



Just Friends

As we approach Christmas (the decorations and Advent calendars have been in the shops for months!), we arrive at the party season. We can look forward to spending time with friends, colleagues, family, or even complete strangers. But among them there may be some people you would rather avoid. They are hard work, they don't do anything for you: they are not your friends.

What are friends for?

If you believe the sociologists, friends are like-minded people we seek to fulfil our own needs. But if they are disloyal or annoying, or start to drag you down, you should drop them. Do you agree? To what extent are your friendships about what you can get?

Are you someone your friends can rely on when their life gets tough? I think we all feel that there are limits, and we are justified at drawing the line somewhere. At the very least, we want equal friendships.

Technology

It is surprising how many 'friends' you can have without real friendship. Technology is great for keeping in touch, but it requires very little

commitment, and it is easy to withdraw. It gives the illusion of companionship with few demands—but on the other hand can maintain contact. Do you use it to deepen your friendships, or have they all become more trivial?

Greater love...

The Remembrance Day anniversary reminds me of those words of Jesus: "Greater love has no man than this: that he lays down his life for his friends.." Those who died in the wars of the last century showed at the very least great loyalty to their country, even if few of us who now benefit can say we were their friends. But it is with good reason this is described as 'the ultimate sacrifice'.

And it is all the more amazing in the context of Jesus' death for us. I find it mind-blowing that Jesus both needed friends—after all, he chose 12 disciples to be with him, to help and encourage him—and he also embodies the pinnacle of self-giving friendship: he is always there for us, forgiving us when we let him down, but wanting us to share his interests and for him to be involved with our lives. It is neither an equal nor a trivial friendship.



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