**BETTER TOGETHER** in 2022

September 4, 2022

Dr. Jerry Edmonson, *Founding and* *Lead Pastor*

**Into The Mystery**

**The Mystery Anam Cara**

John 16:7-11



The Mayo Clinic writes … Friends **prevent isolation and loneliness and give you a chance to offer needed companionship**, too. Friends can also: Increase your sense of belonging and purpose. Boost your happiness and reduce your stress.

**Friend** - a person you know well and regard with affection and trust

In a report published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, University of Kansas, Associate Professor of Communication Studies Jeffrey Hall … estimated it takes between 40 and 60 hours to form a casual friendship, 80-100 hours to transition to being a friend, and more than 200 hours together to become good friends. He says in his study …

*You can’t snap your fingers and make a friend.* ***Maintaining close relationships is the most important work we do in our lives*** *— most people on their deathbeds agree.* Jeffrey Hall, *Associate Professor of Communication Studies, University of Kansas*

Developing close friendships is hard **work** and it takes **time**.

*Wishing to be friends is quick work, but friendship is a slow ripening fruit.* Aristotle

But in the ancient world of early Celtic Christianity, there developed a word for a type of friend that was close, trusted, loved and present in one’s life. **They were called an Anam Cara.**

***Anam*** is the Gaelic word for soul and **Cara** is the word for friend. So anam cara in the Celtic world was the “**soul friend**.”

*Go forth and eat nothing until you get a soul-friend, for anyone without a soul-friend is like a body without a head; is like the water of a polluted lake, neither good for drinking nor for washing. That is the person without a soul-friend.*  Saint Brigid, Irish Nun who in died 525 A.D.

Jesus showed us how to be a **soul** **friend**.

*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.* ***You are my friends*** *if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but* ***I have called you friends,*** *for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.* John 15:13–15

*… he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”* Hebrews 13:5b–6

We all need a **soul** **friend**.

**“An *anam cara* provides a sacred type of hospitality into whose care you arrive** simply as you are, without mask or pretention. Sitting at the hearth fire of this intentional soul friendship you are at home – **you belong** – and are able to take off your shoes and lay everything on the table. You fully rest. All parts of you are welcome, and all parts of you are served with presence, love, truth and wisdom.”

*Friendship is a deep oneness that develops when two people, speaking the truth in love to one another, journey together to the same horizon.* Tim Keller

*Faithful are the* ***wounds of a friend****; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.*  Proverbs 27:6

*Like a surgeon, friends cut you in order to heal you.*  Tim Keller

*A* ***friend loves at all times****, and* ***a brother is born for adversity****.* Proverbs 17:17

*A friend is someone who knows all about you and still loves you.* Elbert Hubbard

*A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is* ***a friend who sticks closer than a brother****.* Proverbs 18:24

John O’Donohue, in his book *Anam Cara* writes

*In the caring, loving presence of an Anam Cara/Soul Friend, you are understood as you are without mask or pretension. The superficial, half-truths of social acquaintance fall away, you can be as you really are. Love allows understanding to dawn … Where you are understood, you are home … when you really feel understood, you feel free to release yourself into the trust of the other. …* ***Friendship is the nature of God****. This art of belonging awakens and fosters a deep and special companionship.* John O’Donohue, *Anam Cara*

A biblical example of a **Soul Friendship** is the friendship between David and Jonathan.

*As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul,* ***the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David****, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.* 1 Samuel 18:1

*And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father’s house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And* ***Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt****. And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul’s servants.* 1 Samuel 18:2–5

**Developing and Growing an Anam Cara - Soul Friendship**

Cultivate your **soul** **friendship** with Jesus as a first priority.

*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit,* ***for apart from me you can do nothing****.* John 15:5

Go deep in spiritual **encouragement** with your soul friend.

*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.* 1 Thessalonians 5:11

*[Spiritual friendship] is eagerly helping one another know, serve, love, and resemble God in deeper and deeper ways.* Tim Keller

Help your soul friend through **hard** times.

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!* Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

*Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.*  Helen Keller

Pray for your soul **friend**.

***I am praying for them.*** *… I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,* ***that they may all be one****, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that* ***they also may be in us****, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* John 17:9, 20-21

*For this reason* ***I bow my knees*** *before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be* ***strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being****, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you,* ***being rooted and grounded in love****, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and* ***to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge****, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:14–21*

Be a good **listener** for your soul friend.

*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.* Proverbs 12:15

*A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.* Proverbs 18:2

*… a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;* Ecclesiastes 3:7

*True friendship comes when the silence between two people is comfortable.*  David Tyson

Forgive your friends when they **mess** up.

*bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.* Colossians 3:13

Draw near to Christ and ask Him to show you His love and how to truly be a soul friend to another.