

Friendship

WHAT IS THE MARK OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP?

PROVERBS 17:17; 1 SAMUEL 18:1-4

Some friendships are fleeting and some are lasting. True friendships are glued together with bonds of loyalty and commitment. They remain intact, despite changing external circumstances.

¹⁷A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.

¹After David had finished talking with Saul, he met Jonathan, the king's son. There was an immediate bond of love between them, and they became the best of friends. ²From that day on Saul kept David with him at the palace and wouldn't let him return home. ³And Jonathan made a special vow to be David's friend, ⁴and he sealed the pact by giving him his robe, tunic, sword, bow, and belt.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF FRIENDSHIPS?

1 SAMUEL 18:5-13

Jealousy is the great dividing force of friendships. Envy over what a friend has will soon turn to anger and bitterness, causing you to separate yourself from the one you truly cared for.

⁵Whatever Saul asked David to do, David did it successfully. So Saul made him a commander in his army, an appointment that was applauded by the fighting men and officers alike. ⁶But something happened when the victorious Israelite army was returning home after David had killed Goliath. Women came out from all the towns along the way to celebrate and to cheer for King Saul, and they sang and danced for joy with tambourines and cymbals. ⁷This was their song:

“Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands!”

⁸This made Saul very angry. “What's this?” he said. “They credit David with ten thousands and me with only thousands. Next they'll be making him their king!” ⁹So from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

¹⁰The very next day, in fact, a tormenting spirit from God overwhelmed Saul, and he began to rave like a madman. David began to play the harp, as he did whenever this happened. But Saul, who had a spear in his hand, ¹¹suddenly hurled it at David, intending to pin him to the wall. But David jumped aside and escaped. This happened another time, too, ¹²for Saul was afraid of him, and he was jealous because the LORD had left him and was now with David. ¹³Finally, Saul banned him from his presence and appointed him commander over only a thousand men, but David faithfully led his troops into battle.

PSALM 41:9

When respect or reverence is seriously damaged, even the closest friendship is at risk.

⁹ Even my best friend, the one I trusted completely,
the one who shared my food,
has turned against me.

2 SAMUEL 13:11

Friendships are destroyed when boundaries are violated.

¹¹But as she was feeding him, he grabbed her and demanded, “Come to bed with me, my darling sister.”

GENESIS 50:14-21

Forgiveness restores broken relationships.

¹⁴Then Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father's funeral. ¹⁵But now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became afraid. "Now Joseph will pay us back for all the evil we did to him," they said. ¹⁶So they sent this message to Joseph: "Before your father died, he instructed us ¹⁷to say to you: 'Forgive your brothers for the great evil they did to you.' So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive us." When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept. ¹⁸Then his brothers came and bowed low before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

¹⁹But Joseph told them, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, to judge and punish you? ²⁰As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil. He brought me to the high position I have today so I could save the lives of many people. ²¹No, don't be afraid. Indeed, I myself will take care of you and your families." And he spoke very kindly to them, reassuring them.

WHAT DO I DO WHEN I'M HAVING TROUBLE MAKING FRIENDS?

JOB 19:19; JOHN 5:7

We all go through times when it seems our friends have deserted us.

¹⁹My close friends abhor me. Those I loved have turned against me

⁷"I can't, sir," the sick man said, "for I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred up. While I am trying to get there, someone else always gets in ahead of me."

JOHN 15:15; HEBREWS 13:5

The first thing we must do is remember that God is our constant friend and will never leave us.

¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn't confide in his servants. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.

⁵Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said,

"I will never fail you.
I will never forsake you."^o

EPHESIANS 4:32

Acts of kindness and generosity attract others to you.

³²Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

WHETHER CASUAL OR ROMANTIC, MALE/FEMALE FRIENDSHIPS INVOLVE UNIQUE PRESSURES AND TEMPTATIONS. DOES THE BIBLE OFFER ANY GUIDELINES FOR DATING RELATIONSHIPS?

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

Paul's timeless description of Christian love becomes the standard of respect and decency that should mark all our relationships, including our dating relationships.

⁴Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. ⁶It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

EPHESIANS 5:3-5, 8-18; MATTHEW 5:27-30

In dramatic contrast to much that we see in our modern world, Jesus calls us to a standard of sexual purity in thought as well as in deed.

Living in the Light

EPHESIANS 5

¹Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. ²Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him.

³Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. ⁴Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. ⁵You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world. ⁶Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the terrible anger of God comes upon all those who disobey him. ⁷Don't participate in the things these people do. ⁸For though your hearts were once full of darkness, now you are full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! ⁹For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

¹⁰Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, rebuke and expose them. ¹²It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. ¹³But when the light shines on them, it becomes clear how evil these things are. ¹⁴And where your light shines, it will expose their evil deeds. This is why it is said,

“Awake, O sleeper,
rise up from the dead,
and Christ will give you light.”

Living by the Spirit's Power

¹⁵So be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. ¹⁶Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. ¹⁷Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do. ¹⁸Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you. ¹⁹Then you will sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, making music to the Lord in your hearts. ²⁰And you will always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Spirit-Guided Relationships: Wives and Husbands

²¹And further, you will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²²You wives will submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of his body, the church; he gave his life to be her Savior. ²⁴As the church submits to Christ, so you wives must submit to your husbands in everything.

²⁵And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her ²⁶to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's word. ²⁷He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. ²⁸In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man is actually loving himself when he loves his wife. ²⁹No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for his body, which is the church. ³⁰And we are his body.

³¹As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."³²This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. ³³So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

²⁷"You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Do not commit adultery.'²⁸But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹So if your eye—even if it is your good eye—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your hand—even if it is your stronger hand—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Promise from God: Matthew 18:20

²⁰For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them."