

Two paths, two aims, but what kind of friend?

**Have We not given him two eyes...and shown him the two highways
(Surat al-Balad; 8,10)**



All human beings seek a *true friend*. They look for people to share their happiness with, who will support them in times of trouble, who will show them solutions when they can find none, who will love them unconditionally, be loyal to them, protect them, treat their errors gently, and who will not abandon them when they are ill, in the same way that they will not abandon them when they are healthy, or when they grow old.

However, a person has two ways of finding such a friend. One of these is the way of the Compassionate One, a requirement of Qur'anic moral values and the path chosen by believers who seek solely the approval of Allah. The other is the way of friends who seek to serve only their worldly interests, a path based on advantage. In this article, in which we look at the reasons underlying these two states of affairs, we reveal clear differences between the powerful bonds in relationships between believers and relationships between non-believers based only on worldly gain.

Friendship that attaches importance to moral values: In order to be a *true friend*, a person must love someone else *solely for their proper moral values*. These are a person's *fear and love of Allah, faith, sincerity and takwa*. Only friendships built upon these values are permanent. The friendship of people with such elevated moral values achieves an unshakeable nature.

A never-ending friendship: There can be no doubt that the *true friend* that everyone feels the need for and seeks is a great blessing. A true friend is someone who will be there for a person in good times and bad, who unconditionally wishes the same for his friend as he wishes for himself, who wants him to be at least as happy and as well as he wishes himself to be. He is someone who avoids such emotions as jealousy, intolerance and rivalry, who loves the other party sincerely and always wants the best for him.

A friendship aimed at the Hereafter: The precondition for being a true friend is to aim for the other party's happiness in this world and in the Hereafter. One important attribute of such a friendship is speaking honestly and openly, telling the other party of any deficiencies of faith, and affectionately showing him ways by which these can be remedied. Only a true friend who truly loves the other person can behave in this way.

A friendship based on love and respect: In an environment where people live by Qur'anic morality, fear of and faith in Allah are values whereby people can truly feel love and respect for one another. The love, trust and loyalty that believers feel for one another is shaped totally in accordance with the endeavors they make on the path of Allah. A believer who uses all he possesses for good in order to gain the approval of Allah, who presses forward undeterred on that path, will obtain the love of his Muslim brothers and set an excellent example to them. The powerful loyalty between them will increase the love, devotion and trust they feel towards one another. Therefore, if

friendship and closeness are built on people's fear of and faith in Allah and on proper moral values, then physical alterations due to sickness or age will have absolutely no effect on them. On the contrary, even greater affection and compassion will be felt for the believer.

A friendship based on honesty: Sincerity means a person being the same on the inside as on the outside, an external reflection of what he feels and experiences in his heart. It means being sincere, open and straightforward, revealing one's true character without hiding one's real thoughts and feelings, not engaging in calculating behavior or trying to appear different to how one really is. According to Qur'anic moral values, a person is worthy to the extent of his honesty, and his friends and loved ones love him because they know that he is sincere towards them.

Your friend is only Allah and His Messenger and those who believe: those who perform prayer and give the alms, and bow. (Surat Al-Ma'ida; 55)

A friendship condemned to loneliness: Despite all their longing, people who fail to take the moral values of the Qur'an as their guide can never find a true friend. That is why one frequently finds them saying such things as *"I am very lonely," "I don't have a single friend in the world,"* or *"They have left me all alone, so they were just fair weather friends."*

A friendship based on prestige and rank: The friendships that some people build on the basis of such values as wealth, beauty, prestige, rank or social status are never long-lasting. Because as soon as there is a change in these values on which it is based, that friendship comes to an end. For example, someone possessed of such moral values who adopts a friend because that person is very attractive and impressive will immediately lose all interest in them the moment they become unrecognizably flawed, needy and helpless as the result of an accident.

A friendship based on rivalry: People who are competitive and regard others as rivals generally only tell others of their mistakes when they have to. Because they are generally unwilling for others to be better than them, or even if they see their flaws, they still behave insincerely out of a fear that this could damage their friendship, and so say things like *"You are a very good person,"* or *"We love you just the way you are."*

A friendship based on self-interest: People who live according to their own self-interest experience many psychological ups and downs during the course of their lives. They may lose their attractiveness, youth, health, possessions and wealth. They see that people they once imagined to be their friends attach no value to them when they become old and frail. These people, who were very close and swore undying loyalty to one another in happier times, become so distant as not to speak to or even recognize one another. They see that they have no-one to share a problem with, to advise them, whom they can ask for help from or place their trust in. They realize that even the people they described as *my closest friend* put their own interests above their friendship.

A friendship dominated by insecurity: It is impossible for people who do not live by the moral values of the Qur'an to feel true love, respect or trust towards one another in the knowledge of each other's moral failings. It is impossible to truly love and respect someone if one knows that they lie and are false and hypocritical and if one sees that they use other people for their own advantage. A person will be aware that although this individual may say that he is their closest friend, he actually behaves in exactly the same way towards him as well.

The Day when a wrongdoer will bite his hands and say, 'Alas for me! If only I had gone the way of the Messenger!'

'Alas for me! If only I had not taken so-and-so for a friend!'

'He led me astray from the Reminder after it came to me.' Satan always leaves man in the lurch.

(Surat Al-Furqan; 27-29)

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