

Take-Home for Session 5: A Faithful Friend Is a Sturdy Shelter

If You Come Forward to Serve: An Inductive Study of Sirach

What We Found

- Ben Sira's circles: warm peace with many, tested trust with few, one-in-a-thousand advisers (6:6-7). Slow trust is how deep trust becomes possible.
- Counterfeit friends love your assets, not you, and vanish in the day of trouble (6:8-13): trouble is friendship's testing fire, the same furnace logic as 2:5.
- A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter, a treasure, an elixir of life, and those who fear the Lord will find him, because character aimed at God converges with character aimed at God (6:14-17). Jonathan proved it at the cost of a throne.
- Jesus fulfills the whole teaching: no longer servants but friends, and greater love has no one than to lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13-15).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Aelred of Rievaulx

The twelfth-century Cistercian wrote the Church's classic treatise on the subject, *Spiritual Friendship*, teaching that true friendship must begin in Christ, continue in Christ, and be perfected in Christ. He dared to gloss St. John: he who abides in friendship abides in God, and God in him, because genuine friendship is a school of charity and a foretaste of heaven.

Spiritual Friendship, Books I and III (paraphrased)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas defines charity itself as a certain friendship of man with God, grounded in God sharing his own happiness with us (q. 23, a. 1), and ranks charity the most excellent of the virtues (a. 6). If charity is friendship with God, then human friendships lived in grace become, so to speak, apprenticeships in it: which is why the saints treat friendship as serious spiritual business rather than social garnish.

Summa Theologiae II-II, q. 23, aa. 1 and 6 (paraphrased, with application)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. John Bosco

The great friend of the young told his boys, in his famous Letter from Rome, that it is not enough to love the young: they must know that they are loved. His Preventive System, built on reason, religion, and loving-kindness, formed saints in a family atmosphere of holy friendship: a companion, in his school, was someone who helped you toward heaven.

Letter from Rome, 10 May 1884, and the Preventive System writings (paraphrased)

Live It This Week

- Do one act of day-of-trouble friendship this week: show up, uninvited if necessary, for a friend who is in the battle.
- Write a short note (paper, not text, if you can) to one faithful friend naming specifically what their friendship has been to you: shelter, treasure, or medicine.
- Pray for your three closest friends by name each day this week, and ask the Lord to direct your friendship aright.

Scripture Memory Verse

"A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter: he that has found one has found a treasure." (**Sirach 6:14**)

Before Next Session

Read Sirach 4:1-10 and Sirach 31:1-11, in that order.

Catechism References

CCC 2347; CCC 1829