



# KINGDOM

FRIENDSHIPS

# FOREWORD

Table of plenty is a collection of zines dedicated to bringing God's love and truth to all of its readers. This collection aims to engage readers by allowing them to journey through testimonies, reflections, and illustrations contributed by individuals united in Christ. Born from a desire to inspire new and deeper encounters through a creative platform, ToP hopes to be a beacon of light, drawing readers closer to the One who calls them beloved.



# WE WALK EACH OTHER HOME

BY NATASHA KOH

Dear friend,

What comes to mind when you think about companionship? Perhaps you are reminded of a lunchtime catch-up, a night playing board games, a rowdy supper. Maybe you might even be drawn to reflect on how your definition of companionship has changed, between where you were and where you now are.

Personally in writing this, I realise my initially warped perception of what friendship had to be. Being introverted by nature, I was never one to easily make - or, for lack of a better word, attract - friends. Much of my younger years were spent envious of how everyone had someone to call a 'best friend', how those around me had consistent cliques to eat lunch with whilst I did not. I began, then, to desire this companionship that people seemed to so easily acquire. If I had to change bits of myself to be accepted into what seemed like the norm, I would.

I am almost certain that I questioned the term "kingdom friendships" upon hearing it for the first time. How else could friendships unfold? How many more definitions of the word could there be? It then occurred to me, gradually and only quite recently, that kingdom friendships were appointed and not forced, secure and not erratic, sustained by God and not by what each person could offer to the relationship. To say that this contrasts my previously always seeking, radically insecure impressions of friendship would be an understatement.

I think this quote by Henri Nouwen explains a friendship rooted in Christ beautifully:

*“When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing, and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.”*

*Henri Nouwen, Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life*

*I particularly love the words underlined - to have people around me who acknowledge the fundamental limitedness of a human person, and so the necessity of seeking and depending on God. It is through this knowledge, and the subsequent desire to know and place Christ in the center of any relationship, that we can grow as disciples headed heavenward. This is what I am now fortunate to experience from my kingdom friends. I have moved beyond seeing the people in my life as an indicator of popularity, or as a means to satisfy my need to feel worthy. I can now begin to see them as people through whom God reveals Himself to me, and to whom I can also bring God to. If you ask me, this is a far more purposeful impression of friendship to have.*

*Dear friend, what if I told you that you need not strive or tiredly and restlessly search for these companions? I have learned also that God has placed (and will continue to place) these people in my life when He knows is right - for you He will do the same. This means that sometimes, when it makes no sense for friendship to blossom, it does. When it seems unlikely that you would become acquainted with someone, you do. When God wills for divine appointments, growing to know someone else becomes more surprising - but, to me, also more beautiful.*



# GATHERED IN CHRIST'S NAME

BY JAMES CHONG

**“THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT ARE NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN JUST PURSUE, INSTEAD THEY ARE BORN OUT OF A LIFE IN THE SPIRIT.”**

*This phrase kept coming to mind as I pen this reflection on kingdom friendships. Looking back on my own life, I see now the ways in which I have pursued friendship and companionship, sometimes in all the wrong places, and how I had yet to come to understand that these were not targets or objectives to achieve, but experiences that manifest from a life outside of myself.*

*I struggled with a lot of loneliness in my growing years. Often, I had seen how others were able to always reconnect and stay close to old friends, while the “close friends” I made in each season of my life always became distant in the very next season. Coming back to community, slowly the lies and loneliness began to creep in again, and out of my own fears and insecurities, I began to expect that I would only experience the same fleeting friendships I had before.*

*But truly, God is good. In the past year, He has brought immense healing and restoration into this area of my life. He teaches me how to initiate and to respond to the people He has brought close to Him, to let go of expectations I had of myself and those around me, and to desire the other person for God instead of desiring the experience I may have with them.*



*What are kingdom friends to me? They are people I can trust, not just with my worries and fears, but that I can just be myself and not how I think others would want to see me. They are people I can be honest with, not having to look "holier" than I think I am, and being just as I am at any moment is enough. They are people I am accountable to, where I can admit my own shortcomings and failings without fear of judgment. Lastly, they are people who continue to remind me of unchanging truths, speaking plainly yet lovingly, bringing me back to the God who unites us in the first place.*

*"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20) This year has been one of learning what it really means to be gathered in the name of the Lord.*



*In this area of my life, it is more than just coming together to pray, or carrying the same shared beliefs together. In a more intimate way, it is in the daily walk that we share, being united in our minds and hearts for one purpose alone, to bring ourselves closer to the cross of Christ each day.*

*It is through the thirst that God first had for me that I too begin to hunger for my own communion and the communion of others with the Lord. Instead of friendships built on temporal and fleeting purposes that eventually fade away, I have come to recognise that it is this shared yearning and longing for the eternal that brings my friends and I together. Companionship, intimacy and affirmation no longer become things to be pursued, but fruits born out of a life of communion with God and His people. Friends, my prayer for us today is to recognise our longing for God, and eventually find all we have been looking for in Him.*



# CREATIVCE REFLECTIONS

*I think no one would argue that this season has brought about tremendous change, most of all in our social interactions. Everything tipped on its axis literally overnight. We were plunged into deep physical isolation - and the emotional quickly followed. I took a semester of French and my favourite phrase was en un clin d'œil which means 'In a flash' or 'In a blink of an eye'. And in a blink of an eye I went from being a person who loved being around people, meeting friends every day, to someone too comfortable being alone, perhaps even afraid to put myself out there again. It was easy to build this fortress, my computer screen my perfect protector. As I succumbed to this insidious retreat, I found myself trapped, the walls too high for me to scale alone. But I only thought I was alone.*



***“WHAT A GREAT FAVOR GOD DOES TO  
THOSE HE PLACES IN THE COMPANY  
OF GOOD PEOPLE!”***  
***ST TERESA OF AVILA***

*I chanced upon this quote sometime during Circuit Breaker and en un clin d'œil, I recognized how truly favoured I was. This entire time I had my head buried in my hands thinking it impossible to tear down this wall I'd put up in front of me, but when I looked up I saw this (image I drew). I had friends, who wanted the best for me, who desired goodness for me when I couldn't desire it for myself. They took down this wall brick by brick, even through the internet (truly how great our God is). They didn't leave me be or buy into my feeble excuses. Yes, they accepted me in my weakness and sinfulness but more than that, they moved me out of it and into the Light.*

*Amidst the demolition of my wall, a thought creeped in: How could they love me? Why would they bother? But I didn't even have time to ponder because the love they lavished and the Truths they spoke into my life didn't allow it. They loved me because Jesus loved them – so indescribably simple, how could I question it when I felt it so profoundly. To sum, in my desolation I cried out "Where are you, Jesus?" and He answered, "Look around". I saw the face of Jesus in my friends.*

***"Better two than one alone, since thus their work is really rewarding. If one should fall, the other helps him up; but what of the person with no one to help him up when he falls? Again: if two sleep together they keep warm, but how can anyone keep warm alone? Where one alone would be overcome, two will put up resistance; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."  
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12***

*My kingdom friends have tipped everything I knew of friendship on its axis too. Each day, they offer me the sincere gift of themselves, and through them I see Heaven on earth. I'd imagine being in the company of Christ to be somewhat (but of course better) like when I'm with them. There are plenty of people to do something with but with them, I can do nothing, I can just be.*

BY MICAELA ARRIOLA



*Growing up, I didn't have the best track record when it came to friendships. Like my father always used to nag, "Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are." I found myself being content with shallow conversations and fleeting feel-good moments.*



*As a young adult, I started to understand my father's words a bit more. I knew my heart wanted to break through the glass ceiling of surface-level, short-lived friendships. It was longing for something deeper and with purpose.*



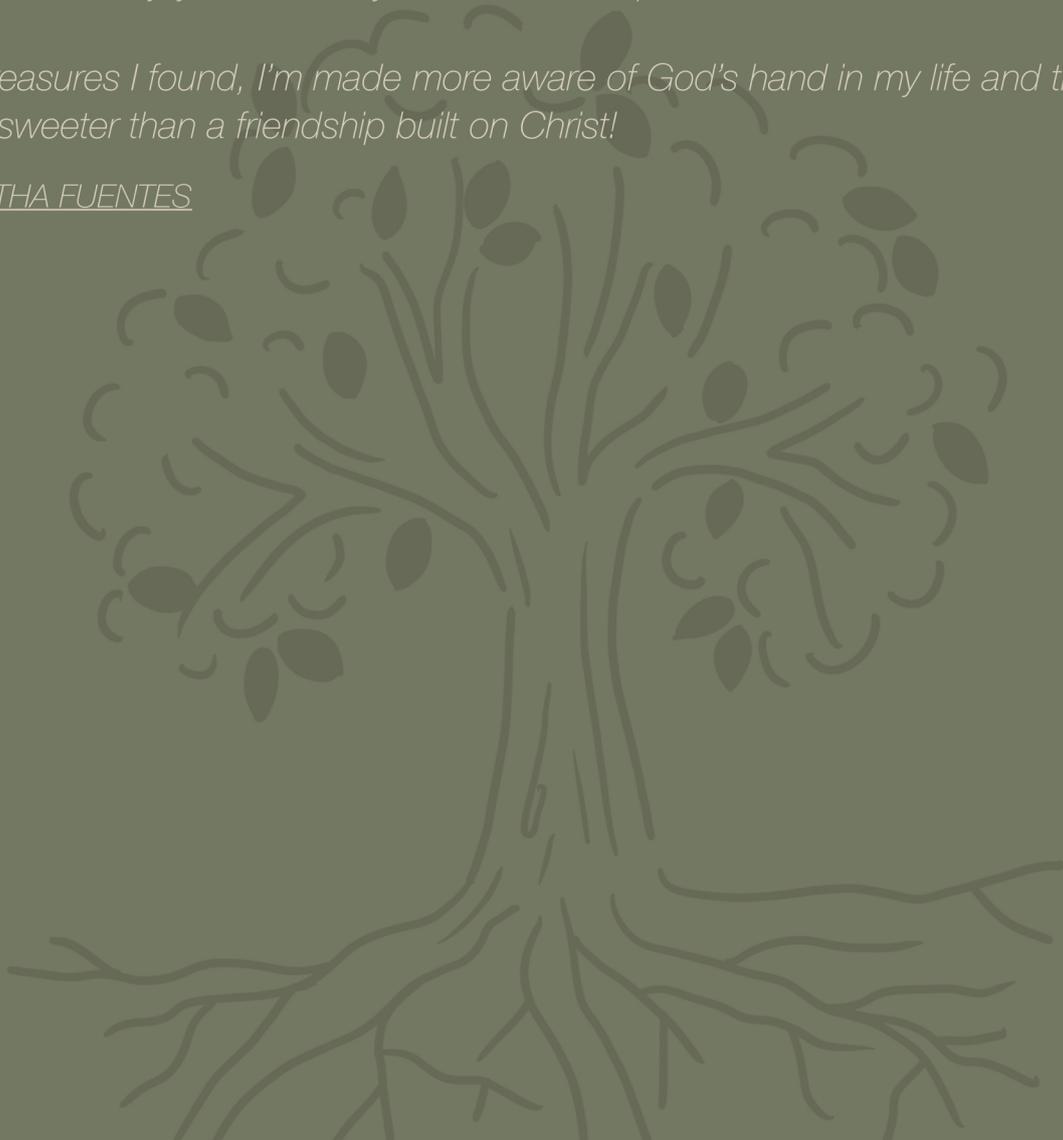
*My breath of fresh air came when I joined my parish and university communities, where I got a taste of authentic kingdom friendships. There, I've been blessed with friends who would readily pray for me when I'm down, gently correct me when they see me going down the wrong path, build me up when everything seems to be crashing down and simply love me as I am.*

*Most importantly, they have inspired me in my walk with the Lord through their actions, helping me place my affection and gaze towards the One who loved me first. Finally, I was able to tangibly see the person I wanted to be and share a common goal with a group of friends – Jesus Christ!*

*As Proverbs 27:17 says, "Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another". In this season of my life, I'm realising that a true friendship isn't one that feels like a bed of roses all the time, but it's one that challenges you to be better. They too have their fair share of heartaches, but the joy, vulnerability and love I've experienced is like no other.*

*With the treasures I found, I'm made more aware of God's hand in my life and truly, nothing tastes sweeter than a friendship built on Christ!*

BY SAMANTHA FUENTES



# Recommendations

## **Activity:**

Write to a friend

We invite you to find an hour out of your week to do this activity in the presence of Jesus. You might wish to light a candle at your altar space, or even pull up the virtual adoration.

Take a few minutes to open in prayer, asking Jesus to reveal to you two people who have impacted your life with his/her friendship. Bring each name to prayer, pondering on why his/her presence has left an indelible mark on you, how God reveals Himself to you through him/her. When you are ready, write (on paper or digitally) a note addressed to this person. It does not have to be long or complex - even a simple 'thank you for being in my life' would suffice; it is the spirit and intention behind the words that matter. You may also wish to include any images that come to mind. When you are done writing your two notes, close in prayer, thanking God for this time and for placing these people in your life.

We challenge you to pass or send your notes to your friends. Allow them to feel your gratitude towards them!

## **Songs:**

Dancing on the waves - we the kingdom

Abundantly more - north point worship

Come as you are - the worship initiative

Living with a fire - Jesus culture