

Bible Principles For Happy & Enduring Friendships

The Search Continues

Success in friendship is success in life for no one ever achieves true success without genuine friends. True friends are faithful. The wheels of progress are lubricated by the oil of faithful friends. Unfaithful friends only constitute cogs in the wheel of progress. David, Ruth and Paul became what they were because of faithful friends (I Corinthians 15:33). The foundation of friendship is faithful

relationships which prosper in an atmosphere of equity and naturalness with the result that both partners derive from one another shared helps, intimacy and potentials.

All over the world, there is a relentless search for friendship. This is sometimes manifested in seductive styles of dressing, attendance at pubs, night clubs, fraternities, cinema, sports, social events, etc.



If you can't have boy or girl friends, can you be friendly with boys and girls?

The proliferation of dating agencies, increase in internet chat room activities, etc. are all indications of a vacuum that only genuine friendship can fill!

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned (Songs 8:7).

Victorious Christian Ministry

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Food For Thought

- *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you (John 15:14)*
- *A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity (Proverbs 17:17)*
- *A three fold cord is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12).*
- *A man's foes are the men of his house (Micah 7:6).*
- *Birds of a feather flock together.*
- *Show me your friends and I will tell you who you are.*
- *Your only secrets are the ones you have kept to yourself only. Wisper separates chief friends (Proverbs 16:28)*

Friendship Is...

Friendship means many things to many people. Generally, the meaning we attach to a thing affects how it is developed and what it achieves (or fails to achieve). One of the many possible meanings of friendship is:

Faithful
Relationships
Inspired by
Equity &
Naturalness
Deepened and
Shaped by
Healthy
Interactions in
Purity.

(I Timothy 4:12; 5:2^b)

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The Foundation For True Friendship

True and lasting friendships are founded on **faithful** relationships.

Faith

Accountability

Integrity

Teachableness

Humility

Fearlessness

Uprightness

Love.

Faith. Relationships foster on trust. Where this is lacking, suspicion creeps in and undermines the friendship. The friendship of Jonathan and David (2 Samuel 1:26) is embodied on trust (Proverbs 16:28).



I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women (2 Samuel 1:26).

Accountability. True friends are accountable to one another. This leads to a healthy consideration for one another in practical life situations. Where accountability is absent,

selfishness creeps in and turns the friendship into enmity (Philippians 2:3; Matthew 7:12; Proverbs 18:24).

Integrity. True friends are committed to noble ideals. They shun every shady act that will damage their moral values (Philippians 4:8).

Teachableness. True friends are open to counsel, advice, corrections and rebuke from one another without taking offence (Proverbs 27:6,9).

Humility. This is the life blood for genuine friendship. It paves the way for other qualities and virtues to foster and abound (Philippians 2:5-11). Humility allows for acceptance. And where it is lacking the partners will be employing strategies to manipulate, dominate or outwit one another (Proverbs 18:24).

Fearlessness. This is the outcome of true love mixed with sobriety (Proverbs 27:6; John 15:15; I John 4:18). Fearlessness leads to frankness and openness. It paves the way for healthy companionship and wholesome communications of plans, intentions, desires, feelings, purposes etc., without the fear of being reproached or undermined. The presence of fear creates room for secrecy, hypocrisy and subtlety (Malachi 3:16; Amos 3:3; I John 1:3,7).

Uprightness. True friends are upright in their dealings one with the other. There is transparent honesty and loyalty. This inspires confidence—the cornerstone for faith (trust) in the relationship. When uprightness is replaced with sham the relationship becomes shallow. Like a seed on the rocky grounds—it thrives only when conditions are favourable, but lacks the depths to endure the storms of misunderstandings, misinterpretations, doubt, frustrations, suspicion, etc.

Love. Love is the key to true friendship. It is the ignition key that flames the fire of friendship as well as the live-wire to a sustained relationship. Love is selfless, noble, pure, sensible and enduring. Love sacrificially cares for the needs, legitimate pleasures, happiness, well-being, comfort and progress of others. No friendship ever thrives without love. (I Corinthians 13:1-8; Songs 8:7; Philippians 2:4; Proverbs 17:17; II Samuel 1:26). When love dies the relationship ceases.

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (I John 4:18).

Testing The Ties Of Love From I Corinthians 13

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunted not itself, is not puffed up,

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

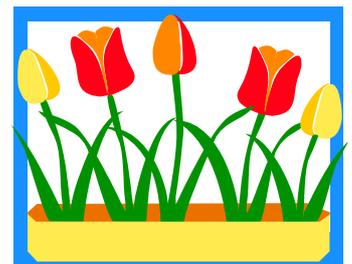
Beareth all things, believeth

all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

(13) And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest

of these is charity.



Just like forcing open an unripe flower damages it irreparably, so also does forcing a relationship that is not ready has the potential of damaging it for life. **“A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle”** (Proverbs 18:19).

Benefits of Genuine Friendship

Genuine friendship revolves on the fulcrum of faithfulness in the relationship. Many blessings accrue from such relationships including shared help, hopes, intimacy through association as well as tapping into and enhancing the potentials of each other (Proverbs 17:17; 27:6,9; 19:6; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Psalms 133:1-3).

Mutual help, encouragement in difficulties, companionship and fellowship, stimulating love and shared counsel provide a foundation to success. Individual potentials and prospects are greatly enlarged and increased. Where these are sustained by

the love of faith, the power of God is tapped into for miraculous breakthroughs. *“Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Matthew 18:19,20). Just as bad relationships ruin good morals (I Corinthians 15:33), so also does good relationships boost good morals, and can indeed result in an eternal destiny with God. Solomon was correct when he penned *“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed”* (Proverbs 13:20).



Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labour... Woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up... And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a three fold cord is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

The Atmosphere For A Flourishing Relationship

Relationships are delicate roles that need to be nurtured and honed. They are never static, but dynamic and may be affected by outside influences and competing priorities. Friendship relationships flourish very well under certain atmospheres, but withers in others. In addition to faithfulness, the atmosphere of equity and naturalness favours a blossoming relationship (I John 15:15; Proverbs 19:6).

Several types of relationships exist in nature, such as:

1. Parents and children
2. Husband and wife
3. Employer and employees
4. Mentor and Mentee
5. Colleague and colleague
6. Friend and friend,
7. Ruler and subjects, etc.

Some of these are formal others not. Some are officious and some casual. Partners in relationship may try to put on an air of superiority to gain some ad-

vantages. Some may adopt certain protocols normal to such relationships. This sometimes create an **imaginary personality** that could be significantly different from that of the **real** person.

Reality is the key to creating the right atmosphere for the relationship to flourish. True friends are free to be themselves. They talk in natural tones. Their true feelings and fears - a taboo in officious relationships, can be shared without prejudice. The mask of secrecy and glamour that is often put on



Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel (Proverbs 27:5,6,9). **All play and no prayer is a recipe for disaster!**

to impress the outsider is removed in true relationships. One then becomes free to be himself / herself without the fear of being slighted. True friends come down from their 'ivory towers' of pride, vanity and vain glory and dwell peaceably on the plains of honesty, truthfulness and sincerity. They no longer view one another as impregnable castles to be conquered or pulled down, but as security strongholds to be protected and preserved.

R Role
E Endeared for
L Life
A Attained through
T Transparency
I Integrity
O Openness
N Nobility
S Submission
H Humility
I Intimacy
P Purposefulness and
S Steadfastness.

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Living Like Jesus—In His Steps

Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel (Proverbs 20:17)

Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For a son dishonoureth the father.... A man's enemies are the men of his own house... (Micah 7.5,6).

Dangers in Friendship

The saying "All that glitters is no gold, therefore do not be deceived by the green grass" is as true and applicable today as when it was first said. Despite the numerous benefits of friendships there are also many dangers that must be identified and avoided if one is to enjoy a wonderful relationship. When a friendship is good, the relationship can be very very good; but when a friendship is bad the relationship can be very very sour! To get involved in a bad relationship is like getting into a trap or into a house that is on fire! Indeed the relationship could become like that of a sheep sharing the same apartment with a wolf!

The question posed by Solomon "Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned" (Proverbs 6:27,28) is still pertinent to relationships in general. Many dangers lurk friendships including:

Disappointments / heartbreaks. David lamented "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took counsel together and walked unto the house of God in company" (Psalms 55:12-14).

Betrayal / murder. Like Judas betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26:47-50), friends betray and kill. Recent police statistics suggest that about 80% murders in the UK are committed by known acquaintances.

Rapes, violence, etc. Like Amnon raped his half sister Tamar through the advice of his friend Jonadab (2 Samuel 13), many sexual crimes are aided, abetted or committed by known acquaintances.

Compromise, lukewarmness, backsliding and many social ills (e.g. drug,

Beyond Friendship - It Is Better To Prepare Than To Repair

The ties of friendship can mature into life long relationships including marriage. Even where marriage is not the ultimate end, friendship has the potential to shape life and destiny. It is therefore crucially important that purpose precedes partnership and that every partnership is maintained in an atmosphere of transparent purity.

God's standard remains the same **"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God"** (I Thessalonians 4:3-5). Moreover, God declares **"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers**

God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). It should be settled once and for all, that friendship is not the seedbed for tasting the privileges that are exclusively and legitimately reserved for marriage. Anything out-

side of that violates God's word and brings damnation.

This calls for discipline and caution in all relationships not only to avoid sin but also to avoid damaging one's testimony through carelessness and

undue liberty. To remain strong in Christian witnessing in these last days demands that a believer **"abstains from all appearances of evil"** (I Thessalonians 5:22); as well as **"maintain a conscience void of offence"** (Acts 24:16) at all times. The closer



Can two walk together except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3)
Purpose before partnership helps purity in partnership!