

Biblical Wisdom On Friendships

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INTRODUCTION

Pr 17:17 KJV

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

Pr 18:24 KJV

A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

The Bible has much to say on the subject of friendships. Someone has said, "you will be the same next year as you are today, except for the books you read and the friends you keep." I believe that A Good Friend-Ship can prevent a Ship-Wreck. I have found that there are genuine Friend-Ships but that there are also Friend-Dips. As Mike Murdock says, "Healthy friendships are usually based on mutual interests. Unhealthy friendships are usually formed because of mutual problems, mutual sin, mutual addictions, and mutual sympathy."

FRIENDSHIPS IN OUR EARLY YEARS ACTUALLY SET THE COURSE OF OUR ENTIRE LIFETIME.

Often the friendships we make in our childhood, our teen years, and in our early twenties determine the final outcome of our lives. Our friendships are really that important! *Proverbs 24:21 NLT: "My child, fear the LORD and the king, and don't associate with rebels." 1 Co 15:33: "...for bad company corrupts good character." Pr 13:20: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."* Mike Murdock says, "When Satan wants to destroy us, he places a person into our life. Likewise, when God wants to bless us, He places a person in our life." It is up to us to discern and recognize the source and motivation for our friendships.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

It only took one bad friendship to destroy Samson's life and ministry... Delilah. It only took one great friendship to save young David's life from Saul's death threats... Jonathan. It just took a few bad relationships to make the wisest man in the universe to backslide... Solomon's ungodly wives and concubines. Similarly, because Apollos discerned the worth of making friends with Aquila and Priscilla, he became born again eternally.

The truth is that we BECOME whom we spend time with! More is CAUGHT than TAUGHT. Our associations determine our stations in life. Sometimes who we hang with, hangs us! The fabric of our character is determined by whom we are knit together. Like it or not, we ALL are impressionable. We are each subject to peer pressure, irregardless of age. You are, at this very moment, being influenced by someone. So the only choice we really have is to decide by whom we will be influenced, and who we will allow to be our peers.

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF FRIENDSHIP

There are different kinds of friends and it helps to understand this and identify each relationship for what it really is. Doing so will help eliminate unfulfilled expectations. One minister teaches that there are two kinds of relationships: Depleting Friendships and Replenishing Friendships. Depleting relationships are the kind of people that God has placed into our lives so that we can help them or minister to them, rather than them helping us. But one should balance these depleting friendships with other replenishing relationships. Other friends that God has placed in our lives are there mainly for us to RECEIVE replenishment from them. Some friends are there to lean on in times of trouble. Some are just pillars in our lives. Some are for having fun together. Some

are for hearty discussion. Some need us more than we need them and we are to mentor them. Some friendships are seasonal and temporary and that's alright. Some friendships are life-long. In any case, it helps to label any relationship for what it really is so that mutual satisfaction is experienced.

HOW TO ENTER A FRIENDSHIP

You'll see from the below scriptures that true life-long friends are few and that we should be cautious about entering into any relationship. The healthiest way to enter a friendship is to let it grow naturally over time without rushing it. First the person is an acquaintance. Later, you exchange a small portion of your selves with one another in conversation and see whether this nugget from your heart is valued. Over time, you share a little more of yourself each time. And finally, after trust, confidentiality, and mutual interests are established, you have a rewarding friendship that can be counted on and enjoyed immensely.

FOUR KINDS OF RELATIONSHIPS

We must be very careful about choosing friends. The friendships we keep **MAKE US** or **BREAK US!** Really! The book of Proverbs is copiously replete with warnings about the wrong friends. Mike Murdock teaches that there are four kinds of people that try to enter our lives: Those who subtract from us, those who divide us, those who add something to us, and those who multiply us. We must not be naive about this fact. We must qualify the soil of each person's heart before allowing them access to our life, especially the inner sanctum of our dreams and problems. We must be careful not to cast the pearls of our life onto someone who will turn around and trample those precious nuggets. Those who don't respect our time, won't respect our wisdom either. Those who don't respect our divine assignment in life, disqualify themselves for a relationship with us. We will always gravitate towards the people that solve our most immediate problem, so we must have wisdom in the area of friendships lest we make a costly mistake.

Not all friendships are made in heaven. Not all friendships are what they appear to be. Not all friendships are out of pure motives. And there is a difference between a **FAN** and a **FRIEND**. Actually, the strength of a healthy friendship is never known until times of pressure, strain and testing on that relationship. Often the quality of a friendship cannot be discerned until it has been tested in the crucible of time and hardship.

MOTIVE OF OUR FRIENDSHIP

We must discern the motive of our own heart when entering any relationship. Are we entering this relationship because we desperately crave **ATTENTION**. Getting attention feels good but it is not a solid foundation for a lasting friendship. When it comes to relationships we should be **SECURE ENOUGH** in our relationship with God, that we no longer crave mere **ATTENTION** from people. Rather our relationships with others should be built on a foundation of **ADMIRATION**, or respect. When entering a relationship we must be a **GIVER** as well as a **TAKER**, or we should not pursue a closer friendship with that person.

FRIENDSHIP BOUNDARIES

Friendships have boundaries as well. Some friends become leeches and dump all their problems on you without ever taking personal responsibility for their own decisions and behaviour. Some friendships can also become abusive over time in that they become possessive, smothering, jealous, or too demanding. Some friends have no inner restraint and discernment to know when a conversation is crossing the line of respect; either meddling, gossiping, manipulating, controlling, or exploiting the other. To enjoy a friendship we must respect the individuality of our friend, never trying to project our own personalities or personal preferences on them. Enjoy the uniqueness of your friend and their individuality. We need time with our friends and they need time with us. However, we must also offer them the space, time, and the privacy they need.

HAVING FRIENDS

To have friends we must develop listening skills, not just talking skills. One of my pastors years ago taught me that "LISTENING IS LOVING." When conversing with others we should ask ourselves inwardly, "Am I really listening to this person, or am I merely waiting my turn to talk?" To have friends we must sow friendship into others. To have friends we must make time for people and ask them questions about their family, their occupation, their interests, etc. that begin to bond us to them. To maintain a friendship we must fertilize it, marking out time in our schedules and calendars to spend quality time together. To have friends, we must inconvenience ourselves to come to their aid at inopportune times for us. We must be willing to listen even when we disagree. A strong friendship eventually evolves into a realm of mutual accountability as well as fulfilling companionship.

DATING

Marriage is a friendship as well as a sexual union. So 5:16 KJV: "His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend..." The Bible warns never to marry an unbeliever. The Bible counsels against becoming close to someone of the opposite sex that is not a born-again Christian. If you are saved then you should only date another committed Christian who loves Jesus with all their heart. 1 Corinthians 9:5 NLT: "Don't we have the right to bring a Christian wife along with us as the other disciples and the Lord's brothers and Peter do?" 2 Corinthians 6:14 KJV: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

FRIENDSHIP SCRIPTURES FOR MEDITATION

Below are many scriptures on the subject of friendship that will greatly enrich your understanding and help you to make wise choices. Read them slowly and reflect on these divine thoughts. Let their wisdom soak into the fabric of your personality and character. The checklist I have provided at the end of these scriptures might also be of some value to you.

1 Co 15:33

...for "bad company corrupts good character."

Pr 22:24 KJV

Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:

1Sa 20:17 NLT

And Jonathan made David reaffirm his vow of friendship again, for Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself.

1Sa 19:1 NLT

Saul now urged his servants and his son Jonathan to assassinate David. But Jonathan, because of his close friendship with David,

Ex 33:11 KJV

And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend...

De 13:6 KJV

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers;

2Sa 13:3 KJV

But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man.

Psa 41:9 KJV

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Pr 17:17 KJV

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

Pr 18:24 KJV

A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Pr 19:6 KJV

Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.

Pr 22:11 KJV

He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.

Pr 27:6 KJV

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Pr 27:9 KJV

Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

Pr 27:10 KJV

Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.

Pr 27:17 KJV

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

Job 42:10 KJV

And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Pr 14:20 KJV

The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.

Pr 16:28 KJV

A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

Pr 17:9 KJV

He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

Pr 17:9 NLT

Disregarding another person's faults preserves love; telling about them separates close friends.

Pr 20:19 KJV

He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Pr 19:4 KJV

Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.

Pr 27:14 KJV

He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

Pr 13:20 KJV

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Pr 13:20 GNB

Keep company with the wise and you will become wise. If you make friends with stupid people, you will be ruined.

2Ch 22:4 KJV

Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction.

Pr 15:22 KJV

Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

Pr 24:6 KJV

For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.

Ps 1:1 KJV

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful

Ps 55:14 KJV

We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

Pr 27:17 NLT

As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend.

Pr 27:9 NLT

The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.

CHECKLIST

Here is a checklist of questions to assist you in evaluating each of your potential or present friendships:

1. Is Jesus Christ first place in this person's life?
2. Does this person have higher, as high, or lower goals than myself, and how will their goals affect mine?
3. What recreational activities and social activities do we do when we are together? Are these activities helping me or hurting me?
4. When I am with this person do I talk about things that are wholesome and godly, or things that are just fluff, or things that are not good?

5. How do I feel when I am with this person? Closer to God? Tempted to think or do evil? Distracted from my dreams? More passionate about my dreams and goals in life?
6. How do I act around this person?
7. How do I behave around my family AFTER being with this person? And how do I feel?
8. What do I and this person talk about the most when we are together?
9. Does this person have a deep respect for my dreams and goals?
10. Does this person bring me DOWN or UP after being with them?
11. Is this person a LEECH OR TICK, draining me of precious time and energy?
12. Do I feel more like praying, reading my Bible, or going to church because of this relationship, or do I feel less passionate about Jesus and the things of God?
13. Is this friendship based on mutual problems, addictions, or sympathy, or is it based on mutual interests and goals?
13. Is this friendship really valuable to me or is it just the easiest and most convenient one to keep?
14. If opposite sex: Is our friendship sexually pure or are we merely using one another to satisfy our hormonal drives, without being married and committed to one another for the rest of our lives?
15. Is this friendship helping my other friendships or is it subtracting from my other relationships?
16. When I am with this person, do we tend to talk about others in a positive light or do we end up just gossiping and discussing others' flaws?
17. Does this person make me feel like I am neglecting them unless they are with me most of the time? Are they using me as a security blanket because they are insecure about their relationship with God and others?
18. Or am I using them as my security blanket because I am insecure whether I could really make any other friends better than them?
19. Is my friend really a friend, or is it an enemy of my relationship with the Lord Jesus, only in disguise?