

BibleWise

Discussion Questions, Topics, and Ideas for Practical Tips on Friendship

By Marjorie F. Eddington

Make your own list of the qualities you want to be as a friend, as well as those you want to see in a friend.

We can be a true friend to ourselves. We can fulfill the second greatest commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt 22:39). How do we do that?

- We rid ourselves of biased, egotistical, prideful beliefs that actually hurt us more than they hurt others.
- We treat ourselves well. We don't wrongly criticize, condemn, justify, or hurt ourselves. That does not mean that we don't acknowledge our weaknesses and work to improve them. But it means that we deal compassionately with ourselves, that we are gentle with ourselves -- as gentle as the Samaritan was with the wounded man binding up his wounds. We can bind up any of our own wounds.

We can be true friends to others. A true friend is one who:

- treats others -- everyone -- with kindness;
- meets the needs of others with compassion.

We can be more like the Samaritan.

- The Samaritan disregarded the race or religion of the wounded man. We can wipe away prejudicial barriers. This includes reaching out and being friendly to people who are not in our little group or "clique." We may find wonderful friendships we may have otherwise missed.
- We can keep our eyes open to see who around us needs help. It may be physical, emotional, social, or academic help that is needed. People are crying out for help in so many different ways. Our smile, our hello, our compassion may give someone a reason to live. We may never know what people are struggling with or thinking.
- We can be kind to someone who has treated us poorly. We can start the healing process because, as Jesus said, "If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that" (The Message Matt 5:46).

And we can see God as our Best Friend. Getting our relationship right with God will bless all of our other relationships. Let's be the friend we want to have. Let's be "Good Samaritans."

This exercise is for teens. A high school senior asked the following question: How do you make good friends? And when you do make friends, how do you know if you can trust them?

How would you answer the question? Now check it with Teen Time Director Marjorie Eddington's response. How is your answer similar? Different?

I put these questions to one of my high school classes of seniors who answered:

- "Very carefully and slowly. People usually start out as acquaintances and then become better friends through shared experiences." When I asked them how they knew if they could trust someone, they explained:
- "You learn about people by spending time with them. Usually they'll show themselves."

I also asked them if they'd ever gotten burned, and if so, what they had done about it. Many of them, both guys and girls, had gotten hurt.

- One girl said that she is a type of person who automatically trusts people, which sometimes makes her vulnerable. But she's not concerned by that at all. It makes her stronger. She would rather trust than not trust. She is a happy person.
- One girl said that she isn't friends any more with a person who hurt her. And that does happen.
- Most agreed that they had learned something from the experience.

When I asked if they had a lot of good friends, their responses were telling:

- Many had a lot of friends, but they had only a handful of very good friends.
- "Good friends are hard to find. Friendships take a lot of work. And often friends come and go."

So how do we see friendship on a spiritual basis?

The Bible tells us: A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. **KJV Prov 18:24**

To me, this suggests that in order to have good friends, we must be good friends. A previous Hot Topic on [Friendship](#) discusses this in more detail.

Eugene Peterson's translation of that same text reveals a different aspect:

Friends come and friends go,
but a true friend sticks by you like family.
The Message Prov 18:24

And another passage really helps to define true friendship:

Friends love through all kinds of weather,
And families stick together in all kinds of trouble.
The Message Prov 17:17

We certainly can't make friends if we stay holed up in our own world hoping that someone will reach out to us. If we really value friendship, then we will look for those who need a friend, and we will be that friend. This requires a little bit of risk-taking. A good friend of mine who is an actor, mime, and teacher has a saying that not only applies to the theatre, but also to life: "Risk and Reason." To progress, we must take risks, but we must accompany those risks with reason and common sense. And we can't forget prayer!

Prayer -- which really is listening to God's constant communication to us and striving to understand the power of His Love operating in our lives -- will help us see the goodness in ourselves and others. Just as we know the voices of our family members, so we can know the voice of God. We can hear God telling us what to do in each circumstance and with each person. Rather than trying to base a friendship on trust between humans, we can base our friendships on trust in God.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. **KJV Prov 3:5, 6**

There's a reason why this proverb is so known and loved: it's comforting, and what it teaches works! If you open up your heart wholly to God (and not tell God what kind of a friend you want, when you want one, etc.), trusting His ability to give you everything you need, then you will find every single one of your needs fulfilled, including good, true friendships.