

HLH- 790814- Choice of Friends

The subject I would like to discuss this evening, which I think will be helpful to many who are here for years in the Southern California area, as well as for new students whose relationships will be much more extensive in an academic atmosphere.

I would like to discuss the topic of who your friends are.

How do you determine who should be your friend? What is the approach, the guideline, the standard you use? You might be quite surprised at what the scripture says, because when I discussed this with the minister some time ago, he was astounded that I would explain myself as I proposed to do this evening, but he in this case agreed with me, and I think that in reality, though he may not have directly thought of it, he was one of those who understood what Mr. Herbert Armstrong's example is, even though many may not have followed that example and understood what it means.

There is a tendency for individuals who come within the fold of the church before or after they are baptized to decide that all their past friends are worldly and to junk them to treat them as appropriate only for the garbage can.

I would like us to take a look at Christ's example and the instruction of the apostle Paul, John, to see what kind of friendships and how those friendships should be maintained, what kind of friendships we should expect, and we'll take a look at at least two examples in the Old Testament, and I will give you some personal examples.

The general rule of thumb, of course, is that in coming into the church, the first thing we do is alienate our relatives and next our friends by attempting to convert them on the assumption that they are equally called and knowledgeable as you are or the reason why you understand must lie also within them.

But apart from that question, there are individuals who have been your friends and new individuals whom you will meet through life who are not now converted and there is no evidence that they are being called, what do we do with such individuals? What kind of friends did Abraham have, did David have? What kind of a social life did Jesus have? What did Paul recommend to the Corinthians about this matter? What did he tell the Hebrews about Christ's conduct when compared with all the friends he had? First, I think we should turn to a verse, we'll start with Christ's example, I think that's the best for us this evening.

If we will turn to Matthew chapter 9, and we could begin in any number of others, in the ninth verse of Matthew chapter 9, as Jesus passed by, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to this Matthew, who was the tax collector on behalf of the Romans, follow me, and this man, who was a Jew, rose and followed Jesus.

And as Jesus sat at the table, I'm reading from the common Bible, which is the English edition, published in Great Britain, of the Revised Standard Version, just picked it up this evening for variation when I read.

And as he sat at the table in the house, he holds many tax collectors, Matthew's friends, and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples.

Now in the Church of God, of course, the second category for many is a no-no.

You would never want to be found with a sinner, an alcoholic, an adulterer, a thief, a person with a problem.

But I want you to notice the reality of life that Jesus sat and what he did in connection with such contact.

He sat down, obviously, and he was dining in the disciples with tax collectors and those who were regarded as sinners.

Now a sinner was a category different from the scribe or the Pharisee.

A sinner was pictured as, on one occasion, saying, forgive me because he wasn't worthy.

The Pharisee, who was not a sinner, had the impression that he was better than this sinner and unlike other men.

So to be a sinner is not necessarily to be one who intentionally commits all kinds of evils.

Nevertheless, the sinner was regarded as one who religiously, in the Jewish community then, was on the outside spiritually, and a tax collector was surely one who would be closest in comparison today, let's say, with the mafia, people who need to launder their money.

These were the individuals who represented Rome, and Jesus sat down.

Now when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? But when he heard it, Jesus said, those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick.

Now Jesus was implying, without any question, that in reality the tax collectors and sinners were sick spiritually.

The Pharisees knew that they were well and had no need of a physician.

I didn't say Jesus said they were well, I said they perceived that they were in good spiritual health and had no need of Jesus' company.

Now there were a few exceptions.

Go and learn what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, for I came not to call the righteous but sinners.

So Christ's function was to convey his message not to those who already were persuaded of their good deeds, but to those who knew their deeds were not, up to the standard of those who were important in the congregation of Israel.

Here we have an illustration of what Jesus approached what.

Jesus did not say that he came as one sick among other sick to indulge in their mutual sicknesses.

He did not come as a drunk to enjoy the drunken revelry of other drunks.

He did not come as a thief to share in the plans of the favor of others.

He came as a physician understanding the sickness of the individuals and did not rise above the need to be their friends.

Please do not assume, however, that I take the approach that all my friends are sick.

Jesus was describing the reality that there were individuals who were so categorized, and he came as a physician among them.

And interestingly, when Jesus draws an analogy, apart from the question of a teacher or a priest, and there are analogies where Christ fulfills both roles, it is a reality to so you understand that Jesus not uncommonly compared himself to a physician.

Because of all the functions in this world, there is probably a greater intention to be of service in the medical area than in most others.

I qualified it with the word probably, and I think Jesus was discreet when he used such analogy.

And although it is not uncommon for a physician to have taken a woman's money through treatment and she was no better, and these are realities also in life, Jesus' statements regarding physicians were far less strong than regarding any other major profession.

I would just mention that.

I am glad I have never darkened a doctor's office for physical need since I was seven years old and I have no intention of doing so.

But I think we should be realistic and understand that accidents can happen, and there may be need of individuals unexpectedly in this category.

Nevertheless, Jesus had friendship because some of the people whom he called were in professions of less than great repute, and they had friends equally, and he was not above contact with them.

You will find the same thing in Mark 2 verses 15 and 16, but we will now take another place in Matthew in chapter 11, verse 19.

The son of man, Jesus is referring to himself, came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

John the Baptist was in contrast, abstemious, and did not eat and drink.

With others, he fasted, and they thought that, of course, he was a little eccentric.

He has a demon, and when Jesus did something a little different, then they were accusing him of just the opposite, so that you couldn't please the Pharisees whether you fasted or whether you ate, whether you were a member of the women's Christian temperance movement or you drank at a bar.

You could please this group of people in no way.

Now the fact that they said he was a glutton and a drunkard meant clearly that he dined, he had social fellowship with individuals, and he apparently enjoyed what God created.

Now note, they claimed he was a drunkard, Jesus never sinned.

I will show you a clear statement of that effect.

So he must have eaten with people who sometimes ate and drank too much.

And there are people who do that, and they're not today, always, outside of the church.

And people who were not of the greatest repute.

Jesus also dined with Pharisees, who were of great repute.

But nevertheless, this is a picture that sometimes you will have friends who have problems.

The same thing may be found in Luke 7, chapter 34.

We'll quickly just glance to what Luke is writing years later, the son of man has come eating and drinking and you say, behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

Now Paul, and remember Luke writing to the Gentiles, parallels many of Paul's statements.

The Christians in times past are described as being full of all sorts of evils, of banqueting and drunkenness, adultery, all of those things.

Now when Jesus had friends, he did not let their evils rub off on him.

We will now carefully turn to the book of Hebrews.

In the book of Hebrews, we have a very important verse on this subject, chapter 7, verse 26.

It was fitting that we should have a unique high priest, holy, H-O-L-Y, that means dedicated to the service of God, blameless, unstained, separate from sinners.

What does it mean to be separate from sinners when you eat and drink with them? People have read this to assume that you must not have anything to do with people who are unconverted or people of another religious conviction.

When you sit at a meal with a man who has a problem, maybe it is that he drinks a little too much.

Maybe pork is his thing.

Maybe he eats too much.

Maybe he talks too much.

Do you always have to be overcome by your friends? Now this is the question you have to face when you make friends.

Jesus was able to rise above the problems of those whom he was with.

He was as a physician among those who were sick.

But he was able to be with them, and he came not as one of them, but as someone who set an example, someone who rise above the occasion to lift the talk on another level, to point the way that would make them happier.

Now when it means to be separated from sinners, it means that he was never categorized as a sinner because he was without sin.

So we have these two illustrations of what Jesus did as he lived, and to what extent he was above the problems because of the Spirit of God and prayer and fasting.

He was above the problems of those whom he met day to day.

Now Paul warns and Peter warns that we should be careful and avoid the social situation.

That involves drunkenness, and if we may classify the Roman behavior where you eat and drink environments so you can eat and drink again.

Jesus did not indulge in that kind of vanquitting.

He indulged, if we may use the term, in the kind of social fellowship that was uplifting, but that was also a joyous occasion.

There was time also when he fasted.

But this is the other side of the life of Jesus, the Messiah.

Let us look at some other verses, Paul's instructions.

1 Corinthians 5, 9-12, there had been a problem in the church, someone involved in immorality you had to be dealt with.

This was about the time of the days of unleavened bread, not Easter.

Paul said, so you don't misunderstand 1 Corinthians 5-9, he said, I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men.

He qualifies this by saying, not at all meaning, please brethren, the immoral of this world, or the greedy, or robbers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

The world then must have been full of greedy, immoral, heaving idolaters.

That was the Greek and the Roman world.

But rather I wrote to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of a brother.

If he is guilty of immorality or greed, or as an idolater, a reviler, a drunkard, or a robber, not even to eat with such a one.

Most of us haven't seen the full implications of this.

No brother in the church should ever indulge himself or herself in immorality or greed.

Idolatry of various sorts today may differ from that day, one who is a reviler or a drunkard or a thief, not even to eat with such a one.

Of course he says, what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge, that is when you have problems to deal with it? Instead of letting it stay in the church, it has been somewhat the practice.

God judges those outside in his time.

Judgment is now on the house of God.

But let us look at what Paul is saying.

He said, I wrote you in a letter in no way saying that you must automatically as a Christian dissociate yourself from people who are immoral in the world, or even greedy, or robbers, or idolaters.

That's what he himself writes.

Because it is not our function to be above the people around us as the Pharisees thought themselves to be above their friends and their neighbors.

Paul also said that there were in times past Christians who behaved differently.

So in the next chapter we read a little about what we are not to do.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sex perverts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers.

This is basically the same category, isn't it? None of those people in their present state will inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you.

But you were washed, figuratively speaking.

You were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the spirit of our God.

This is quite a picture if we really sit down to consider.

Here is a category in chapter 5 of people that Paul said, you must not assume that you have to shun these people merely because you are now in the fellowship of the church.

He also said that some of you were just like they are, and you know that none of them will inherit the kingdom of God as long as they remain what they are.

We are then saying that it is not impossible to be friends with people who have problems.

But you are to rise above their conduct, to be forgiven, to be cleansed of your past, to be a new kind of person who can draw the line and say to your friend whom you used to drink with too much.

I don't do that anymore.

But why don't you come over for dinner anyway? You be, shall we say, the host.

You be in charge.

You don't go to their parties, you bring them to yours.

You set an example of what you now are.

You take command of the helm instead of being led about by your friend.

Now there is the other side of the coin.

Paul is addressing the Galatians, and he speaks of some who can be overcome by these things, and we have to help one another.

We should plead temptation that leads to sin.

That's why I say, don't be the follower.

You be the creative, friendly leader, host.

You take charge.

It's the same thing that we say or should have been saying all along, with respect to friends your children make.

Now your children generally go to public schools or private schools, none of which except maybe one locally here is church associates.

All your children's friends are of the world, and if they are average, 40 percent of them in high school today are suffering from various stages of alcoholism.

That is a fact of life, a terrible fact of life.

It's a little change from the drug of a decade ago.

It is the new tragedy.

I have said, before you let your children go to your neighbors, have your children invite your neighbors to you.

Our little girl, the youngest, now 15, a few years ago introduced two of her friends to our home.

She had nice, interesting children at school.

When one of them was in our home, she wanted only to talk, and the other one wanted only to eat.

Needless to say, they were not invited again, nor did our daughter go over there.

They turned out to have another side.

You can be friends at school, but there are things you can learn not to do.

You just simply don't associate in situations that are bad for you emotionally.

When you have young people, you have to be very careful about these matters as parents.

You can see that your children take charge and play the dominant role in invitation.

This is the best solution since we are in the world.

Let's look on again a few things here in 1 Corinthians 6.

Verse 18 says, shun immorality.

Every other sin which a person commits is outside the body.

We're not talking of pork or anything like that, we're talking about spiritual sin.

But the immoral man sins against his own body.

And do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? So you're to glorify God in your body and not get involved in any fellowship that would lead to problems.

So all kinds of fellowship through friends may be lawful.

I'm now dropping back to verse 12, but not all are helpful.

You will learn that there are some people you cannot help.

There are others whom you can't.

There are some people who can set, let's say, a standard for you because of their accomplishment.

Paul didn't say that all Christians were evil.

He said some of you were like that in verse 11.

So some of your friends may be like this, but not all are.

I have friends, some of whom are above these problems, some of whom would die for me, and some of whom suffer from these problems, and who count me, nevertheless, as a friend.

We have to know when to have contact and when not to, and all depend heavily on your capacity to handle problems.

Now when John, in 1 John 2, 15 and 16, speaks of not loving the world, we'll turn to that now, we are not talking about being above other people in your own mind.

He is talking about the order of the state of affairs operating in the world today.

He is talking of the present structure or cosmos as the Greek would have it, this present age in which the devil governs the society and government, religion, and it is manifest through lust for the flesh and lust of the eyes and pride of life, and all these are characteristics of the present order that we should shun.

To have lust of the eye means that your eye looks at something that is not allowed you, which you desire, but is appropriately not yours, and the pride of life should be quite apparent if we look at the politicians and some other leaders and lust of the flesh.

We are not talking about the fact that God created beautiful plants, the stars that may be seen at night in the moon, when you are involved in idolatry, that's another thing, but you can appreciate the beauty of the moon and the stars and the beauty of the flowers which Jesus referred on one occasion.

It is not wrong to appreciate beauty.

What is wrong is to covet, to lust after it. Your neighbor has a beautiful plant, admire it, but recognize it as your neighbor. There is a distinction. Maybe your neighbor, speaking of a man, has a beautiful wife. You can appreciate her and be glad that she is your neighbor.

I think that should be clear.

There are some who cannot understand the logic of that.

I know that there are some women in the church who are outstanding in character and in beauty.

We can't all be. There are some men who are distinguished or handsome. We can't all be.

We don't have to covet someone else. We can admire and know where the law says we should place our respect, appreciation, and honor.

John is not talking here about separating ourselves from everyone who is evil.

What we must learn is that we cannot conduct ourselves with them as we once did, but we have the choice either to shun a fellowship when they cannot leave you alone, or you may have fellowship when it is possible for you to have the kind of relationship that allows for an uplifting conversation, a real understanding of new goals and horizons in life.

David had friends of this nature. We will come to see some of them.

Now we'll look at another side of Christ's life in Romans 5.8 briefly.

When we were still weak in verse 6, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. He died from the Passover with flames. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man.

Though perhaps for a good man, one will dare even to die.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Since therefore we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

I'm not here explaining the difference of Christ's life and his blood. That's a separate theology, but you should note it. People don't realize that the death of Christ did not solve everything.

If he had never been resurrected, the shedding of his blood would not have made your resurrection any immortality possible. The blood of Christ justified you. Makes you right in God's sight so that now you can contact him, but you must proceed. That's not the theme this evening.

What we note is that if Christ was willing to do this, when we were sinners, we should not be above being friends of those who are sinners, our example may help. I would like to tell, because probably half or more of you, or maybe even two-thirds of those who are here this evening, have never heard me tell something about some of my friends. I think it would be good to know, and you could tell something of your friends. Now we have different kinds. I'm not going to reveal everybody's secret, everybody's problems, but the kind of people that I would like to mention are the kind I think you can appreciate. 1 Kings 5, 1-8, Hiram, King of Tyre, sent his servants to Solomon when he heard that they had anointed Solomon King in the place of his father David. For Hiram always loved David. There's no statement that Hiram was converted, that he was called. But we do know this. And Solomon sent word to Hiram, you know that David, my father, could not do the following. But now the Lord has given me rest on every side. That's verse 4. And so I propose to build a house. Now I would like you to make certain preparations for me. Verse 7, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, he rejoiced greatly and said, Blessed be the Lord this day who has given to David a wise son to be over his great people, this great people. Now Hiram was an unusual friend, the kind of friend that David could appreciate.

David had his enemies, but he also had his friends. And it doesn't mean that Hiram was perfect. We will see later he had a little falling out with Solomon when he wasn't that impressed with the cities that Solomon offered him. That can happen.

We'll take a look at Abraham. Chapter 14, when Lot was seized, one who had escaped came and told Abraham the Hebrews, who was living by the oaks of Mamre, the Amorites, who was a brother of Eshkol and of Anur. These were allies of Abram.

And so they pursued and delivered Lot and those who had been carried captive.

In a conversation which follows, the king of Sodom offered Abraham certain rewards, but Abraham said, I have sworn to the Lord God most high, maker of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread of a sandal fong or anything that is yours, lest you should say I have made Abraham rich. Abraham was a little blunt with the king of Sodom.

I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten and the share of the men who went with me.

Let Anur, Eshkol and Mamre take their share.

Now, Abraham had friends of the Amorites. The city of Sodom was so bad that in Abraham's generation, God blasted them. The Amorites were punished only after 400 years.

I draw an analogy here to the difference in time. Abraham decided that close friendship with Sodomites didn't pay and he was very blunt. But he did have friendship with Amorites, whose sin was not yet full and would take 400 more years before God decided to deal with them.

Right? You remember the story. And that's why Abraham's descendants couldn't take the land before.

This implies that they were not of the same category. So Abraham had friends who were above some of the problems of others of his neighbor. Abraham was careful, if you please, of the friends he chose. David was careful of the friends he chose.

You should be. If all your friends are drunk, thieves, murderers and liars, it would reflect on you.

But we cannot avoid them altogether. And we're not asked now to judge them. We might admonish them and Jesus set standard. There was occasion when a woman was caught in adultery.

You remember the last piece of tabernacles? And there were a number of righteous people around.

They introduced this woman to Jesus. You know the rest of the story. When Jesus said it would seem advisable on this occasion, since they introduced the law of Moses, that whoever is without sin should indeed be the first one to stone her. Because there is no doubt Moses said she ought to be stone. That was a very clever answer. They had no intention of doing that. And they were convicted of sins. And when Jesus looked away and scribbled in the ground and on the sand in Hebrew, they just simply disappeared. And Jesus was left in the company of an adulterer. He did not leave her without admonition. He said, I don't condemn you, but don't ever do anything like that again.

The Greek is a lot stronger than the King James watered down version came via the lap.

The original Greek is much more emphatic. And any good modern translation will make it emphatic.

I have a friend who decided not to be a member of the church because he likes shrimp. He just simply in this life decided he couldn't give it up.

Now, I don't know what your weakness is, but before you assume you have none, think it over.

He is a man. I will not name him because I'm introducing it this way, although I've mentioned him before. He is a man over many years. I've known him a quarter of a century who introduced me to many societies in the educated world who will never end a phone call. And we communicate usually by phone, sometimes personally. He will never end the phone call without assuring me that I am quoting him. I love you, Herman.

He's a man a little bit older than my wife, who's a little bit older than I am.

I was at his wife's funeral. He has since remarried. He would never think of divorcing.

He is not converted. He's a remarkable person. In politics, he probably stands to the right of Attila the Hun. I have friends on the other side, whom we might say stand as far left as Lenin might have. But I enjoy this man's company. He's an absolute, delightful person, and he speaks good Russian. I want to introduce him sometimes to Joseph the Koch and vice versa.

These are situations when he talked about, after his first wife's death, the question of conversion. He laid out before me what he simply couldn't give up.

And I talked frankly with him. He said, I would like to have what you have, but I am not willing to pay the price. He simply couldn't make up his mind to pay the price.

But there's coming another time. There is an eighth day after the piece of tabernacle. There is a second resurrection. There's a day of judgment. A resurrection to judgment, not damnation, as there is a resurrection before the millennium to life. This man is a lifelong friend.

He will ever be that kind of person.

I do not share that weakness with him. We may have other weaknesses we have to deal with.

He nevertheless is the kind of person who would remain loyal.

And in any group, wherever Ambassador College or the Worldwide Church of God has been named, he will publicly defend the institution, what we stand for.

He never has doubts about what we stand for as an institution.

I've told you the story. Many of you who were not in Southern California have never heard of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Colton. He's a businessman. The man, your factory, he's really the son-in-law, the founder of New Virginia, the soap that you might have been acquainted with. Recently, his wife was shot and his son, 15, was shot or about that age, and a friend in their home. It was a play, a murder, when he was away. Some of you kindly went to the film. He's a man whom I have known for a lesser period of time. He was admired by the man whom I first spoke up.

I was in their home, and I want to quote something. They're a Jewish family.

It was Mrs. Colton who said, and I repeated this to one of our other congregations, and we'll repeat it here briefly, when my husband is home, my time is here.

When he's gone, my time is mine.

There are many women in the church who could not say, when my husband is home, my time is his.

They say, when my husband is home, that's the time to complain.

That's the time to argue. That's the time to try to persuade him of that there are people who simply have never recognized to what extent. There are some rigid principles in the Bible and some principles of unusual generosity. And there are people who are generous foolishly with the public monies, and there are people who are too tight-fisted politically to be generous. I have another friend whom I will merely name when Paul said, as I read to you in Romans, that Christ died for sinners. You remember that section? I want to read just a small section here again.

Why one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for a good man one would dare even to die.

I have a friend who lives in Monterey Park, whose business is in here and elsewhere, who not only was willing to die, but willing to die hundreds of times in the last war because he spent his life in the Second World War for two and a half to three years, rescuing people from Hitler's Europe through Vichy France to Switzerland and to Spain.

He's John Weidner, the Seventh-day Adventist elder, the man who would say, this is the kind of friend I hope all of you could have, that your friends are mine.

That if you're my friend, or friends in this case as an audience, all of you he would consider hit.

I have taken some of my acquaintances in the church from other cities to meet him when he is in town. I said you will never find a businessman like this.

They have left and said you were right. I've never met a businessman like that.

We have known, I've known Mr. John Weidner since 1956. I was with him and he asked my advice, what to say, the night that he was honored by the Jewish community in the Temple of Beth Israel in Southern California. And we explained to the Jewish community, we, because it was his view in mind, that we should set the standard as a Ten Commandments, the willingness in a time of crisis to give your life for another. And that's the kind of man he is. I don't ask the same thing of every friend. When I was in Hawaii, when Mr. Armstrong had a touch of the flu, this was I think in 1975 in the winter, sorry 1976, in the beginning of the year in the winter, I told him about John Weidner.

Because I could do more of the talking then, when he got better he could. And I just let him know what it's like to have a man who would be willing to die for me.

I know he would because he proved it hundreds of times already. I wouldn't ask the same of everybody else. That's the kind of individual he is. I have another friend, the Jacob Zeitlin, who is the Dean of Book Dealers of Western America, who enjoys social life far beyond most people, who even has to be on occasion and admonished by his brother. And his brother tells me that. A man that I would introduce, or to put it another way, a man to whom I would introduce any single person that I would meet in the church from around the world. And often when I'm on my way to the airport I will stop at his big red barn on La Cienica Boulevard. He's Jewish. He's a man who is 75 and can dance as if he were 35. A man who may be weary when he comes to work in the morning and after meeting people all day is a glow at night because he thrives on other people's personality. Now not everybody does. Some people are exhausted by other people.

Some people exhaust themselves.

They make themselves miserable. Jacob Zeitlin will live to be 100. If he curbs certain proclivities of social life over extending himself because he has the capacity to just bounce back in the presence of other people, I expect to see him there when he's 80 at work.

When I leave him, his face is a glow. He's just that kind of person. He's read in a smile.

He is a man who has great knowledge in the field of his choice. He's a person who helped discover some of the most recent finds that were lost of Leonardo da Vinci. He is a man who could spend his youth climbing the Grand Canyon, staying in it all night on some of the pinnacles, just that kind of individual. John Weidner is a Seventh Day Adventist elder. I don't think that all of these individuals would necessarily find immediate friendship with everyone else. It just happens that some of your friends wouldn't be comfortable with others. But when I have a problem and I would like to discuss some things, I will go to Jacob Zeitlin.

I don't discuss spiritual matters, but I will discuss other things. I'll ask him for advice.

His advice is free. He calls me his friend. Whenever I go there, he's likely to give me on occasion when I'm alone a book. I have given him some of the things, of course, that we have published appropriately through AICF, or the Ambassador Foundation. He has always said that I give him more than he gives me. I'd never look at it that way because I think it's the reverse.

But it is nice to know that you have a friend like this who can advise you, if I want advice, in certain areas.

For some years, I have known Giorgio and Marilyn Buccellotti. She is Marilyn Kelly Buccellotti.

Irish is Italian of a responsible Milanese family. They are in the field of archaeology.

For some years, since 1968, Mr. Armstrong and Stanley Rader have wanted to be reasonably even handed in the Middle East and to have contact in the Arab world in an educational sense as we have had contact in the Israeli world. Because of our friendship, one day in August, I guess this was time goes by. I'll have to see. In 1975, I believe it was, the Giorgio Buccellotti came over with a proposal asking if I would be interested in presenting to our institution participation in a Mesopotamian expedition of major proportion that in a sense will be the thrust of his educational life's scope, covering Syria in Iraq in particular, the ancient Near East, the north of Israel.

We would not today have been participants for three years, and I'm sorry that I don't have the brochure about the material there, but I can say it is available. Mr. Rader has material and I do, but I can say that if I had not been willing to be a friend, we would never have had this opportunity. Recently, Dr. Buccellotti brought over a man in the Syrian Department of Antiquity.

We met for at least 20 minutes in Stanley Rader's office in the Hall of Administration, and Mr. Rader has been invited to Syria to visit there. Mr. Armstrong would not be able to make that trip now. He must husband his strength. It's one thing to sit down and to talk with Chinese leaders. It's another thing to walk around on a tail, T-E-L. Nevertheless, I want to tell another side of this story. I had to be a friend. That is true. But in another sense, they cultivated me. They treated me as their friend. I have never invited them into our home. The others, I have invited John Weidner. I have invited, of course, the first man whom I addressed.

I have been in Mr. Cotzen's home and his wife. Jacob Zeitlin, we do not have social fellowship.

We only have business fellowship. We do different things with different friends.

I will discuss the Bible as freely with John Weidner as I would with any of you, and in some cases, I would discuss it more freely, unfortunately. But he's that kind of person. I don't discuss the Bible with every friend. I could discuss many things, the Old Testament, and of the New, with the Cotzen. Mrs. Cotzen was one who invited me to the bar mitzvah of her son.

I could not go on that occasion. She always appreciated that I could have Muslim friends and Jewish friends and Christian friends. And if I wanted to correspond in the Soviet Union, I could have atheist friends. I just haven't done it because we can't do everything.

But we had people there whom we could readily cultivate, who appreciated our approach to religion. That might sound strange from an atheist, but they're very few real atheists, you see. That's the reality.

The Buccalares have invited me on numerous occasions to their home in my wife, and they discuss their plans. When they have a major plan, I don't have to be brought into the discussion I'm invited in. I have not always been able to go. When they have special gifts, I've been asked to go. They cultivate me. I don't have to, in this sense, go out of the way and cultivate others. You see, sometimes you discover that if you want to be a friend or have friends, you must be one. And in this case, I will cite them most especially, because I don't have anyone else who have ever gone out of the way this much in recent years.

In the case of the first man whom I mentioned, who often hosted individuals who were guests of the Department of State, I would be asked to his home, which was nearby.

And in that home, I would be introduced to individuals of various rank from other countries.

And he always thought it appropriate whenever there was a special guest in Southern California to invite me over. On one occasion, there was a Turkish person in the field of archaeology.

This is the kind of friends we are. And Mr. Kotzen expected me to host him. This is my job, because this man once spoke here at the college. I asked the first man who couldn't give up shrimp if he would open his home to this special guest and the Kotzen and a few others who were involved.

And they did, because they could do something that neither my wife or I could.

A friend is someone who will help you in an emergency, who will do something for you. And when Mr. Kotzen left, he said that it was the most remarkable and perfect setting.

This is what somebody will do for me. This is what others do for me, because I try to be their friend. I never parade our religion.

The Buczelates know that we are the Worldwide Church of God. I know they're Catholic.

That does not stand in the way of our appreciation of Jewish customs, for we both were at the funeral of the Kotzen family, which was that tragedy I mentioned, which occurred only now, just months ago.

Giorgio Buczelate is the only American scholar who has been invited, by the Italian expedition, to assist in the translation of the eblah tablets found at ancient eblah in northern Syria.

Giorgio Buczelate is the kind of friend who took me to the basement, otherwise off-limits, took me to the basement of the museum at Aleppo to view not only the tablets that are found, 17,000 fragments and tablets, but all of the other finds, well in advance of publication.

He took me to the site to be introduced to Professor Mattie and to his wife, the kind of individual he is, who goes out of the way, far beyond merely the requirement just because we have assisted financially. I believe that he knows we would do it whether or not he could extend himself socially. That's the kind of individual that he is.

I happen to have other friends, these may have some reputation. I have another friend who is a Muslim, I have told you, he's a taxi driver. Now, I don't normally correspond with New York taxi drivers, in fact, I never could. They're a different breed. This man is a Muslim who operates out of Nandi in Fiji. I met him in 1971. We've been friends every year, every time I'm in Fiji in the month of Ramadan, which is the fast day, I fast with him and he breaks the fast with me.

Now, that's an unusual experience. He invited me to his home and I took my wife and our son, Manfred, in 1973. Manfred was then a little young. He was 12 years old. He said to my mother, he said, what is dad taking us out into the Cainfield and some Muslims home for? After we left, he didn't tell me, he told her, he said, now I see. Why? Dad took us out to the Cainfield in a Muslim's home in the month of Ramadan.

You learn another people's culture. He's a person whose ancestors go back to the region now called Pakistan, then India. I presented to the mosque. There, a picture of the tomb of Muhammad's father, which Victor Kubik and I took the traditional tomb in Central Asia because the family of Muhammad were traitors. I will not vouch for the absolute validity, but I have no reason to doubt the implications. We were guests in their home. His wife served us. I was introduced to his sister. As a brother, he was responsible for finding a husband for his sister because their parents are deceased. Every year, he writes me at least once, and every new publication on his little island country, he

sends to me. I sent him a copy of the Quran in English and Arabic because he didn't have one. I have no reason necessarily to send a new testament.

I talked with him for at least 12 hours at our first meeting, first time I ever met the man.

We never disagreed on anything. We discussed everything from abortion to the second coming of Jesus. I would not find members of the Church of God who would agree with me on as many topics as he does because there's some in the Church of God who have had abortions and who don't understand the teaching of the Church. He's not conversant with our teachers.

He's not converted, but he understands human responsibility.

It's one of those unusual situations. He's the kind of man who introduced me, if you please, to the most responsible taxi driver in the island. Now, of course, when he was introduced, I asked for the most responsible, knowledgeable person, and I felt indeed that this was correct after I had known. There wasn't any doubt in my mind. One day we were going through the country and he could not help me because we were going across the island to the other end, and so he sent the most helpful driver he knew. He was a Hindu. He did not choose another Muslim.

My taxi driver Muslim friend is Abdul Aziz. Mr. Gopal is the Hindu.

Mr. Gopal is the kind of man that when I have to leave at 4 a.m. and the post office doesn't open till 8, I will leave him with enough money to buy stamps and to post an important letter I had to for a reason back home here at headquarters. I meet him at 3 o'clock a.m. in the morning near the airport because you have to work at night, you know, when the planes come in. I leave this material that is important, that is in a sense confidential because it did pertain to a proposal and I know I could trust him to mail it when I couldn't. A taxi driver who does this kind of service, a man of another religion chosen as a friend, you see, of a Muslim.

And I always extend my best wishes to both.

I've been invited, in fact, to be a guest in the home of Mr. Gopal, but I have never gone back to see him. It is interesting to have people of different religious views, whether they be Jewish or Catholic or Muslim. I won't mention all the friends we know in Israel where we have more than any. I will just single out one person for those of you who may sometime have a chance. This feast of tabernacles to go there. One of the warmest, most cordial friends you will ever meet in all the world is the honorary secretary. He would never take the title as secretary of the archaeological society there in Israel.

Perhaps it would be of value for some of you who have known Joseph Aviram to mention him in your discussions, if you've ever been at the excavations over there. I hope you've met him.

He is an absolutely humble, cordial, friendly individual. He will always put you at ease.

In fact, that's what a friend does. I'm comfortable around all these people.

A friend makes you feel comfortable. Perhaps you must make them feel comfortable.

I know a photographer whom I've never met. We only correspond. I sent him certain things.

I have known of his work, John Brooke from Massachusetts.

When I introduced him to certain individuals, he once wrote to me, he said, you must be unusual because you attract such unusual friends to you.

I wrote him back and said I was attracted to my friends because that's the real way it should go.

I think we have to say that Jesus was attracted by the personalities of the tax collectors and sinners. He was appalled at the personalities of some of the righteous. He was sorrowful about that.

But if he were willing to die for us while we were yet sinners, he was attracted to us to whom he would assign the responsibility of a church. And as we normally think of a man being attracted to a woman, Christ is attracted to the church and the church is made up of all of us. Or most of us, some of you are not yet baptized. He must in this sense have been attracted by you in some way.

That is important. And that is really what true friendship is all about. You are attracted to someone else. You like to share things with them. You learn when not to share in their mistakes.

One of my acquaintances doesn't always take his life along as company. One time he introduced a friend. She was named Angel. I was with someone else who was working in the radio studio. I had to introduce one of our staff members and he was in a slightly awkward position, but it's never changed my view of the man because that's not where we associate. We associate in another level.

We have people sometimes who do make mistakes. We have individuals who might never have the kind of temptations we do as friends in the world. And we should capitalize on their strengths and health and their weaknesses. Now we can do this and know how to be untainted by the world.

We will be doing what Christ expects of us. And that's following his example.

I wanted to end briefly with a story that many of you know because I have a reason to.

Sometimes you're attracted to the life experience of someone else. And I was to someone appreciably younger. In fact, I'm the age of his father and mother. I was attracted by the story, as no doubt many others were, of Robin Lee Graham. He's the young fellow between 16 and 21 who sailed around the world alone in 1965 to 1970. I finally was able to locate them. He and his wife, Patty, and did meet them in Southern California when they were visiting his parents. We have been friends ever since. I send them certain things of appreciation. They express their appreciation to me as individuals, which means more than anything they might give.

I usually send them an unusual book to their children or something that we publish.

We had a young man in the church in Montana whom I met when I went up to visit Robin and Patty Graham. This young fellow happened to be named Graham too, but no immediate relative.

His name was Mark Graham. And I heard him play in our church in Missoula, Montana.

Some of his own compositions, he has since come to college, been on our staff here, now lives in Ohio. Mark Graham played a, he played then a piano, but he also could play a guitar.

And I asked him if he would set a certain psalm to music, which was really the story of Robin Graham in terms of his adventure and experience with God. Now, if you want to know about the book I have mentioned, *The Boy Who Sailed Around the World Alone*, which is for younger readers, and *Dove*, which was for the general audience, that Robin came to discover God.

They've had their children by natural childbirth. They've sent me a few volumes on their views in terms of ecology and family relations, which I greatly appreciate and can understand and agree with. I've sent them other things. Anyway, I wanted to, in a sense, tell them what I thought of the impact of his adventure on the lives of others. And so I had Mark Graham set to music for the guitar, Psalm 107, verses 23 to 32. Psalm 107, verses 23 to 32, you can read it, some go down to the sea and ships and do business on great waters.

They see the works of the Lord their God and his wonders in the deep.

For he commands and he raises the stormy winds and he lifts up the waves of the ocean.

They mount to the heavens and go down to the depths again.

Their soul is melted for trouble. They reel to and fro and they stagger like a drunken man.

Their wits have left them completely. Then they cry to the Lord in their trouble and he brings them out of their distress. He makes the storm a calm and the waves of it are still. Then they are glad for the quiet. He brings them to their port. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and his wonderful works to the children of men. Let them exalt him in the people in the assembly of the elders. Let them praise him. Mark Graham, a church member, set those words to music and he has copyrighted it and I have enabled him to publish the material that we call he called it the Psalm of the sea. And it is to commemorate the voyage of dove words in the Psalms and music by Mark Graham. And I am the distributor. I did this as a token of appreciation for the moral responsibility of a young man far beyond what most young people would ever have done between ages 16 and 21. A young fellow who gave a night's rest to a young woman who was five years roughly older than he when he was first introduced to her and she had to jump ship because the ship's captain where she was working wanted her to bed down with him as a part of her wages. And she had no place to stay in Fiji where she was introduced to him by a mutual friend. And although there was only one bed on board the little boat dove, I found later when I talked to the co-author who was a South African Derek Gill who helped Robin Lee write his two books, I said is it really true my impression of the story of their life and he said yes. He said that when the young woman who was Patty Rattery at the time was on board the boat because she had no place to stay for about three nights I guess it was that he didn't touch her not even with a finger. And that's why she accepted his invitation to share that boat for a whole month and they never involved each other sexually. When the movie dove was being made an quotation appeared where Robin Lee Graham said I am and the word I won't quote here just the slang word which meant he was interested in sex with her he asked his lawyer whether or not it was possible to have that taken out of the movie and of course he could not do it because it was regarded as only PG. What R and X may stand for are variables circumcision is rated X in the movie G in the Bible.

There are other things rated X in the movie that are G in the Bible and things rated PG that are rated X in the Bible profanity murder and illicit sex it's a tragedy but I did appreciate what Mark Graham did and I have here what amounts to a six page is one page of insets I thought what I would do this evening is a conclusion since they are friends if any of you play the guitar I have a hundred copies roughly here I'm not asking you if you don't play to take one but if you have friends who do and who would like to have a copy of this there's nothing sentimental it is a good composition and you know you can always improvise and vary it to your needs Mark I think has done very well in conveying the mood of a story that tells something of the life of Robin Graham who discovered God and had to call on him in the Indian Ocean when he had no one else to turn to so I will in closing say that over here since we have this well in front of us which is not usual here for the study that if any of you would like to have a copy they are it's free it's my wife's lunch money I haven't mentioned it to her but I can do things when she's at home that I wouldn't do here see anyway it is available and if you have friends who would like to share in it that's fine I do feel that it's one way of telling two young people who are morally responsible what I think young people ought to be like and what I would want my life to be like and I'm thankful in many ways of parallels without adventure I hope that as we end the study tonight you will give some thoughts to how I have illustrated the kind of people that I would choose to remember in my life's experience Mr. Armstrong would have a host of others whom he

mentions from time to time and is personal I do not deny that some of my friends have problems I have some who may drink too much I have some who would never drink and will wait to the resurrection before they would we have individuals who might or might not be absolutely loyal to their wife I told you the first man the reason I mentioned the shrimp and in every other way absolutely loyal person who would never take another man's wife or another woman these are variable I do not judge their weaknesses I appreciate their strengths seek to avoid their problems and hope that we may mutually share in helping each other and if you can do that in your school relationship those who are new some of you have parents here or those of you who are regularly in the church and meet new people in our auditorium am and pm congregation you will have achieved what life is really all about because sooner or later you're going to ultimately help in judging those who are not now called and we're all going to be called to the same family so we must avoid the pitfalls of bad friendships and learn to cultivate good friendships they do not have to be converted they do not have to be unblemished you must remain unblemished