

Small Group Studies

Cultivating Friendship

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Study Guide

Cultivating Friendship Contents

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Week 1 - What is a friend?

Dictionary Definition

A friend as "one who cherishes kind regard for another person; an intimate and _____."

Other People's Definitions

"A friend is someone with whom you dare to be yourself." --C. Raymond Beran

"A friend is someone who understands your past, believes in your future, and accepts you today just the way you are." --Unknown

"A friend is one who knows all about you and likes you just the same." --Elbert Hubbard

"A friend is a person with whom I may think out loud." --Ralph Waldo Emerson

"A real friend is one who warms you by his presence, trusts you with his secrets, and remembers you in his prayers." --Unknown

"A friend is:

- A push when you have stopped.
- A word when you are lonely.
- A guide when you are searching.
- A smile when you are sad.
- A song when you are glad." --Unknown

What are the various levels of friendship?

There are at least four levels of friendship or relationship:

1. Acquaintance

The word "acquaintance" is defined as follows:

"A person with whom you are familiar or conversant."

An acquaintance is someone that you see occasionally, that you know on a very surface or public level and that you can identify by name and general information.

2. Casual Friends

The word "casual" is defined as follows:

"Occurring at irregular intervals, accidentally or by chance."

A casual friend is someone with whom you share common interests and with whom you participate in common activities. You bump into them occasionally, more by chance than by design. You may know very little about them except for those commonly shared areas or experiences.

3. Close Friends

The word "close" is defined as follows:

"Affectionately associated with or trusted."

A close friend is someone with whom you share common life goals, mutual projects and personal conversations relative to family, values and beliefs. A close friend is someone that you trust and toward whom you feel a strong level of personal commitment.

4. Intimate Friends

The word "intimate" is defined as:

"Closely connected on a personal, confidential and innermost level."

An intimate friend is reserved for only the **very closest** of friends and is based on covenant relationship. This includes a mutual commitment to build each other up, to love in spite of weaknesses and to sharpen character through personal accountability.

This is the relationship that David had with Jonathan (I Sam. 18:1-4).

Now when 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. Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.

Week 2 - What is the purpose of friendship?

A person who has no friends is missing out on a great blessing in life.

Psalm 142:1-4

I cry out to the LORD; I plead for the LORD's mercy. 2 I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles. 3 For I am overwhelmed, and you alone know the way I should turn. Wherever I go, my enemies have set traps for me. 4 I look for someone to come and help me, but no one gives me a passing thought! No one will help me; no one cares a bit what happens to me.

What does this verse teach about friendship? _____

This verse teaches that a person without friends has no one:

1. To _____.
2. To turn to _____.
3. To _____.
4. To _____.
5. To _____.

A person who has friends is blessed.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor.10 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. 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

What does this verse teach about friendship? _____

This verse teaches that a person who has friends has someone:

1. With whom to _____.
2. To _____ when he or she _____.
3. To _____ his or her life.
4. To help him or her _____.

A friend is someone who can refresh our souls.

1. By sharing their life with us in _____ and relationship.
2. By caring for us in our times of _____.
3. By growing with us in the purposes of God through mutual _____ and _____.

Week 3 – What the Bible says about friendship

The Book of Proverbs has much to say about friendship.

1. Proverbs 18:24, Amplified

The man of many friends [a friend of all the world] will prove himself a bad friend, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Main point being made: True friendships in life are _____.

2. Proverbs 17:17

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Main point being made: A true friend _____ in times of _____.

3. Proverbs 19:4, 6

Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend deserts him...Many carry favor with a ruler, and everyone is the friend of a man who gives gifts.

Main point being made: A true friend is not in the relationship for the _____.

4. Proverbs 27:9

Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.

Main point being made: A true friend's _____ is very sweet.

5. Proverbs 27:5-6

An open rebuke is better than hidden love! Wounds from a friend are better than many kisses from an enemy. -NLT

Main point being made: A true friend will tell you what you _____ not what you _____.

6. Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

Main point being made: A true friend will clash with you at times for your _____.

7. Proverbs 11:13; 17:17; 18:24

A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.

Proverbs 11:13, NIV

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 17:17

There are "friends" who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24, NLT

Main point being made: A true friend is _____ at all times.

8. Proverbs 16:28; 17:9

A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.

Proverbs 16:28

He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends. Proverbs 17:9

Main point being made: A true friendship _____ by slander, whispering and not keeping confidences.

Jesus had something to say about friendship.

1. John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Main point being made: A friend _____ for the relationship.

2. John 15:15

No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Main point being made: A friend knows _____.

The rest of the Bible adds to the concept of friendship.

1. Deuteronomy 13:6b

...your friend who is as your own soul...

Main point being made: A true friend will know you as they know _____.

2. Job 6:14, NIV

A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.

Main point being made: A true friend will show you kindness when you are _____.

3. Job 16:21, NIV

...on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.

Main point being made: A true friend will be an advocate or intercessor _____.

4. Ecclesiastes 4:10

If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

Main point being made: A true friend will be there _____ if you stumble.

Week 4 – How do friendships happen?

1. For friendships to happen they must be _____.

You will never have close friends unless you desire them. And you can only be a close friend to those who desire to be one with you. You cannot force someone to want you as a friend. Deep friendships must be _____.

2. For friendships to happen they must be _____.

They do not just happen. Casual friendships happen by chance. Deep friendships require regular contact. You must take initiative and not expect the other person to make the first move. This means that having friends must be a _____ to you above some of the other things in your life.

3. For friendships to happen they have _____.

That means that we have to _____ and put in the kind of things that will contribute to their success. This means a certain amount of work. Take advantage of common interests such as hobbies, exercise regimen, activities to spend time building the relationship.

4. Friendships _____ to build.

Friendships move gradually through the various stages. Not all friendships will reach the "intimate" friendship level. Before friendships can reach that level, both parties must be _____.

5. Friendships will be _____.

Everyone will disappoint you or let you down at some point. People are still people. It is important to understand from the beginning that if perfection is required for being your friend, _____ is the only friend that you will have until you get to heaven.

6. Friendships must be _____.

We cannot take them for granted. The same things that build a relationship maintain a relationship.

7. Friendships are to be _____.

You do not have to feel guilty about spending time with people that you enjoy being with. Yes, we have to avoid being exclusive of others and closed to outreach to those in need, but a good friendship can help us to reach all of the other goals in our lives.

Week 5 – How do I choose my friends?

What are some qualities to look for in a friend?

Quotes:

"Friendships form among people who strengthen each other." --Franklin Owen

"He who looks for advantage out of friendship strips it of all its nobility."
--Seneca (4 B.C. -65 A.D.)

Five key qualities that you look for in friends

1. Those who fear the Lord (Ps. 119:63, NIV).
2. Those who can keep confidence.
3. Those who possess the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:23-24).
4. Those who enjoy life.
5. Those who share your basic values.

What are some qualities to avoid in a friend?

We must choose our friends wisely because we will be known by our friends or the company we keep (Pro. 12:26; 13:20; I Cor. 15:33). We will also become like our friends. We become like what we worship or admire (Ps. 106:19-20).

The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray. Proverbs 12:26

He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed. Proverbs 13:20

Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." I Corinthians 15:33

Five key qualities that you do not want in your friends

- 1. Angry or Hot-tempered People (Pro. 22:24-25)**

Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.

2. Worldly People (Eph. 5:11; Jam. 4:4)

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. Ephesians 5:11

*Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
James 4:4*

3. Wicked People (Pro. 12:26; II Cor. 6:14-15; Gal. 5:19-21)

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? II Corinthians 6:14-15

4. Self-Centered People (II Tim. 3:1-5)

Paul discusses the nature of people in the end times. They are lovers of self, lovers of pleasure and lovers of money. He tells us how we are to view these people who maintain a form of godliness.

And from such people turn away! II Timothy 3:5b

5. Hypocritical, Unrepentant "Christian" People (Mt. 18:15-17; II Th. 3:6).

But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Matthew 18:17b

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. II Thessalonians 3:6

These are people who profess to be Christian but who live a lifestyle characterized by some of the following:

- Covetousness—Inordinately desirous or greedy
- Idolatry—Inordinately fond of anything above the Lord
- Railing—Abusive and scornful in their language
- Drunkenness—Habitually drinking to excess
- Extortion—Obtaining gain by dishonest means
- Fornication—Involved in illicit sexual relationships

- Hardness of Heart—Refusing to reconcile an offense with a brother

With these types of people we are encouraged not to eat with them or keep company with them (I Cor. 5:11; II Th. 3:14-15).

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person.

I Corinthians 5:11

And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. II Thessalonians 3:14-15

Week 6 – What can I do to develop good friends?

Quotes:

"Friendship is like money, easier made than kept." --Samuel Butler (1612-1680)

"Promises may get friends, but it is performance that must nurse and keep them." -- Owen Felltham (1602-1668)

"Friendship is usually treated as a tough and everlasting thing which will survive all manner of bad treatment. But it may die in an hour of a single unwise word; its conditions of existence are that it should be dealt with delicately and tenderly. It is a plant and not a roadside thistle. We must not expect our friend to be above humanity." --Ouida (1839-1908)

There are some skills that will help you to develop and foster good friendships

A. Becoming a good conversationalist.

1. Learn how to start a conversation and keep it going.

- Give a warm greeting.
- Wear a smile.
- Ask questions.
- Work to remember details, especially their name.
- Repeat their name several times in conversation.
- Notice things that stand out about the person or their environment.
- Compliment them (sincerely) on some area of achievement.
- Play off of their responses with more clarifying questions.
- Paraphrase back to them what you believe they are saying (in your own words). They may add to or correct your perception of what they had said.
- Find out what the person is interested in and explore it.
- Discover things you may have in common (do not focus on yourself).
- Avoid highly controversial subjects until you get to know them better.

- If you must disagree, do it agreeably.
 - Do not interrupt.
 - Recognize when the conversation is over.
 - Remember the depth of conversation is based on the depth of friendship.
2. Be willing to give and to receive information.
- A good friendship is 50/50. You do not want to listen all of the time no more than you want to talk all of the time.
3. Do things together that require a certain amount of talking (e.g. going for coffee, walks, golf, etc).
4. Learn how to communicate creatively to further feed the friendship.
- Phone
 - Email
 - SMS
 - Fax
 - Answering Machine Messages
 - Occasional Card or Note

B. Becoming a good listener.

1. Pay careful attention when they speak.
2. Maintain good eye contact with them as they speak.
3. Respect their point of view.
4. Do not react to what they say.
5. Do not feel that you must adjust every factual detail with which you disagree.
6. Give responses that indicate your interest (active listening).
7. Don't walk away until the conversation comes to resolve.

C. Becoming a physical and moral support.

1. This means acknowledging them as your friend.

2. This means attending to their physical and emotional needs.
3. This means providing a listening ear when they want to vent.
4. This means putting up with them when they are moody.
5. This means being cautious in criticism willing to overlook some of their imperfections.
6. This means encouraging them when they are down.
7. This means being ready to assist them financially.
8. This means providing a shoulder for them to cry on.
9. This means praising them for their positive actions and accomplishments.
10. This means rejoicing with their success (and their new car).
11. This means praying for them when they need it.
12. This means helping them solve the problems of their life.
13. This means surprising them with thoughtful gifts and remembrances.
14. This means staying true to them when they disappoint you.
15. This means giving them the benefit of the doubt when unexpected things come up and things do not work out as planned.
16. This means relaxing, slipping off your shoes, loosening your tie, kicking back on the couch and just "hanging out" with them.

Week 7 – What does accountability mean in friendship?

What does accountability look like in an intimate relationship?

If you ever want to move to the highest level of friendship with someone it will necessitate moving into realms of accountability.

1. Accountability involves _____.

This means being willing to share some of your inner secrets. This includes such things as:

- Life goals, visions and ambitions
- Inner fears, values and beliefs
- Personal challenges
- Temptations and spiritual battles

2. Accountability involves a commitment to _____ and speaking the truth in love.

3. Accountability involves _____ when you are _____.

4. Accountability involves a high level of trust and _____.

5. Accountability involves giving permission to ask the _____.

The following 26 questions are excerpted from *Rebuilding Your Broken World* by Gordon MacDonald.

1. How is your relationship to God right now?
2. What have you read in the Bible in the past week?
3. What has God said to you in this reading?
4. Where do you find yourself resisting Him these days?
5. What specific things are you praying for in regard to others?
6. What specific things are you praying for in regard to yourself?
7. What are the specific tasks facing you right now that you consider incomplete?

8. What habits intimidate you?
9. What have you read in the secular press this week?
10. What general reading are you doing?
11. What have you done to play?
12. How are you doing with your spouse? Kids?
13. If I were to ask your spouse about your state of mind, state of your spirit or state of your energy level, what would be the response?
14. Are you sensing any spiritual attacks from the enemy right now?
15. If Satan were to try to invalidate you as a person or as a servant of the Lord, how might he do it?
16. What is the state of your sexual perspective? Tempted? Dealing with fantasies? Wrong entertainment?
17. Where are you financially right now? Things under control? Under anxiety? In serious debt?
18. Are there any unresolved conflicts in your circle of relationships right now?
19. When was the last time you spent time with a good friend of your own gender?
20. What kind of time have you spent with anyone who is a non-Christian this past month?
21. What challenges do you think you are going to face in the coming week? Month?
22. What would you say are your fears at this present time?
23. Are you sleeping well?
24. What three things are you most thankful for?
25. Do you like yourself at this point in your pilgrimage?
26. What are your greatest confusions about your relationship with God?

Week 8 - Do all friendships last forever?

Do all friendships last forever?

No! In a perfect world, all relationships would last forever. Some of the friends that you have, you will have for life. In other cases they may have a shorter life span because of things that change. In addition, one person can only nurture a limited number of close relationships without neglecting others.

Three reasons why friendships change

1. Sometimes relationships change _____.

2. Sometimes relationships change due to the change of _____.
 - Marriage. Sometimes when single people get married it changes their relationships in favor of other married couples.
 - Children. Sometimes when people have children it affects their relationship with people who are not in the same phase of life.
 - Relocation. Sometimes when one relocates a long ways away it is difficult to maintain the same intimacy levels.
 - Spiritual Shift. Sometimes the relationship that began at the same level changes as one person moves on or falls back.

3. Sometimes relationships change due to other factors including:
 - _____.

 - A good friend will be very cautious about what was said to them in confidence. It only takes one careless conversation to undo months of relationship building.

 - _____.

 - A good friend will allow for other friendship in the person's life of which they are not a part.

 - _____.

A good friend will not dominate a relationship but will allow space for other activities of life.

Good friends are worth fighting for, because they are the things that make our life rich and full.

Friendship from A to Z

What is a friend? Someone who...

A ccepts you as you are,
B elieves in "you",
C alls you just to say "HI",
D oesn't give up on you,
E nvisions the whole of you (even the unfinished parts),
F orgives your mistakes,
G ives unconditionally,
H elps you,
I nspires you to be the best you can be,
J ust happy to be with you,
K eeps you close at heart,
L oves you for who you are,
M akes a difference in your life,
N ever judges,
O ffers support,
P icks you up,
Q uiets your fears,
R aises your spirits,
S ays nice things about you,
T ells you the truth when you need to hear it,
U nderstands you,
V alues you,
W alks beside you,
X -plains things you don't understand,
Y ells when you won't listen and
Z aps you back to reality.

--Author Unknown