

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



Thinking Through Your Friendships

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 41:9; Proverbs 16:28 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Proverbs 13:20; 20:19; 22:24-25; 24:21-22; 28:7; 29:3

SUMMARY

Because God designed us to live together in relationships, friendships are an important part of His plan for our lives.

Our friends are gifts from the Lord for which we should be truly grateful. Since they are so precious, we ought to do all we can to nurture these relationships and be the kind of friend God wants us to be. The most important friendship we can have is with Jesus Christ. When we walk closely with Him, we'll become the companion others need and want.

A friend is a treasure who loves you as you are, sees not only who you are but who you can become, is there to catch you when you fall, shares your everyday experiences, accepts your worst but helps you become your best, understands your past, believes in your future, accepts you today just as you are, and comes in when the whole world has gone out.

SERMON POINTS

Although we all desire rich, life-long relationships, the reality is that sometimes friendships don't last. This may be no fault of our own, but sometimes it's the result of choosing the wrong type of friend.

The book of Proverbs warns us of the kinds of associations to avoid.

- **Do not associate with a gossip** (Prov. 20:19). We need friends we can trust not to share with others what we have told them in confidence.
- **Do not associate with someone given to anger** (Prov. 22:24-25). If we hang around angry people, we could become like them.
- **Do not associate with those given to change** (Prov. 24:21-22). These are friends who are discontent

and disloyal. We never know whether we can trust them because they are so unsettled in their ways.

- **Do not be a companion to someone who is self-indulgent** (Prov. 28:7). This person is only interested in satisfying himself.
- **Do not keep company with immoral people** (Prov. 29:3). They may lure us into following their sinful example.
- **Do not become a companion of fools** (Prov. 13:20). The Bible defines a fool as someone who says there is no God. Although we are called to interact with unbelievers in order to lead them to Christ, we should never be close companions with those who are trying to live apart from the Lord. As Christians, we need friends who are devoted to the same God we are. Otherwise, we could easily be led astray by those who are going in the opposite direction.

Great friendships don't just happen; they have to be built and nurtured.

If we truly love and care for our friends, we will invest our time and energy in the relationship.

- **Spend time together.** This is the most important ingredient and the only way we will truly get to know each other.
- **Talk to each other.** Through conversation we learn more about the other person. As the relationship progresses, the interaction becomes more personal and open.
- **Cry and laugh together.** Close friends are willing to share their hearts with each other in both the joys and heartaches of life.
- **Share accomplishments.** Promotions and successes are reasons to rejoice together.
- **Share trials.** True friends stay close in times of trouble or pain and faithfully bear each other's burdens.

- **Be thankful.** Realizing what a blessing friends are, we should be generous with our gratitude, letting them know how much we appreciate them.
- **Be thoughtful.** Everyone wants to feel loved and remembered. We can reach out to friends with letters, calls, texts, or small gifts.
- **Show tolerance.** We all have flaws. We must be willing to overlook a friend's words or actions and freely grant forgiveness.
- **Touch.** Another important ingredient in friendships is appropriate physical touch whether it's a casual handshake or a more intimate hug.
- **Be transparent.** Deep friendships require vulnerability—letting the other person see who we really are. If we try to cover up and appear perfect, we limit the relationship.
- **Be truthful.** This is essential for trust. Friends need to know that some conversations will be kept confidential and that they can believe what the other person says.

Behaviors that destroy friendships

Friendships end for a variety of reasons. Sometimes this is the result of circumstances, but there are also some behaviors that may damage the relationship.

- **Selfishness.** Focusing on ourselves and wanting our own way will eventually ruin a friendship.
- **Manipulation.** We should never use or manipulate a friend to get what we want.
- **Possessiveness.** Attempting to limit the other person's friendships will smother the relationship.
- **Jealousy.** Trying to control our friends in an attempt to keep them is a sin, not a sign of love.
- **Criticism.** If we continually find fault with our friends, we'll drive them away.
- **Explosive temper.** We will very likely hurt others and do irreparable damage to a relationship if we are prone to angry outbursts.
- **Covetousness.** Wanting what someone else has is selfish and is the opposite of focusing on what's best for the other person.

- **Disloyalty.** Distrust drives a stake between two people, destroying the friendship.
- **Dishonesty.** When we try to cover up the ways we've failed our friend instead of admitting our wrongs, we are being dishonest.
- **Busyness.** If we are too busy to spend time with our friend, the relationship will wither.

How to rescue a troubled friendship

If you have a relationship that is in trouble, you must first decide whether that friendship is worth rescuing and if you are willing to take the necessary steps to make it right.

- **Admit wrong.** Begin by taking responsibility for your role in damaging the friendship.
- **Commit to change.** Then promise to make the changes that are required and be faithful to carry out your commitment.
- **Don't defend yourself.** The goal is to seek forgiveness, not excuse your behavior.
- **Ask what you can do to heal the relationship.** This opens the door for suggestions from the other person.
- **Give your friend an opportunity to say what needs to be said.** Then listen and do what you can to mend the relationship.

RESPONSE

- Has the Lord blessed you with good friends with whom you feel free to share anything? What is it about these people that draw you together?
- Are you actively building and nurturing your friendships or have you unintentionally drifted into neglect of these God-given treasures? How can you become a better friend to someone else?
- Do you have any troubled friendships? What do you think has caused the strained relationship? What can you do to bring healing to that friendship?

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