

Life Coach: People Principles

Friendship, Part 1

Introduction: Life is comprised of relationships and the Bible provides guidance for maintaining healthy human connections. Both the Old and New Testaments emphasize the centrality of human relationships in all of our lives. Failure to build healthy relationships diminishes our personal joy and effectiveness for Christ. One of the most important, and often overlooked, relationships is that of friendship.

I. The Significance of Friendship

- A. Friendship is the only perpetually voluntary relationship of our lives. It has no formal, outward constraint or moral obligation.
- B. Friendship is deeper than mere association. People may be associated through circumstances for decades and yet not be real friends.
- C. Friendships can be a decisive factor in our lives. Positive friendships provide encouragement, counsel, and a listening ear. In addition, Christian friendships provide partnerships in Christian service.
 - 1. Old Testament Example: David and Jonathan
 - 2. New Testament Example: Paul and Barnabas, Jesus and the Disciples, Paul and Timothy, etc.

II. The Elements of Friendship

- A. The key to making friends is outgoing, unconditional friendliness—*“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”*
- B. The relationship of David and Jonathan illustrates the irreducible elements of human friendship:
 - 1. Mutual Love and Admiration (I Sam. 17:56-18:3)—Jonathan admired the bravery in David’s slaying of Goliath, and something about David’s speech before King Saul deeply impressed Jonathan.
 - a. Friends recognize and respect the value of each other, admiring positive qualities and sometimes even emulating them.
 - b. Genuine friendship loves deeply, involving a connection of the soul. Psychologists refer to this as “chemistry.” We sometimes refer to this as “clicking” with someone. Without the soul connection, no deep friendship is possible.
 - 2. Unshakable Loyalty (I Sam. 18 and 19:1-2)
 - a. David and Jonathan’s success in military campaigns against the Philistines garnered the praise of Israelite women—and the burning jealousy of Saul (18:1-9). Saul’s jealousy would result in multiple attempts on David’s life.

- b. Rather than siding with his own father Saul (who was morally wrong in the situation), Jonathan remained steadfastly loyal to his friend David.
 - 1) Protected David from harm (I Sam. 19:1-2)
 - 2) Protected David's reputation (I Sam. 19:4-7)
- 3. Eager Assistance (I Sam. 20:1-4)
 - a. Genuine friendship involves eager, mutual desire to provide help whenever necessary. Friendship views inconvenient requests as an opportunity to prove love.
 - b. People who hesitate to help others or who count the cost too great never have close friendships. Lack of friendships is a symptom of selfishness and narcissism.
- 4. Divine Sovereignty (I Sam. 20:8)
 - a. With ongoing pressure from Saul on David's life, the friendship between David and Jonathan deepened. Their relationship was a "covenant of the Lord."
 - b. God brings people into our lives for a reason. Close friendships become more significant in times of stress and pressure. For the Christian, the encouragement of a friend takes on a divine aspect.
 - c. When we break significant relationships, we cut ourselves off from the grace God intended them to provide. Even when a friend offends, we should consider Proverbs 27:6, "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend...*"
- 5. Trusting Transparency (I Sam. 20:9)
 - a. Close friendships require the risk of full disclosure—transparency. Fake people have few friends. Always attempting to impress or to "save face" results in shallow relationships at best and no relationships at worst.
 - b. Friendship with David required Jonathan's full disclosure of Saul's intentions. The heart of Jonathan assumed such as the natural course of friendship.
 - c. Potential friendships are often ruined before they begin because of an unwillingness to be transparent and/or an inability to handle properly the transparency of another person.
- 6. Sacrificial Commitment (I Sam. 20:14-17)
 - a. Jonathan recognized David's rightful claim to Israel's throne. He willingly gave up his claim as Saul's son, asking only that David forever express kindness to Jonathan and his extended family. David later fulfilled this covenant in caring for Jonathan's crippled son Mephibosheth (II Sam. 9).
 - b. Genuine friendship may well extend beyond the grave. David's commitment to Jonathan was not complete at Jonathan's death. Rather, David had the obligation of promise to fulfill in relation to Jonathan's family.

7. Undying Permanence (I Sam. 20:23)
 - a. Jonathan promised to warn David of Saul's intentions by shooting arrows across a field, the direction and distance of the arrow indicating Saul's mood. Should Saul's mood be negative, both men saw the danger in a face-to-face meeting.
 - b.