



May 5, 2015

Finding Good Friends

By Teresa Hampton

Have you ever been in a friendship or relationship that became spiritually risky or emotionally draining? If so, you probably wish you could go back in time and do things differently. How does one establish good friendships in the church, workplace, and community? Jesus, and other inspired men, left us examples and instructions for how to build good relationships.

First, choose your friends wisely. Solomon said, *The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray*” (Proverbs 12:26). Though Jesus associated with and taught sinners, his close relationships were with like-minded people, those who wanted to please God. Paul said, *Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character* (1 Corinthians 15:33). Surrounding oneself with godly people ensures less temptation and provides mutual encouragement.

Second, be friendly. Solomon said, *A man who has friends must himself be friendly* (Proverbs 18:24a). Jesus was friendly to everyone, as was the case when he spoke to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (John 4). Speaking to a Samaritan was frowned upon. Also, men did not speak to women in public, and they especially did not converse about religion. Yet, Jesus broke cultural norms and taught her.

Third, know your convictions and how to graciously defend them. Peter instructed us to be prepared to answer spiritual questions with meekness and fear (1 Pet 3:15). Be a good listener. *Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak...* (James 1:19). Sometimes the most effective tool is asking questions. The person you disagree with concerning spiritual matters may become a Christian and a close friend.

Fourth, be real or sincere in the way you live, talk, and spend your time. People usually see through hypocrisy, flattery, or “putting on a show.” Hypocrisy is the polar opposite of Christlikeness. James said, *wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy* (3:17).

Fifth, love others with the love of God. Love is an essential ingredient of friendship. Godly love is not the same as *liking*. It is being committed to the good of the other person through good times and bad. Jesus told the apostles, *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends* (1 John 3:16). He did not want to be crucified, but his love for mankind demanded it.

Sixth, be trustworthy. Mutual trust is necessary for building meaningful relationships, which involves shared confidences. Solomon wrote, *A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret* (Proverbs 11:13). Trust also involves keeping your word. Jesus said, *Let your ‘Yes,’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’* (Matt. 5:37).

Finding a good friend is like finding a treasure. If he/she is a brother or sister in Christ, you will gain encouragement, support, and insulation from evil influences. Finding a good friend at work can make the job more enjoyable, and more importantly, may open a door for sharing the incomparable love of Jesus!

Today’s Verse: *A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity* (Proverbs 17:17).

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