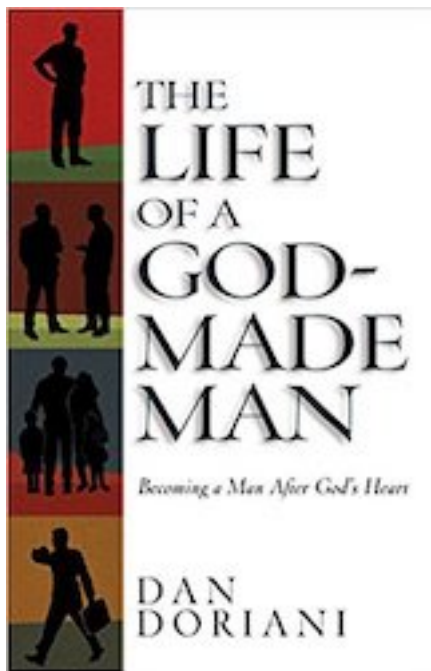


## Notes on The Life of a God-made Man Chapter 6

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This chapter is on friends and friendship. Merriam-webster defines friend as one attached to another by affection or esteem and a favored companion.

Hebrew word for friend is ra'ah [Gen38:12], which is also used for neighbor and companion. The Greek word is philos used in [Lk 11:8] and in few places other place, the word hetairos [Mat26:50] is used to denote comrade, partner.

Further [Sng 5:16] talks of lover as a friend, while in [James2:23], Abraham is called the friend of God, as he believed in God and that was imputed onto him as righteousness.

Here then are some highlights of the chapter -

Agape and philos are two very different kinds of love the reaches broad and deep, based on divine and human origins of the feelings, respectively

Friends in church can be an oxymoron due to exclusivity and focus on inclusivity, which tends to make churches neglect mere friendship.

The value of friendship comes from [Ecc4:9-12]

- Work focusing on effectiveness
- Help in time of need
- Presence in time of loneliness and enui
- Strength in times of need when life deals us hard blows

Men (friends) can help men ensure marriage doesnt become an idol

True friends are not sycophants but inflict creative discomfort or constructive misery, so its not feel good all the time.

Ideal friendship is God-centered. Hence its not like Nike christianity to keep lists or 5-steps to friendship, but to be, embodying and grounding in the nature of God, the archetypal Friend.

This means that I cant be a friend if I am not a godly or atleast trying to be a friend of God. *Our friendship with God, doesnt rely on our faithfulness, but His.*

Friendships today are one-dimensional based on the compartment of life. Our goal has to be to integrate it. One-dimension doesnt yield the helpful presence or the self-disclosure needed in God-centered friendship. This leads to a 2/2 matrix again of the 4 types of friendship -

- Good old boys where there is presence without self-disclosure
- One-point friends where both are limited
- Leader/follower where one discloses and other gives help
- Genuine friends where both are present

As men, we need to establish boundaries in female friendships. One way to do it is using the presence of your wife or the woman's husband.

I realized early on, friendship took a lot of investment. Hence I was nice to a lot of people but never really invested in friendships. I also saw in some of my uncles what bad friends can do to their lives. The few friends I had I made it situational or seasonal. I also was very selfish and wanted something out of every *friend*, so kept it very transactional.

As I changed seasons in my life, due to something I did (out of shame) or where I was in life (due to my achievements), I transitioned my *friends*. Not having friends didnt bother me.

This became a problem when I got married, and couldnt build a friendship with my wife - as I said before it was all eros with a little agape.

Since I hadnt built meaningful friendships, although I was really nice to everyone I came across, it meant I didnt know how to build that part of our marriage without becoming a Santa Claus or Adonis.

Couple this with the good-provider model, which pushed me out to travel and achieve by working long hours, away from home - what I thought I needed to do to provide for my family, caused lack of time to build meaningful relations other than at work. There were plenty of time when I have been chided by my bride (rightly) that I cared more for my co-workers and employees than our family. I would get angry and not understand - why she couldnt see all the hard work I was putting in 100s of miles away.

This also meant, the weekends were taken by doing family things. For the longest time we as a family didnt have friends. This was primarily due to the fact that as a head of my house, I was a bad example both from my lackadasical attitude on friendships and the fact that I knew it required lots of time that I didnt have.

As I became a believer in Fall of 2017, I started to forge new bonds with men that I didnt know was possible from casual chat periodically to weekly breakfasts and coffee and other forms of fellowship. I wanted to know my brothers in Christ. This was good initially, until I realized that I was prioritizing my new found relations over my wife and kids. There was one ocassion, when I went to bed early as I had a 6:30 coffee meeting with a brother and choose sleep over not connecting and praying with my wife. She called me to carpet, few days later.

I had to take a step back and look at my time as a whole and realize that I had to dedicate to my family. Once I balanced out, cutting out some waste and streamling some of my work efforts, I now feel like I can manage the various aspects a bit better. I still have to contend with my mobility around work - being gone weeks at a time (missed men's study for the 5 weeks in a row, until I made it a point to not travel Wednesdays for the last few weeks). This means that I need to make the best use of time when I am working from home - both to tend to my family and to my friends.

The other area that I saw a huge change was in how I started looking at other women. I started to see them as daughters, sisters or grand-saughters, which I thought was never possible for a lecher like me. In my pagan days, the way I dealt with other women were to just ignore them, as I didnt want to loose my control of my wandering eyes or worse yet look at them lustfully. I respected my wife too much to do that. Hence I was always awkward around other women.

After I become a believer, I started to see not only other women in Christ in a sister/daughter kind of way, but most girls and ladies outside of church, as that

as well. This came both in desiring my wife more - building a better relation with her, praying with her, as well as with seeing how God had created them.

As I forge new relationships in the Church, it has become apparent to me that I can balance agape with philia. It will require time and a continual renewing of my heart. For those that I don't know better or feel like I have nothing in common, I pray for them or include them in my prayers. It also means that I can open up to men more as we build stronger bonds. I have learnt more about me over many a coffee or breakfast with other men in church. This has helped me to ask God to work in areas of my heart that needs more surgery.

I still struggle with judging my friends, trivializing what they say at times and not paying attention as in not being present. But as I forge a better relation with my God and my wife, it has started to become a bit easier.

The other thing I decided to do was to open our house to college students and singles. My wife and I prayed, talked this through and decided to open our house every Friday evening for a meal and bible reading. This meant that I was forging relations as part with my family and not an individualistic kind. This also helped to forge bonds with women and men alike, as my wife was present as were my sons.

These Friday fellowships have grown in my heart as I am able to build relation in Christ with few men that otherwise might be impossible given their work schedule or my availability to just do 1-1s.

In all its neat to see how Lord has put diverse men in my life through GBC and the larger Christian network, those I not only respect, but can call some my friends.

I still have a long way to go, as I am still a babe, but I feel like I am figuring this friend thing out, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.