

# What a God-Given Covenant Friend Really Looks Like

False friends. That was the topic of two of my recent columns. Those columns—"5 Ways to Recognize False Friends" and "5 More Ways to Recognize False Friends"—struck a nerve with our readers. It seems many Christians have friends who stab them in the back, climb over them for opportunity, and run the other direction when trouble comes.

A friend of mine, Jennifer Eivaz, suggested I look at the other side of the coin: What are the characteristics of a true covenant friend? What does it take to be a good pal? What does the Bible say about real friendships? I thought her suggestion was brilliant.

Although I don't expect this article to get the tens of thousands of shares the last two did, I feel it's important to dive deeper into the issue because we can probably all be better friends. With that in mind:

Listen to Jennifer's podcast on this topic: [What a True Covenant Friend Looks Like](#).

**A true covenant friend sticks closer than a brother:** That's according to Proverbs 18:24: "A man who has friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." What exactly, though, does that mean? How does a friend stick closer than a brother? You would expect your family to stand with you in a trial, but true friends sometimes show up when family can't or won't, defying the bonds of nature. True friends are like family, and often even closer than family. Proverbs 17:1 also speaks to his bond.

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**A true covenant friend makes sacrifices when necessary:** John 15:13 says " Greater love has no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends." True covenant friends will make sacrifices to help you. Merriam-Webster defines sacrifice as "the act of giving up something that you want to keep, especially in order to get or do something else or to help someone." You may not have to literally lay your life down, but you may have to sacrifice time, money and even your own needs at times to help a friend.

**A true covenant friend will stand up for you and fight alongside you:** In 1 Samuel 18-20, Saul tried to kill David a dozen times. Jonathan, Saul's son, had a covenant relationship with David and stood with him through the assaults. Even though Jonathan was next in line for the throne of Israel, he helped David escape his father's wrath (1 Sam. 20). That's a self-sacrificing friend.

**A true covenant friend will tell you what nobody else will:** Proverbs 27:6 says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Friends should lift you up, but sometimes the Lord will use them to help you root out wrong behaviors and mindsets. Of course, they should do it in love and not with accusations.

**A true covenant friend will get into agreement with you:** Amos 3:3 says, "Do two people walk together, if they have not agreed?" That doesn't mean that true friends will agree on every little thing, but it does mean that they won't break relationship over disagreements. You've heard it said, "We'll agree to disagree." True friends find agreement.

**A true covenant friend is someone you can trust with anything:** Although we must ultimately put our trust in God over man, trust is the cornerstone of every relationship. Once violated, trust can be difficult to earn back. True friends have tight lips, have your back and have the integrity not to share your personal life with others or break your boundaries. True

friends are consistent and don't merely say the words but do the actions to back them up.

**A true covenant friend walks in love, which includes forgiveness:** A true friend believes in you, stands by you and sticks out the tough times in the relationship. Nobody's perfect, and we're all growing in the fruit of the Spirit, but a true friend treats the relationship with 1 Corinthians 4:8 in mind: "Love suffers long and is kind; love envies not; love flaunts not itself and is not puffed up, does not behave itself improperly, seeks not its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails."

This is not an exhaustive list, but it's a good place to start.

My dad always told me this: At the end of your life, you can count your true covenant friends on one hand. I'm in my mid-40s now, and I am finding that to be true. I've had a lot of friends over the course of my life but true covenant friends are few and far between.

Treasure them like gold. Cherish them with all of your heart. Respect and honor them at all times. You can't make a true covenant friendship happen but you can ask God for them—and you can work on being the best friend you can possibly be.