

Romans 16

Proverbs 17:17 *“A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.”*

“One of the greatest needs of the human heart is for friendship. We have a longing for someone who knows us, loves us, and accepts us – someone with whom we can share. Somebody who understands our deepest needs, our hurts, our cares, our wants, our victories. We need friends and to say that you do not need friends is to deny your humanity.” Therefore, today we will look at making friends forever.

I. THE MARKS OF FRIENDSHIP What is a friend?

A. A friend is somebody who shares *“A friend loves at all times...”* A publication ran a contest asking the readers to send in their definition of a friend in one sentence. One wrote, *“A friend is someone who multiplies our joys and divides our griefs.”* Another one: *“A friend is someone who understands our silence”* Here is the one that won the prize: *“A friend is someone who comes in when the whole world walks out.”* We need someone who will strengthen us with prayers, bless us with love and encourage us with hope. A friend is one who is wise enough to leave you alone when you need to be alone.

B. A friend is somebody who sharpens **Proverbs 27:17** *“As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.”* A friend is someone who helps you to be all that you can be. He helps bring the best out of you. He sets you free to be all you can be. Our English word for friend is related to our word for freedom. Jesus is my best friend, and Claudia is my next best friend. I am a better person for knowing Claudia.

A friend is somebody who sharpens

Proverbs 27:6 *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”* A friend will love you enough to confront you when you’ve done wrong. *“The kisses of an enemy are flattery, but flattery is a lot like perfume. You can kiss it, but don’t swallow it. You know the difference between a flatterer and a hypocrite? They are first cousins. The hypocrite will say behind your back what he will not say to your face. The flatterer says to your face what he won’t say behind your back.”*

C. A friend is somebody who sticks. **Proverbs 18:24** *“A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”* If you want to know who your friends are, make a mistake. **Proverbs 27:10** *“Do not forsake your own friend or your father’s friend,”* **Illustration: Chuck Coleson** wrote of an experience he had while speaking to a hostile crowd after Watergate and writing *“Born-Again”* Chuck was read a scathing criticism of Mr. Nixon written by **Henry Kissinger**. The student asked Mr. Coleson if he agreed with what Kissinger had said. He said, “We all know Mr. Nixon’s negative qualities. I know his good points, but I don’t think I could convince you to accept them. But what it comes down to is this, *“No, I don’t go along with Kissinger’s comments. Mr. Nixon is my friend, and I don’t turn my back on my friends.”* After saying this, there was a great silence, then they stood on their feet and gave Coleson a thunderous applause. Even a hostile crowd like that understood loyalty to a friend.

II. THE MAKING OF FRIENDSHIP Friendships are built. They are more like oak trees than toadstools. They take time to develop. We find a definition of friends by Jesus Christ in **Luke 6:31** *“And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.”* There are 5 secrets that come out of this principle: **Dale Carnegie said:** *“you can make more friends by finding something interesting in other people, than in 2 years*

by getting other people to find something interesting in you.” So many of us are so self centered. The 5 secrets to making friends are giving people acceptance, acknowledgment, appreciation, affirmation, and assistance in affliction.

A. People want to be accepted: Jesus called his disciples friends. He accepted that motley crew! We are accepted by the grace of God just as we are!

B. People want to be acknowledged: If you accept somebody, you have to acknowledge them. You have to let them know you see they are there. We need to give people our full attention when they speak to us! **Illustration:** *“A husband said he was concerned about his wife because she always went around talking to herself. Someone asked, does she know she’s doing it? He said, no, she thinks I’m listening to her.”* That husband was not much of a friend. Active listening is a Godlike quality: **Psalm 34:15** *“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry.”* God’s eyes and God’s ears are on you. Put your eyes on others and open your ears to them. The psalmist said, *“I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my supplication.”* When you acknowledge a person, you are saying to them, “you are important to me!”

C. People need to be appreciated: Find something in somebody that you can compliment and appreciate. **Psychologist William James said,** *“One of the deepest needs in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.”* **Mark Twain said,** *“He could live three weeks on a compliment.”* I love it when Claudia tells me that she is proud of me. Before the apostle Paul wrote about some problem a church was having, he first wrote his appreciation of them and commended them on what they were doing right. Jesus first commended the churches before saying, “I have somewhat against thee” in letters to the churches in Revelation .

D. People need to be affirmed: We live in a negative world with many have such a negative picture of themselves. This is what leads to most teen suicides. They think no one love me, but maybe if I am dead, someone will shed a tear for me. People need empathy and understanding. The Bible says we are to *“...rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.”* People are not primarily interested in your answers or solutions to their problems. They are interested in assurance from you that you know and care – a gentle touch, a shared tear.

E. People need attention in adversity:
Proverbs 18:24 *“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly : and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.(KJV)”* Another translation puts it like this. *“A man with many friends will come to ruin (New American Standard)”* How can they do that? It doesn’t sound like the same verse. Don’t have more friends than you can show yourself friendly to. **Friendships are costly.** They cost time, effort and investment. A brother is born for adversity. To love at all is to be vulnerable. *“If you want to make sure of keeping your heart in tack, you must give your heart to no one. Wrap it carefully with hobbies and luxuries. Place it in a tomb. Ben Franklin said,* *“Be slow in choosing a friend and slower in changing a friend.”*

III. THE MINISTRY OF FRIENDSHIP **John 15:13** *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”* Jesus is speaking here of his ministry. We are to make friends, not for a lifetime, but forever. Jesus was a friend to sinners and that is one reason why they crucified him. Lets look at practical ways...

A. Memorize names. B. Learn to greet people Learn to shake hands. Give everyone a look, a word, a touch! **C. Put a welcome sign on your face.** Learn to smile.

Learn to laugh. We need to watch our first impressions. Statistics say people make up their minds during the first 12 minutes whether they will be part of a church. Serve refreshments. Don't embarrass our guests by making them speak in public or by putting them on the spot. Most of church fellowships are sacred societies for snubbing sinners, but Jesus was a friend to sinners. You say, "I thought I was supposed to be separate from sinners." Well, we can accept people without approving what they do.