nature. When those around us despise Christ's Judgment, reject His Person, refuse His Will, and betray His Love, we need His Humility-Friend Nature in order to keep a Christlike attitude. This is how we grow in our moral development — by putting Christ's Spiritual Principles of Truth into action.

Christ's degrees of Humility do not grow to maturity in our hearts overnight; they increase little for little as we let our Friend cut away new layers of our fleshly pride and graft new portions of His Living Humility into our hearts.

IV. A True Friend Is Faithful to Exalt.

The fourth degree of Christ's Humility Nature as a Friend is displayed through the *faithfulness* of the Friend's Nature, which Jesus taught in the Parable of the Ambitious Guest.

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, **Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.** For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 14:7-11).

A Parable is a moral lesson that is like a *gate* which excludes those who are wise in their own conceits, but which includes those who are humble and hungry for the LORD's Divine, Infinite Truth. Since the exaltation mentioned in these verses relates to receiving worship, this Parable excludes all except the Bride of Jesus Christ. She is the only one who will share in the Bridegroom's worship (Revelation 3:9).

The Bride will not don her Linen Dress of Glory, visibly, on Resurrection Morning. She will be wearing it, but it will be hidden from all eyes but those of her Bridegroom, under a Cloud of Christ's Humility. The Bride will take her seat in the lowest place at the Wedding Supper until her Bridegroom comes to her, saying, "Friend, come higher."

When Christ, the Bridegroom-Friend, removes the Cloud of Humility from His Bride-Friend, she will arise in all the Glory and Splendour of her Fine, Clean, White Linen as described in the Book of Revelation.

And to her [the Lamb's Wife] was granted that **she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white:** for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints (Revelation 19:8).

In this Scripture, the Bride already had been raptured, and the Marriage of the Lamb *had* come. Yet the Word says that she *should be* (future tense) arrayed in Fine White Linen. This confirms that the Bride will not go immediately into the Marriage Supper arrayed in her splendorous Fine, White Linen.

This same Principle also was revealed at the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Although He came out of the grave with Resurrection Power and Glory, He appeared to Mary Magdalene under a humility cloud, in the form of a simple gardener. When the Risen Christ appeared to two of His own Disciples on the road to Emmaus, He also came under a humility cloud, as a stranger walking and talking with them. Therefore, they did not recognize the stranger until He blessed and brake bread with them. His Resurrection Glory was there in each case, but it was hidden from their eyes by a Humility Cloud. On no occasion after His Resurrection did Jesus appear in His full, Resurrection *Kabode* and *Shekinah* Glory. John, on the Isle of Patmos, saw a glimpse of His Face, shining as the sun, and His Head and Hair as wool — but that was all. The rest of His Glory was not unveiled to John.

While she is on Earth, the Bride will learn the Spiritual Principle of humbling herself and trusting her Bridegroom to exalt her at His appointed time; therefore, when she is at the Wedding Supper, she will know to sit in the humble place and wait for her Bridegroom-Friend to pass by and exalt her.

While others with lesser Glory will strive for the High Place at the Wedding Supper, the Bride meekly will seat herself in the lowest room and wait patiently for her beloved Bridegroom to reveal her Linen Glory. She will demonstrate *her faith* in *His Faithfulness* by abiding confidently in the low place until He exalts her to stand by His side as His Wife. Then, Jesus will say, as He did in the Parable, "Friend, come up higher." Christ will say to His Bride, "It is time for you to receive worship because you are One with me." Thus, the Bride will enter into true, eternal exaltation because of her Oneness of Relationship with her Bridegroom and Friend.

It is vitally important for us to realize that the Bride gains her mature Spiritual Stature during her earthly journey, rather than after reaching Heaven. Earth is where she will have learned to discern that the Bridegroom always goes *first* to the place of humility. Hence, Earth is where she will have learned to love the low place of the Crucified Christ. And, Earth is where she will have grown a mature stature of perfect confidence in her Friend's Faithfulness to exalt her at His appointed time.

By refusing to take the low place with a good spirit and a grateful attitude, spiritual babes frequently force other people to exalt them prematurely and out of season. However, they pay a dear price for the "green fruit" of the temporary honour they receive. Green fruit, out-of-season fruit, is always bitter and sour. Remember, beloved, self's untimely exaltation out of the low place produces neither the Spiritual Stature of Christ Jesus within us, nor the sweet, pleasant, agreeable Fruits of the Spirit within us. We deceive ourselves by thinking we will search out the low place in Eternity, if we reject it and are repulsed by it now. If we do not love the humble place and seek it, now, we will have neither the knowledge nor the desire to seek it in Eternity.

Distrust in the faithful Nature of the LORD Jesus Christ is born out of the darkened eye of our natural spirit. The Light of True Faith in Christ's Humility Nature increases in our hearts as our fleshly eye of darkness decreases through crucifixion with Christ. Each new trip down into the Death of Jesus Christ loosens more scales of pride and more blind ignorance of Christ's Holy, Humility Nature from our eyes and allows us to make a true evaluation of the eternal benefits of the low place. The deeper we go in the Love of Jesus Christ, the more clearly we see that the low place should not be dreaded nor shunned. There is peace in the low place; there is joy and contentment there. When our whole being is full of Christ's Light, we are perfectly willing to abide in the low place with Him, as long as He desires for us to do so. A person's thrill and delight are found in the LORD's Personal Presence — not in the high place nor in the low place. Perfect Light drives away all fearful shadows and all clouds of doubt. The radiant beams of the Light of Truth that emanate from the depths of our being say that, just as surely as the Father raised His Son out of the low place, so will He be faithful to exalt the humble one who had Jesus Christ for his Friend in this life.

V. A True Friend Lays Down His Life for His Friends.

The fifth part of Christ's Humility Nature as a Friend was revealed in John's description of "Greater Love."

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

The Self-sacrificing Nature of Christ Jesus, the True Friend, was seen in His willingness to lay down His Life for His friends. The Hebrew word for *lay down* means to place in a passive or horizontal posture, bow, to kneel down, lay aside, lay down, purpose, settle, sink down.

Christ's Humility-Friend Nature was manifested in His dealings with the workers who rejected His Judgment; with the unprepared guest who rejected His Person; and with the betraying Disciple who rejected His Love. Although Christ had the Power and Authority to impose instantaneous Death, He showed Mercy and Love as a Friend. He did not use His Power and Authority to kill, but to bring Life to all who would heed His Words of warning. Jesus Christ chose to lay down His Will in the horizontal position in order to give sinners an opportunity to repent and to ask forgiveness before they receive final condemnation.

The Apostle Paul revealed that God's Goodness leads us to repentance.

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that **the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?** (Romans 2:4).

Beloved, it is not God's Will for *anyone* to perish. He desires that every sinner repent and accept the Gift of His Life, which He has laid down for each of us. Although not everyone will accept the Life Jesus Christ has laid down, He showed Himself to be a True Friend by becoming a living example of God's Goodness, Forbearance, and Long-suffering.

VI. A True Friend Reveals Secrets of the Father.

The sixth part of Christ's Humility Nature was manifested in His Friend-Relationship with His Disciples.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but **I have called you friends**; for all things that I have heard

of my Father I have made known unto you (John 15:15).

As a True Friend, Jesus Christ's unselfish, generous Nature is exhibited in His desire to share the Secrets of His Heart with those who are willing to be His Disciples and sit at His Feet and learn of Him. Christians who accept Jesus Christ's Headship on the Friend-side and who are willing to learn of Him are privileged to walk and talk with Him as they journey together through spiritual Canaans Land, Married Land.

We never can conquer the enemies of Canaan's Land and know the Unity and the Oneness with Jesus Christ in a Spiritual Marriage Relationship, according to God's Purposive Will, without our Friend constantly showing us the Father's Secrets to Victory and Unity. Beloved, one of the first secrets of having a happy relationship with Christ in Canaan's Land is to gain as great an appreciation and as great a respect for Jesus Christ's Humility Friendship as we have for His Exalted Bridegroom Love.

No earthly friend can be compared with Jesus Christ. Christ is sweet and lovely; He is a Friend to publicans and sinners; He is humble to oppressors; He is faithful to exalt; He laid down His Life for His friends; and He reveals the Secrets of the Father.

Our Spiritual Marriage Relationship with Jesus Christ begins to blossom into its full potential once we know Him as the True Humility Friend as well as the Exalted Bridegroom-Lover of our soul. Life becomes an endless spiritual romance of love, joy, and peace after we have learned to appreciate the LORD Jesus Christ in His Friend Ministry and to love Him in His Friend Nature.

