

The Problem Of Friends

Introduction

1. This lesson will deal with "The Problem of Friends."
 - a. This is a strange title because friends are the best of life's treasures and are usually a great blessing and delight to us.
 - b. I would much rather give up material things than friends.
 - c. Material things most often fail us, but good friends rarely do.
2. Let us to look at The Importance Of Friends, Making and Holding Friends, and Some Miscellaneous Thoughts On Friendships.

Importance Of Friends

- It would be difficult for us to over-stress the importance of friends.
- Life certainly loses much of its meaning and happiness without friends.

1. All of us need friends.

- a. Friends bless us in a host of ways.
- b. A person without friends is missing one of life's great treasures.
- c. It is vital to happiness to take time for friendship.
- d. They are a source of happiness.

2. All of us need close friends.

- a. Most people have a number of friends, but close friends are more rare.
 - 1) Most are fortunate to have a few close friends in a life time.
 - 2) Close friends are an immense blessing.
- b. Jesus had some close friends.
 - 1) Mary, Martha, Lazarus (Lk. 10:38-42; Jn. 11:1-44).
 - 2) Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17:1-8; Matt. 26:37; Mk. 5:37; 13:3).
 - 3) We all need some close friends who will stick with us in all circumstances.

3. All of us need Christian friends.

- a. They give us a good example - a positive role model.
- b. They encourage us to cleave to the good and to abstain from evil. (Rom. 12:9).
- c. They motivate us to good works. (Heb. 10:24).

Heb 10:24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

- d. We need the encouragement of Christian friends to overcome the world. (1 Thess. 5:11,14; Heb. 3:13).

4. All of us need to make Jesus our best friend.

- a. Jesus laid down His life for "His friends." (Jn. 15:13).
- b. We must obey Jesus to be a friend of Jesus. (Jn. 15:14).
- c. Jesus is always with us to help and comfort us. (Matt. 28:20).
- d. Jesus nor His Father will forsake us. (Heb.13:5,6).

Heb 13:5 {Make sure that} your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"

Heb 13:6 so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

- e. Let us add the Christian graces so that we will never forsake them - the Father and the Son. (2 Pet. 1:5-11).

2 Pet 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in {your} moral excellence, knowledge,

2 Pet 1:6 and in {your} knowledge, self-control, and in {your} self-control, perseverance, and in {your} perseverance, godliness,

2 Pet 1:7 and in {your} godliness, brotherly kindness, and in {your} brotherly kindness, love.

2 Pet 1:8 For if these {qualities} are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Pet 1:9 For he who lacks these {qualities} is blind {or} short-sighted, having forgotten {his} purification from his former sins.

2 Pet 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

2 Pet 1:11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

5. All of us should beware of evil companionships. (1 Cor. 15:33; Psa. 1:1).

- a. See Prov. 22:24,25

Prov 22:24 Do not associate with a man {given} to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man,

Prov 22:25 Or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself. ESV "entangle yourself in a snare."

b. We cannot and should not avoid all evil people, but we must be careful.

1) Jesus had association with sinners. (Matt. 9:11).

2) We must have some contact with sinners if we hope to gain their respect and win them to Christ.

3) Each person must prayerfully and cautiously work with sinners not overestimating his strengths.

4) We are foolish if we overestimate our strength. (1 Cor. 10:12).

Making And Holding Friends

1. Be friendly (Prov. 18:24)

Prov 18:24 A man of {too many} friends {comes} to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

a. Even a dog, without reading books, knows how to make friends and influence people...by just being friendly.

b. Warmness draws people; coldness repels them.

c. Here are some important thoughts.

1) Wear a smile and have friends.

2) Wear a frown and have wrinkles.

2. Helpful In Adversity (Prov. 17:17).

Prov 17:17 A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.

a. We must not be fair weather friends.

b. Some friends are like a shadow that walks by your side in sunshine but disappears when the clouds come.

c. We must give tokens of our love even in adverse circumstances.

3. Possess A Humility That Will Cause You To Mix And Mingle With All Classes Of People

a. We should have rich and poor friends, educated and uneducated friends, friends of all races and nationalities.

b. We must not be snobbish or conceited.

c. If we truly want to be enriched and blessed, all our friends should not be exactly like us.

4. Be Unselfish (Phil. 2:4).

Phil 2:4 do not {merely} look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

a. We should share time, wealth, feelings.

b. A person wrapped up in himself makes a very small bundle.

- c. Some people are always thinking about what others can do to make them happy.

5. **Be Tolerant**

- a. Don't demand perfection.
 - 1) He who seeks a faultless friend will remain friendless or very disappointed.
 - 2) We should be forgiving and forbearing (Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:32).
- b. We will be more tolerant if we will take a long look at our own weaknesses. (Matt. 7:1,2)

6. **Be Sincere, Truthful, And Honest**

- a. Don't pretend to be a friend. (Rom. 12:9). ESV "Let love be genuine."

Rom 12:9 {Let} love {be} without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

- b. We should be truthful, but not give unsolicited, hurtful statements like, "You look fat in that outfit."
- c. We must not be crooked in our dealings with friends, or attempt to involve them in wrongdoing.
- d. We should be one in which a friend can put his trust and confidence.

7. **Follow Golden Rule** (Matt. 7:12).

Matt 7:12 "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

- a. The Golden Rule is invaluable in making and keeping friends.
- b. The Golden Rule assumes a person has a healthy attitude toward self.
- c. If a person hates himself, he will misuse this marvelous verse teaching us to be kind and considerate of others.

8. **Be Loyal**

- a. One thing that gave Paul strength and courage when he was a prisoner in Rome was the loyalty of his friend Onesiphorus. (2 Tim. 1:16).

2 Tim 1:16 The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains;

- b. One of the things that hurt and frustrated Job was the disloyalty of friends. They turned against him in a very cruel and vicious way.
- c. We must not be a fickle (unstable) friend.

Miscellaneous Thoughts On Friendships

- 1. **Don't wear out welcome.** (Prov. 25:17).

Prov 25:17 Let your foot rarely be in your neighbor's house, Or he will become weary of you and hate you.

2. **Don't put confidence in unfaithful man.** (Prov. 25:19).

Prov 25:19 {Like} a bad tooth and an unsteady foot Is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.

Prov. 25:19 “Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.”

3. **Don't give up if a close friend turns on you or against you.** (Job 16:2; Psa. 41:9; Sam. 16:12; Matt. 26:48,49).

4. **A good friend is able to keep secrets, but not harmful secrets.** (Prov. 11:13).

Prov 11:13 He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.

5. **Friends can make us strong** (Eccles. 4:9, 10).

Eccles. 4:9 Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.

Eccles. 4:10 For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.

6. **Listen to good instructions of friends.** (Prov. 15:32).

Prov 15:32 He who neglects discipline despises himself, But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.

a. Don't be a "know it all."

b. We can learn from friends and foes.

7. **Need a variety of friends**

a. Each friend will have different strengths and qualities that will enhance our character.

b. We should seek to emulate the best (not the worse) in each friend.

8. **Do not meddle into private matters of friends.**

a. "Plastic surgeons can do almost anything with the human nose - except keep it out of other people's business."

b. “Mind your own business” is good advice.

c. Christians are not to be meddlers. (1 Pet. 4:15).

1 Pet 4:15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer [of any kind], or a troublesome meddler;

Conclusion

1. Let us all be friendly and work to develop good friendships.

2. Let us all make our friendships a source of strength and blessings to our lives and the lives of others.

3. Here are some quotes about friendship that would be good to ponder.

- One of the most beautiful qualities of true friendship is to understand and to be understood. **Lucius Annaeus Seneca**
- The greatest gift of life is friendship, and I have received it. **Hubert H. Humphrey**
- Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light. **Helen Keller**
- A friend to all is a friend to none. **Aristotle**
- Friendship... is not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything. **Muhammad Ali**
- I cannot even imagine where I would be today were it not for that handful of friends who have given me a heart full of joy. Let's face it, friends make life a lot more fun. **Charles R. Swindoll**
- A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out. **Walter Winchell**
- Friends show their love in times of trouble, not in happiness. **Euripides**
- A friend is one who knows you and loves you just the same. **Elbert Hubbard**
- My best friend is the one who brings out the best in me. **Henry Ford**
- A true friend freely advises justly, assists readily, adventures boldly, takes all patiently, defends courageously, and continues a friend unchangeably. **William Penn**

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