**RELATIONSHIP WITH FRIENDS**

Sunday School Lesson 9

*Building Right Relationships*

Proverbs 17:17

5/7/2023

**Introduction:** Two weeks ago, we looked at Biblical principles we ought to apply when it comes to our relationship with other family members. Before we move on to today’s lesson, let’s review those principles from the prior lesson. First, we observed that our responsibility to family members should never take precedent over our responsibility to the Lord. We are to put nothing above our relationship with the Lord. Second, we observed that we must be careful not to let family pressures dictate our decisions. Family pressure can be a very powerful thing. Many Christians have compromised their Biblical principles as a result of family pressure. Third, we observed that we must understand that family members are a usual source of criticism. This is especially true when we do not give in to the pressure that they place on us. We must be more concerned with pleasing God than pleasing family. Fourth, we observed that we must practice consistency in our separation, even with family. There is no Biblical command that requires for us to fellowship with outside family members. Consistency in separation is extremely important for ensuring that our children are being guarded from the wickedness and evil in this world. Fifth, we observed that we must guard against entanglements in unresolvable family conflict. Finally, we observed that we should use our family connections to witness of Jesus Christ. We shouldn’t waste the opportunity we have to be a witness. In today’s lesson, we are going to consider some Biblical principles that should govern our relationship with our friends.

1. **WE MUST TAKE THE LEAD ON SHOWING FRIENDLINESS IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS.**

* Proverbs 18:24 tells us that a man that hath friends must shew himself friendly. If we feel as though we do not have any friends, we may need to start being a friend. There are enough grumpy and unfriendly people in the world; the happiest and friendliest people ought to be Christians. We should go to church determined to be friendly.

1. **WHILE WE OUGHT TO BE FRIENDLY, WE DO NOT HAVE TO BE FRIENDS WITH ALL.**

* In James 4:4, believers are warned about friendship with the world. We are told that friendship with the world is enmity with God. Some believers have this misconception that Christians are supposed to be friends with everybody. Frankly, it is not possible for this to happen. Friendship with one individual might put us at odds with another person.

1. **WE OUGHT TO BE WILLING TO RISK RUINING A FRIENDSHIP RELATIONSHIP FOR THE SAKE OF TRYING TO STRENGTHEN OUR FRIENDS.**

* We likely all know what Proverbs 27:17 says. Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. In the same chapter, we find that verse six reminds us that the wounds of a friend are faithful. Verse 9 tells us that just as ointment and perfume rejoice the heart so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel. We understand that friends provide help to one another. They give each other faithful wounds that are meant to make each other stronger.

1. **WE MUST ENSURE THAT WE ARE NOT ENABLERS NOR SEEKING ENABLING PEOPLE IN OUR FRIENDSHIP RELATIONSHIPS.**

* In Proverbs 27:14, we see a warning about a type of friend who is a curse instead of a blessing to us. This type of friend is the one who rises up early to bless us with a loud voice. The reason this friend isn’t good for us has nothing to do with him waking us up. This proverb is referring to the friend who is given to much flattery. He rises up early to be the first one to tell us how great we are. He sets himself up to be our hype man. While our prideful flesh is inclined to such a person, we must understand that such a friend is not good for us. He likely has his own intentions and plans. Likewise, we must be careful not to be the same type of friend to others. If we are always telling them what they want to hear, we ought to ask ourselves the question of why we are doing that. Could it be for our own self-interest?

1. **WE OUGHT TO BE THOUGHTFUL ABOUT THE TYPE OF CONVERSATIONS THAT WE ENGAGE IN WITH OUR FRIENDS.**

* Proverbs 16:28 tells us that a whisperer separateth chief friends. In Proverbs 17:9, we see that he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends. Gossip is a killer of friendships. We must be careful in this matter, as it is easy to get caught up in gossip. We must ensure that we are not the type of friend who is quick to speak a matter or to cause discord to come about by sharing something that was not appropriate for us to share. Obviously, if the matter needs to be addressed, we are to seek to address it, but the Bible commands us to address it with our friend first personally. Additionally, we must consider generally the type of conversations that we have with our friends. We ought to tame our tongue. It must be brought under subjection to ensure that we maintain a healthy friendship.

1. **WE OUGHT TO PLACE AN EMPHASIS ON STEADFASTNESS/FAITHFULNESS IN OUR FRIENDSHIP RELATIONSHIPS.**

* In Proverbs 27:10, we are commanded not to forsake our friends. As we noted earlier, King David had to deal with friends forsaking him. He spoke of his own familiar friend in Psalm 41:9. Job also had to deal with his friends forsaking him. He noted how they had forgotten him in Job 19:14. He also noted how they abhorred him in Job 19:19. Jesus had to deal with His friend forsaking Him. He called Judas His friend when he came out to betray Him in Matthew 26:50. We ought to be friends who are faithful. We often use the word *loyalty* when it comes to a quality important in friendship, but faithfulness is much better. Ultimately, our loyalty is to Jesus Christ and His Word, so we cannot focus on loyalty in our friendship relationships as much as we can focus on being faithful.

1. **WE OUGHT TO CULTIVATE A PROPER GODLY RELIANCE IN ALL OF OUR FRIENDSHIPS.**

* In Luke 5:17-39, we have a wonderful example of friends encouraging Godly reliance. In this chapter, we have the story of the man who was sick with a palsy. His friends wanted to help him, but they knew that the only one who could really help him was Jesus. They did not just encourage their friend to see Jesus, but they actively took him to Jesus. In fact, they were willing to lower him through a roof just to get him access to Jesus. These men showed their friend that he needed Jesus. In our friendships, we ought to be sure to cultivate a reliance on Christ. In our pride and selfishness, we have a tendency to promote reliance on us. While we ought to certainly be there for our friends, we will not be able to always be there for them, and we do not have the power to solve every problem. While we might have what we consider good intentions, we are not truly doing what’s best for our friend when we teach them to be reliant on us primarily. Let’s point them to Christ! (Proverbs 17:18; 6:1; Psalm 41:9)

1. **WE OUGHT TO STRIVE NOT TO ALLOW OFFENCES TO HINDER OUR FRIENDSHIPS.**
   * In Luke 7:23, the Lord encouraged His disciples to not be offended at Him. He speaks to them about being offended again in John 6. The truth is that they did get offended at the words and actions of Christ. This is why they ran when He was arrested. This is why many of His other disciples left Him before He was ever even arrested. We look at these friends of Christ and see people who were not very good friends. Yet, how are we in our friend relationships? Do we allow little things to offend us? Do you realize that if you are friends with someone long enough, they are very likely to do something that might hurt you? The only friend who will never hurt you is Jesus Christ. He is our perfect friend. A person who gets easily offended is going to struggle mightily to find real friends. It is very likely that such a person will only find murmuring alliances instead. They will find people who will complain with them about everyone else. These individuals are not friends. Let’s be sure to be good friends, and let’s both strive not to offend but also to not be offended.