

Friendship Jesus-Style ->Pt. 3 True friends help carry each others burdens

We're in an series on the important topic of friends & friendship. So far, we learned that true friends are hopeful, reassuring, encouraging, comforting, patient, truthful, forgiving, faithful, loyal, humble, serving & loving. True/real friends make us better people. Finally, true/real friends stick around in tough times; they are faithful, loyal, patient, serving and display courage, perseverance and love. This week we're going to look at another aspect of friendship: true friends help carry each others burdens.

One of the greatest examples of this is in the *Lord of the Rings* (LOTR) movie trilogy. This movie series is taken from 20th-century English author J.R.R. Tolkien's groundbreaking fantasy novels & chronicles the story of a group of brave band of nine adventurers tasked with the virtually impossible job: destroying the evil 'ring of power' in Mount Doom at the center of Mordor, the seat of evil in "Middle Earth". The main characters are two hobbits (or halflings), known as Frodo and Sam. The ring of power is a terrible burden to carry & it infects its bearer with evil, eventually transforming them into someone of pure evil. (*Fun Fact: Tolkien was a Christian author; the ring in LOTR represents the power of sin that takes over & destroys all who put it on.*) Because Frodo is so pure & innocent, he volunteers to carry the ring to Mordor, a mission of certain death. Even when Frodo, has to leave his comrades, Sam is the faithful friend & stays with Frodo to help him make it. Sam faithfully protects Frodo from various dangers like the scheming Golem (a creature warped by the Ring who constantly tries to steal it back), a giant spider & orcs. But at the very foot of Mount Doom, just when success is within Frodo's grasp, he gives us. Enter Sam, who isn't allowed to touch or carry the Ring, but he states, "I can carry you!". Sam bravely & doggedly carries Frodo to the entrance to the volcanic so Frodo can complete the mission.

We're supposed to be there for our friends in tough times, as we learned last week. But more than just being there for them, we're supposed to help them carry their burdens. That's what a true friend does, they help us carry our burdens. The Bible says, "Carry each other's burdens..." (Gal 6:2a). So what's a burden? Well, it's anything that is weighing you down: a worry, a fear, a looming task, a challenge, a struggle, a habit, a sin pattern, a loss, etc. These all can weigh people down. A true friend helps his or her friends carry their personal burdens. The help lighten the load, just like Sam did for Frodo.

That's what Jesus, our ultimate friend does. He carries our load. First, He carried the load of our sin on Himself when He was crucified (Is 53:12; 1Pt 2:24). Talk about carrying our burden! This amazing work of Jesus Christ alone saves us from the eternal penalty of our sin & won us the victory of eternal life in heaven! Wow! And our ultimate friend Jesus continues to offer to carry our life's burdens. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let Me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light" (Mt 11:28-30). When you trust in Jesus, He is there in the struggles, worried, challenges, burdens & losses to help you carry the weight of your life. Phil 4:13 says, "For I can do all things through Jesus Christ who gives me strength." Wow, do you hear that! We can do *all things* with Jesus Christ, King of Kings & Lord of All helping us, strengthening us & carrying our burdens. Jesus isn't some aloof god sitting in a cloud in Heaven; He's there to help you in all things!

And that's what we're supposed to do for our friends: do good & carry each others life burdens. This is an active, helping & alive kind of friendship. The opposite is to do nothing for your friends & their burdens. But that's not true friendship- that's an anti-Christ way of living. Gal 6:7b says, "You will always harvest what you plant." In friendship, if you plant seeds of selfishness, self-focus or lack of caring, you'll get more of that in return in your life. So, folks let's be the kind of friends that Jesus is to us. Let's get involved in helping carry our friends' burdens (Gal 6:2). Take an active interest in doing good in their lives. So, *Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions* (1Jn 3:18). Give your friends a listening ear, give them the godly advice they need, pray for them, encourage them, help them to succeed, help them in their struggles, comfort them in their times of pain & loss, and shine the light of Jesus in their lives. There's a 3-way "harvest of blessings" in it when you help your friends: you bless them, God is blessed & He blesses you to. Gal 6:9-10 says "So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith. Your Christians here tonight represent the Body of Jesus. Be the hands & feet of Jesus to your friends, be the light of the world to them & God will get the glory (Mt5:16)

BIBLE VERSES

1Pt 2:24 He [Jesus] personally carried our sins in His body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By His wounds you are healed.

Mt 11:28-30 Jesus said, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let Me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light"

Gal 6:2 Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

1Jn 3:18 Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

Gal 6:9-10 So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to those in the family of faith.

Mt 5:16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Sam carried his friend Frodo in *Lord of the Rings*. Name some other movies where friends helped carried each others burdens.
2. Burdens exist in many areas: physical, emotional, spiritual, relational, etc. Name some burdens your friends are carrying & discuss how these burdens affecting their lives?
3. Read 1Pt 2:24 & Mt 11:28-30. Jesus, our ultimate friend, came to carry our burdens. How can Jesus help your friends' burdens?
- 4a. Read Gal 6:2 & 1Jn 3:18. As children of God thru Jesus, what can we *specifically* do to help our friends carry their burdens?
- 4b. Read Gal 6:9-10 & Mt 5:16. What amazing things could happen if we truly helped our friends carry their burdens?
5. Is anything holding you back from being a friend like Jesus or Sam who helps their friends carry their burdens?

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear Jesus, thank You for carrying the massive weight of our sin on Your shoulders when You died for us on the cross. Thank You for taking away the burden of sin, guilt, shame & death. Thank You for continuing to help us carry our life's burdens. Lord, help us to be the kind of friend like You are & like Sam was to Frodo in *Lord of the Rings*. Help us to actively help our friends carry their burdens. Help us to be Your light to them. We pray all this in Your Name, Jesus. Amen!