**PRINCIPLES OF FRIENDSHIP**

Sunday School Lesson 11

*Bible Principles for Daily Living*

Proverbs 27

8/21/2022

**Introduction:** In today’s lesson, we are going to be looking at the principles of friendship. As Christians, we should understand both the need for friends and the need for Biblical principles that govern our friendships. The Bible shows us that friends can play a very important role in our lives in both a good and bad way. There are examples of Godly friends who were able to be a great blessing to their companions. Sadly, there are also examples of ungodly friends who caused great damage to their companions. Before we list out some of the principles of friendship, let’s first remember that we have the greatest friend of all – Jesus Christ. In all things, He is our perfect and holy example. We should strive to be a friend to others in the same way that He is a friend to us. Let’s also consider why we need friends. What is the purpose of a friend? We need friends because the Lord did not make us to be alone. He made us a social creation. We also need friends because the Lord uses other people in our lives to help us in our Christian walk, and He uses us to be that help to others as well. As believers, it is especially helpful to have friends because there are so few who are walking the same narrow way that we are walking on. It’s such a wonderful blessing to be a part of a local church where we can find many great friends to help us through the battles of life. Let’s consider the following:

1. **FRIENDSHIP IS BASED IN LOVE THAT IS NOT SITUATIONAL OR SEASONAL.**

* Proverbs 17:17 tells us that a friend loveth at all times. I heard a preacher who would often say that somebody can’t help you if they do not have the ability to hurt you. When we give special love to a friend, we are letting that person in where we may not allow many others. Thus, a friend has a great potential to hurt us. Do we have the mindset with our friends that we will only love them as long as they don’t hurt us? Do we have the mindset with our friends that we will only love them for a season or in some situations. If a person loves his friend one day and not the next, that person is not following the Biblical mold of a friend. He is what we might consider to be a fair-weather friend. It might be better said of such a person that he is an acquaintance and not a true friend. David had to deal with such a supposed friend in Ahithophel. It seems that Ahithophel only loved David as long as David was in a position of prominence or power (Psalm 41:9). The same happened with the prodigal son.

1. **FRIENDSHIP IS BASED ON SOMEONE CHOOSING TO BE FRIENDLY.**

* 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. If we try to arrive as late as possible and leave as early as possible at church, are we making much effort to be friendly to others in the church family? Every friendship starts with someone choosing to be friendly. Somebody has to make that choice to be a friend. Those who are friendly in spite of difficulties or hurt feelings will have friends. It seems that many believers are waiting on the other party to be friendly in order to have friends. We ought to apply this principle to ourselves first and take the lead in being friendly to others.

1. **FRIENDSHIP IS BASED ON SELECTIVETY. NOT EVERYONE CAN BE YOUR FRIEND.**

* 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. This happened with David. Joab warned David in 2 Samuel 19:6 that his friendship with Absalom would put him against his own friends and followers. While Jesus is a friend who is willing to be closer than a brother, the Lord was not friends with everyone during His earthly ministry or even now. The Bible commands us in Proverbs 22:24 that we are not supposed to be friends with an angry man. A wise person will understand that friendship should be a selective thing. While you can be kind to people in general, you do not have to be friends with everyone in this world.

1. **FRIENDSHIP IS BASED ON THE SHARPENING OF ONE ANOTHER.**

* 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 one stronger. Isn’t it a great thing to spend time together with a friend? When you are having a bad day, isn’t it wonderful to enjoy the company of your friend? Your countenance brightens after the encounter. When you need someone to talk to, it’s a comforting thing to have a friend? Their counsel is just what you need to hear. Now, this principle should reinforce how important it is to select friends. Not every person is going to be a help to your countenance. They are not all going to give you good counsel. We must also consider what type of friend we are to others. Do we sharpen their countenance? Are we faithful in giving them helpful feedback?

1. **FRIENDSHIP IS NOT TO BE BASED ON THE BOLSTERING OF OUR EGO.**

* 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. Amnon had a friend like this. Rehoboam also had friends like this. While it is scripturally acceptable to speak encouraging words to our friends and even praise them for something that they have done, we must do so with meekness and their spiritual wellbeing in mind. Pride will do nothing for our friends but bring about their quick fall and destruction. If we are a true friend, why would we want that for them? The Bible has much to say about the flatterer and the damage that he can cause (Job 17:5; Psalm 12:2; Proverbs 29:5).

1. **FRIENDSHIP IS BASED ON TRUST AND CONFIDENCE. THERE IS NO PLACE FOR GOSSIP.**

* 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. It can be enticing to have a friend who knows all of the gossip, but a good rule of thumb to remember is that they are likely sharing information about you with others at the same time. We all desire friends who we can trust, but are we selecting friends who we can trust? Also, are we being a friend who can be trusted by others? A gossip often does not truly have compassion for his friend in time of trouble (Job 6:14). Instead, he may be quick to even condemn his friend to others. Let’s be a trusted friend.

1. **FRIENDSHIP IS BASED ON LOYALTY. WE OUGHT NOT TO FORSAKE OUR FRIENDS.**

* 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. Few things hurt more than a friend who forsakes you. We ought to be loyal to our friends, but we ought to ensure first that our loyalty is to Christ. We have a responsibility to choose Christ over any friend. We might also have to realize that there are times where it may not be profitable to fellowship with a friend. We can still pray for them and show love to them, but we are not to be unequally yoked with someone. Let’s take Biblical principles of friendship and examine the relationships that we have in this life. Be a true Biblical friend to someone.