

EXCERPT



**Enduring Friendship**  
*Sticking Together in an Age of Unfriending*

March 12, 2024 | \$20, 160 pages, casebound | 978-1-5140-0844-7

Friendships are difficult. When conflicts and differences over serious issues divide us, it's easy to give up on people and just walk away. Bryan Loritts mines the book of Philemon for insights into how, with God's work and steadfast love, even the most painful relationships that have ruptured can be transformed into friendships that endure.

## "We Were Made for Relationships."

In the creation account, God surveys his work and exhales in joyous satisfaction, "It's good." Only once does he pronounce, "Not good," and that's when Adam is alone.

To be human is to have an innate need to be in oneness with others. Let's look at this another way. Think of your most frustrating moments in life. More often than not, they are related to some relational breakdown. A dad who walked out on you. A mother who was impossible to please. A person you trusted who took advantage of you. Someone you tried to play tennis with who never returned your serve. An individual you could have been friends with until they lied or gossiped about you. I could go on.

With enough of these slights over time, we lose our will to fight for friendship. We tell ourselves it's not worth the trouble and settle into the status quo of shallow interactions with others. But another part of us won't stop longing for the trouble. This yin and yang of the human condition is what it means to be created in the image of God. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit formed their own triad of "I will. I did."—this is what theologians call the Trinity. Life, therefore, is most frustrating when we live in isolation and most meaningful when we travel with our tribe of "I will. I did."

Read any study on human satisfaction and you will see the paramount role of relationships with others. And yet, so many of us readily exchange friendship and community for success and achievement, only to conclude there is no amount of success that can satiate our drive for fulfillment or happiness. I know firsthand. Like most, I spent my twenties and thirties on a sojourn up Mount Significance. By twenty-five I had accrued two degrees. In my thirties I began doctoral studies. Before forty I had written three books.

On my fortieth birthday, I sat out on a patio overlooking a golf course, refreshed by the cool breeze and determined to spend the second half of my life scaling a different mountain. I resolved to be more intentional and dedicated to cultivating friendships with those I deemed could be my "I will. I did." Sure, I had collected beyond my fair share of acquaintances and associates, but I was after more. So I began to think about what a friend should be. While a definition eluded me, a picture of what I was hungry for began to emerge. I was after a happy few who would make a shared treaty with me, and I with them.

It's been said home is the place where they have to let you in. While it's a reach to say I'm friends with each of my family members, our relationships thrive because we share a mutual, understood responsibility for one another. This is what the Greek philosopher Aristotle meant more than two thousand years ago when he described the "friendship ladder."

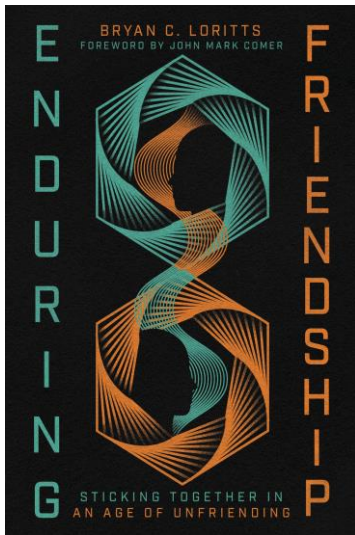


Tara Burns, print and online publicity  
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or [tburns@ivpress.com](mailto:tburns@ivpress.com)

Krista Clayton, author interviews  
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or [kclayton@ivpress.com](mailto:kclayton@ivpress.com)



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*“Let’s face it, the statistics are not good about grownups, especially men, and their ability to maintain close friendships outside their family. Bryan Loritts confronts this reality with a book-length antidote to a growing culture of friendless lives. His blunt honesty, practical remedy, biblical fidelity, and heart of charity will leave you hopeful that indeed, friendships new and old can endure.”*

—**Barry H. Corey**, president of Biola University and author of *Love Kindness: Discovering the Power of a Forgotten Christian Virtue*

Some friendships are based on utility and pleasure; they are transactional in nature and tend to be very thin and short-lived. Many successful people complain about loneliness and the fatigue of experiencing relationships gone south because others have cozied up to them based on what they bring to the table. Some women sigh at being esteemed solely for their looks. There are also men put off by some women’s perceived “gold digging” motives, which reduce them to what they produce. These transactional relationships supersede romance.

At the highest levels of friendship—what we might call our “I will. I did.”—Aristotle describes “perfect friendship” as a shared commitment to one another’s well-being based on an ethic outside either party. Aristotle is referencing a kind of friendship based on a mutual appreciation of values. Unlike utility friendships which lack depth, this “perfect” friendship moves beyond a person’s performance and instead values them for who they are. Utilitarian friendships are thin and temporal, while value driven friendships are thick and enduring. I want to not only receive but also give this kind of friendship.

In the Christian faith, Jesus calls his followers “friends” (John 15:15-17). This description came days before his crucifixion, when he committed the ultimate act of friendship. His disciples throughout history firmly believe that friendship with Jesus fights against the temporal nature of most relationships and spans beyond the grave into eternity. With his costly sacrifice, Jesus let it be known, “I will. I did.”

Any social science study will tell you relationships are key to happiness and well-being. But there’s more. Friendship isn’t just an elective in the course of life, it’s required.

—adaptation from the introduction, “ ‘I Will’ to ‘I Did’ ”



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BIO



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*"Friendships are difficult to navigate; friendships among believers in Christ are no less difficult. They may even be more difficult as there is a level of accountability built into that friendship based on a mutual desire to live out the mandate to be like Christ. Dr. Loritts masterfully and lovingly leads us by way of careful exegesis through the powerful letter of Paul to Philemon."*

—**Jody Moore**, lead pastor of Transformation Church-Inland Empire in Chino, California

## **Pastor and Multibook Author Serving the Multiethnic Church**

*"It's one thing to write a book about friendship and another thing to be the type of friend you're writing about. What comes through on these pages is penned by a man who practices what he preaches. I speak from experience as I count Bryan Loritts as one of my most cherished friends. And here's the truth: what you hold in your hands can transform your life. But let me warn you, this isn't the kind of book you read once and cross off the list. No, this book will bore into your very being and invite you into the depth of what true biblical friendship looks like. Loritts leverages the New Testament book of Philemon as his resource to challenge you to be a better friend. So buckle up and get ready to read the best book I've ever read on friendship!"*

—**Bobby Conway**, author, pastor, and radio host

**BRYAN LORITTS** (DMin, Liberty University) is the teaching pastor at The Summit Church. An award-winning author of eight books, Loritts has spent the bulk of his ministry serving and resourcing the multiethnic church. He cofounded Fellowship Memphis in 2003 and serves as the President of The Kainos Movement, an organization committed to seeing the multiethnic church become the new normal.

His ministry takes him across the globe annually, as he speaks at conferences, churches, and retreats. Loritts has been a featured speaker for Catalyst and the Global Leadership Summit.

Currently, he serves on the board of Biola University and is a regular visiting professor at Grimke Seminary. He is also the Vice President of Regions for the Send Network, the church planting arm of the SBC, where he is responsible for training church planters in multiethnic church planting.

Follow Bryan on Twitter: @DrLoritts  
Follow him on Instagram: @Loritts  
Find him on Facebook: Bryan Loritts  
Visit his website at [BryanLoritts.com](http://BryanLoritts.com)



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