

FRIENDSHIP

In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Aim

- ✠ To know the importance of friendship.
- ✠ To know how to choose our friends and how to keep them as friends.

Key verses

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Proverbs 27:6)

"A faithful friend is the medicine of life; and they that fear the Lord shall find him" (Sir 6:16)

What is true friendship according to the Bible?

- ◆ Jesus gave us the definition of a true friend in John. *"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."*(John 15:13).
- ◆ Jesus is the pure example of a true friend for He laid down His life for His "friends". What is more, "who so ever will" may become His friend by trusting in Him as their personal saviour, trusting Him and receiving new life in Him.
- ◆ The principle of friendship is also found in Amos. *"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3)*. How can two people who are going in completely opposite directions have anything in common? Our main goal is to reach Heaven. Earth is just a mean by which we get there. This ultimately means however, that we should be looking for people who will be assisting us in reaching our destination not hindering us.

Is it good to have close friendships with unbelievers?

- ◆ Christians have to constantly face temptations and the attacks of the world around us. Everything we see, read, do, put in our bodies, etc. affects us somehow. That's why to maintain a close relationship with God; we have to put aside our old ways of doing things; the things we watch on TV, old bad habits (laziness, computers etc), the activities we participate in, and the people we spend our time with. People are divided really only two ways; belonging to the world (Satan), or belonging to God.
- ◆ The holy bible has some wise verses on believers befriending non-believers:
 - *"The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray"* (Proverbs 12:26).
 - *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"* (2 Corinthians 6:14)
 - *"Evil company corrupts good habits"* (1 Corinthians 15:33).

If we become deeply involved as Christians with non-Christians, we are setting ourselves up for turmoil. It can (and does often) cause the Christian to stumble in their walk, fall back into a sinful life, and also turn others away from God.

FRIENDSHIP

- ◆ Although these close relationships are not recommended, it does not mean we turn our noses up and ignore unbelievers either. “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth (2 Timothy 2:24-25). We should serve unbelievers so that they may see God through us and turn to Him. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).
- ◆ Many people have been saved because of the prayers and service of Christians, so don't turn your back on unbelievers. However, having any kind of intimate relationship with an unbeliever can quickly and easily turn into something that is a hindrance to your walk with Christ. We are called to evangelise to the lost, not be intimate with them. There is nothing wrong with building quality friendships with unbelievers – but the primary focus of such a relationship should be to win them to Christ, by sharing the Gospel with them and demonstrating salvation in your life. This does not mean that we cannot work with the lost, the downtrodden and the people who need to find God and His message of eternal salvation. When Jesus came to our earth in the flesh, He always went after the sinners and the outcasts. But when Jesus went after these sinners, it was always for the express purpose of getting them saved and cleaned up. Having said that, Jesus did not chase after everyone. Some people are open to be helped - others are not.

Choose Your Friends Carefully

"The righteous should **CHOOSE HIS FRIENDS CAREFULLY**, for the way of the wicked leads them astray." (Proverbs 12:26)

2. Benefits of Choosing Good God-Friends

These verses will show you that there is safety in the multitude of counselors, that plans can go awry without having other people to hash things out with, that war is waged by wise counsel with others, that learning is increased by listening to wise counsel, and that if you cease to listen to wise counsel - that you will start to stray from being able to acquire more knowledge in God.

- ◆ "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." (Pro 11:14) (read also Proverbs 24:5)
- ◆ “Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days” (Pro19:20)

Many Christians have had their lives ruined and destroyed as a result of choosing the wrong kinds of friends to hang out with.

Backstabbing

“Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread has lifted up his heel against me.” (Psalm 41:9)

Sometimes friends may do something to hurt us whether it is intentionally or unintentionally. If this friend seeks your forgiveness it is important that you forgive them (after all, if you can't forgive others, how do you expect God to forgive you? And your sins are probably much worse) but learn from the incident. Do not hold the friendship in as such high regard as you previously did until the trust is built up again.

FRIENDSHIP

Loyalty

“A friend loves at all times...” (Pro 17:17)

Real friendship involves loyalty. No matter what anyone does to you, you must have unconditional love for them. We don't love our friends because they are worthy of our love – we love them because God is love and if we have hate in our hearts then we are kidding ourselves. Remember – we are not worthy of God's love but He still loves us because it is in His nature to love us.

“Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend...for better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away” (Pro 27:10)

Friends are worth keeping. Do not cut ties with people even if you disagree. You never know when you might need them.

Limitations & Persistence

“Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.” (Luke 11:5-8)

In other words not even friendship could move this person to open the door in the middle of the night but the persistence of the knocker persuaded the friend to open to him. The lesson here is that sometimes human friendships have their limitations and that persistence reaps benefits.

Gossip

“A whisperer separates the best of friends” (Proverbs 16:28)

Gossip can destroy friendships. All it takes is for the seed of doubt to be planted. The devil thrives on this. He loves to see solid friendships – especially those based on God – to be destroyed. So he will do everything in his power to see solid friendships crumble.

Honesty

“As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” (Proverbs 27:17)

A true friend can help keep you sharp in the Spirit, let you know when you are getting too far off track, help you get through and make sense of some of the downswings that can occur in your walk, confirm and help bear witness when you are on the right track, give you pep talks when needed, and help keep you in the game when you start to get too mad and too frustrated when things do not go your way.

You each serve to help keep each other up in the Lord so that you both can continue to stay on the straight and narrow road that God now has you set up on. You can also help each other out if one starts to be tempted to do something they should not be engaging in.

A true friend will always be honest and straight forward with you. You cannot help keep each other up and sharp in the Lord unless you are both willing to be totally honest with one another.

A friend cares enough to be honest with you even if it hurts.

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” (Proverbs 27:6)

FRIENDSHIP

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls for he has no one to help him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

How can you be a good friend?

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteems others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:3-4)

Good friendships

DAVID & JONATHAN

They are the most known example of friendship. Jonathan’s father **Saul** wanted to kill David out of jealousy. When Jonathan was made aware of his father’s hatred he tried to talk some sense into his father and almost got killed in the process (he very literally was willing to ‘lay down his life for his friend’). When he realised how angry his father truly was, he helped David escape although he could have gotten in a lot of trouble if he had been discovered.

THE FOUR GOOD FRIENDS (Mk 2:1-12)

Whenever we hear the story of the four faithful friends who helped their paralysed friend reach Jesus, our thoughts immediately go to the miracle that Jesus performed by healing that man. But do we ever stop to think about those four friends who **brought** their friend to Jesus? The ones who found the house so crowded and didn’t go home. The ones who were determined to do everything in their power to bring their friend to The Lord. The ones, who climbed on top of the roof, detached it, pulled up their friend and manoeuvred him down to meet God. Do we do anything that is remotely close to what these friends did? Or do we give up as soon as the first obstacle comes our way? Or even worse, do we try to begin with?

Bad Friendships

KING REHOBOAM 1Kin 12

- Whose advice did Rehoboam seek?
- What was the difference between the advices he received from the two parties?
- Whose advice did Rehoboam take? Do you think this is a wise decision? Why/ Why not?
- Why do you think he chose to take that particular advice?
- What was the advice of Rehoboam taking the advice of his friends?
- What do you think is the moral/message of this story?

ESAU

Why would someone despise their birthright? What are the influences and the factors at work in people's lives that leads them to despise their birthright? The first thing is - the influence of bad friends. How often have young people grown up in godly families and have wonderful parents but as they grow up they make friends with those who are utterly careless about the things of God. They can just drift away. They adopt the attitude of their friends. “*Evil company corrupts good habits.*” (1 Corinthians 15: 33). This means that bad friends can destroy good lives. Our friends will either lift us up or drag us down.

FRIENDSHIP

Conclusion

- ◆ Just as God saw fit to create Eve for Adam in the Garden of Eden when He first created the first man - God still places an extremely high value on personal friendships.
- ◆ If you ask Him, He will make sure to bring the right people in your life so that you can each help each other out to go farther and deeper in the Lord.
- ◆ When Jesus first started to send the 12 apostles out to walk with His anointing - He would always send them out two by two.
- ◆ The best friend to have is Jesus. John 15:15, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you."
- ◆ Choose friends who love the Lord and have pure hearts. 2 Timothy 2:22, Run from anything that gives you the evil thoughts that young men often have, but stay close to anything that makes you want to do right. Have faith and love, and enjoy the companionship of those who love the Lord and have pure hearts."
- ◆ Friends can steal away our hearts. The lesson for you and for me is to watch our friends very carefully.
- ◆ 'A friend is a second self'. This means that our friends reflect ourselves. We should never make friends with people who are utterly different from ourselves. We have no affinity with them. Therefore, our friends will either make us or mar us. Many a person has been ruined by his friends.

Glory is to God forever. Amen.