

# Who Are Your Friends?

by Anton Bosch

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*We should befriend unbelievers and shun sinning believers, not the other way around, in order to win them to Christ and promote repentance.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 5:9

**Topics:** "Evangelism", "Fellowship"

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## Description

Anton Bosch challenges the common belief among Christians that they should only be friends with believers and shun unbelievers. He emphasizes the importance of befriending unbelievers to impact them for Christ, following the example of Jesus who befriended sinners. Bosch highlights the need to find support, love, and companionship within the Body of Christ while reaching out to the lost with love and compassion. He also addresses the issue of fellowshiping with unrepentant Christians who live in sin, contrasting it with the biblical instruction to have fellowship with unbelievers who need to experience Christ's love.

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## Transcript

"As Christians we should not be friends with unbelievers while remaining loyal to our "brothers" no matter what they do". That is the view of many Christians. But is that correct?

It seems pretty obvious that we need to be friends with Christians and shun those who are not. For centuries Christians have shut themselves into their monasteries and churches for fear of being contaminated by the world. Some groups have even required that their members turn away from unsaved family. These rules are sometimes unspoken, yet real, while at other times the rules are clearly spelled out and the consequences of "fraternizing with the enemy" are excommunication.

I agree, that we should not have friendships that are detrimental to our walk with the Lord. Many who come out of gangs and various addictions must shun their former friends for fear that they will be dragged back into their former lifestyle. Please don't use this article as an excuse to associate with those who will pull you back into the mud.

But if we are only going to be friends with Christians, how are we going to impact the lost for Christ? We cannot simply do that by preaching at them. How will they believe our message if we have not won their confidence? And what does the Bible have to say about it?

The Pharisees would not even touch something that had been touched by a Gentile and had strict rules about eating or even associating with sinners. This was based on their feeling of superiority and it gave them a false sense of their own righteousness. It was a great shock to their system when Jesus befriended the very people they shunned. "As Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Matthew 9:10-11).

If Jesus was the friend of the sinners, should we not be? How is it that we think so highly of ourselves as being so elevated above those around us that we cannot befriend them? I do not believe that we are to find our support, love and companionship with the unbelievers. That is what the Body of Christ is for - we fellowship and find our support, encouragement and love in the church while being a friend to the sinner, unloved and lonely. It is truly sad when Christians have to turn to the world for support because they do not find it in the church. Thus we should be strengthened by our friendships in the church so that we can go out and befriend the unbelievers.

On the other hand we should not fellowship with so-called Christians who live in unrepentant sin. And here lies the problem, we shun unbelievers because they are sinners and we fellowship with Christians who do the same stuff when the Bible requires the exact opposite!

"I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner - not even to eat with such a person." (1Corinthians 5:9-11). Look at these verses again. Paul is telling us that we are not to have fellowship with those who are called brothers who do these things but we should have fellowship with unbelievers who do the same things. (note that one of the things that should be a reason to break fellowship is if the brother is covetous - that includes a vast majority of modern Christians!).

In case you think I am reading into these verses look at 1Corinthians 10:27 "If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake.". This says clearly that if the believer wants to attend a pagan banquet with a bunch of unbelievers, he should go. At the same time Matthew 18:17, Romans 16:17, 2Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 1Timothy 6:5 and 2John 1:10 call for us to have nothing to do with so-called believers who do not repent when they sin.

So, here is the problem. Most Christians do the exact opposite: They shun unbelievers who should be loved and remain in fellowship with believers who should be shunned. No wonder our unsaved neighbors don't want our Jesus and no wonder the church has become tolerant and supportive of the grossest kinds of sin. We have it all back to front.

Unbelievers need to be won to Christ by our love for them and sinning believers should be shamed to repentance by being rejected. But when we refuse to give unbelievers the time of day, they soon learn that we have nothing to offer except our arrogance. When we refuse to shun sinning believers, they also soon learn that their behavior is acceptable, and worse, other believers begin to do the same things since such behavior is endorsed.

Allow me to encourage you to find ways to befriend a few of the many unbelievers around you. I am not asking you to do things and go to places with them that are clearly wrong. There are many ways in which we can be friends with people without compromising our faith - yes you may have to put your scruples aside and put up with some course behavior and you may have to come down from your pedestal to meet them at their level - but that is what Jesus did.

Secondly I want to challenge you to apply Matthew 18:15-20 in your relationships with brothers.

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