

Worth the Effort . . .

One who makes good friends is rich indeed.

“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another”

(Proverbs 27:17). We all need friends with whom we can share our joys and our sorrows, our fun times, and our times of deepest heartache. Yet the development and continuation of a friendship requires effort. A close friendship requires solid communication, a sense of openness and trust, and mutual respect. The way we conduct our friendships will determine whether those friendships help or hurt us.

*“So long as we love we serve.
No man is useless while he is a friend.”*

—Robert Louis Stevenson

What Is Friendship?¹

- A friendship is a reciprocal relationship of liking and loving between two people.
- A friendship is a mutual emotion based on liking—*phileo* love. The Greek word *phileo* means “joy of being together, tender affection.”²
- A mature friendship also includes *agape* love. The Greek word *agape* means “a commitment to seek the highest good of another” (even when that one has characteristics you don’t like).

*“Oil and perfume make the heart glad,
and the sweetness of a friend comes
from his earnest counsel.”*
(Proverbs 27:9)

Levels of Friendships³

Casual

- Occasional contact
- Common interests and activities
- Some knowledge of accomplishments, abilities, and character qualities
- Concern for personal problems
- Guarded emotions
- No accountability

Close

- Regular contact
- Shared interests and activities
- Sensitivity to likes, dislikes, strengths, and weaknesses
- Personal comfort during trials and sorrows
- Willingness to become vulnerable
- Limited accountability

Committed

- Commitment of quality time to be together
- Mutual values and life goals
- Freedom to help correct character flaws
- Personal involvement in defending reputation
- Risk of transparency
- Mutual commitment with sacrificial love

*“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.”
(John 15:13)*

Selfishness: A Cause of Failed Friendships⁴

Self-contempt—having a poor self-image

Self-centered—absorbed with one’s own needs and desires

Self-conscious—shy, uncomfortable with attention of others

Self-deceiving—not honest about facts and feelings

Self-defensive—always justifying actions

Self-pitying—focusing on personal sorrow

Self-pride—perfectionistic

Self-righteous—judgmental

Self-serving—controlling and manipulative

Self-sufficient—not making quality time to nurture friendships

Key Verse to Memorize

*“A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity.”
(Proverbs 17:17)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Philippians 2:1–10

Do's of Friendship⁵

Do . . . Recognize that you need wise friends.
(Proverbs 13:20)

Do . . . Look for others in need of a friend.
(Philippians 2:4)

Do . . . Ask God to bring a faithful friend into your life. (1 John 5:14)

Do . . . Be approachable by smiling at others.
(Proverbs 15:13)

Do . . . Speak to others by name. (John 10:3)

Do . . . Listen attentively to others. (Ecclesiastes 3:7)

Do . . . Give genuine compliments and encouragement.
(Proverbs 16:21)

Do . . . Ask open-ended questions. (Proverbs 20:5)

Do . . . Help others verbalize their feelings.
(Proverbs 27:9)

Do . . . Look for the kernel of truth in your friend's criticism. (Proverbs 27:17)

*"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."
(Proverbs 27:17)*

Don'ts of Friendship⁶

Don't wait for others to reach out to you. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Don't share just facts . . . share your feelings. (Psalm 51:6)

Don't expect everyone to like you. (Proverbs 15:18)

Don't focus on your interests, but ask about the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3)

Don't be quick to voice your own opinions.
(Proverbs 18:2)

Don't harbor unforgiveness over offenses. (Proverbs 17:9)

Don't share negative information about others.
(Proverbs 16:28)

Don't look to a friend to be your source for love, for significance, and for security. (Philippians 4:9)

Don't let your friend take the place that the Lord alone should have. (Exodus 20:3)

Related Topics . . .

- Communication:
The Heart of the Matter
- Identity: Who Are You?
Do You Know Who You Really Are?
- Intimacy:
Learning the Language of Love
- Loneliness:
How to Be Alone but Not Lonely
- Mentoring:
How to Shepherd the Sheep

1. See Gary Inrig, *Quality Friendship* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 144–8.

2. See W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

3. For this section see Joe White and Mary White, *Friends & Friendship: The Secrets of Drawing Closer* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1982), 33–8; Em Griffin, *Making Friends (& Making Them Count)* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1987), 141–2.

4. For this section, see White and White, *Friends & Friendship*, 88–9; Conway, *Making Real Friends in a Phony World*, 36–7, 43, 49; Jerry White and Mary White, *How to Make Friends* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1990), 5–11; Inrig, *Quality Friendship*, 65; Alan Loy McGinnis, *The Friendship Factor* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1979), 29, 63–65, 68.

5. For this section, see McGinnis, *The Friendship Factor*, 71, 109–12, 123–4; White and White, *Friends & Friendship*, 88; White and White, *How to Make Friends*, 18; Conway, *Making Real Friends in a Phony World*, 39–40, 88–127, 163–71; Inrig, *Quality Friendship*, 24; Marie Chapian, *Growing Closer* (Old Tappan, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1986), 160, 163.

6. For this section, see White and White, *Friends & Friendship*, 61; White and White, *How to Make Friends*, 14, 21; McGinnis, *The Friendship Factor*, 42, 68, 113, 114, 155; Conway, *Making Real Friends in a Phony World*, 40, 70, 71, 75–76, 124–6; Chapian, *Growing Closer*, 52–53, 59.

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Friendship:
Iron Sharpening Iron.

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