

MAKING AND KEEPING FRIENDS, Pt 2

First Steps

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“No man is an island.” said poet John Donne. Roy C. Cook countered, “I believe every man is an island, but there are no limits to the bridges or harbors one can build.”

But know this: it requires sincere effort and patience to truly get to know someone. Solid friendships are *built*, not discovered.

Apart from the Bible, the best thing I’ve ever read about friendship is this quote from Dale Carnegie: *You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.*

*I went out to find a friend,
But could not find one there,
I went out to be a friend,
And friends were everywhere!*

Face to Face

Exodus 33:10 When the people saw the cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, they would stand and bow down in front of their own tents. ¹¹ Inside the Tent of Meeting, the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.

Here is an important clue. Friendship is a “face-to-face” relationship. Even with God. In a face to face relationship, the three critical elements are these: looking, listening, and talking.

A good friend is astutely observant of his friends. He watches them — their eyes, their gestures, their body language, their reactions to others, their moods, their self-care. He looks at them thoughtfully, to observe patterns and trends and needs.

A good friend listens attentively — to your words, to your silence, to your story, to your inexpressible feelings. He weighs your words, dismissing those that are simply hollow or superficial and carefully holding those that are truly you.

A good friend talks honestly and transparently — about things that are pertinent to your friendship, about personal values, about the way things feel, and about difficulties.

Communication is the currency of friendship.

Attitudes of Approach

Proverbs 29:5 To flatter friends is to lay a trap for their feet.

Ben Franklin asserted: “The same man cannot be both friend and flatterer.” Flattery may turn heads, but it never wins hearts — because it is basically deceitful and seeks *your* interest, not theirs.

When David was hiding from the wrath of King Saul, other dissidents came to join him.

1 Chronicles 12:17 David went out to meet them and said, "If you have come in peace to help me, we are friends."

If you approach to reprove and correct, you have assumed the role of judge and teacher, not friend. If your approach is aimed at your own advantage, you are not a friend but a parasite.

Psalms 25:14 The Lord is a friend to those who fear him. He teaches them his covenant.

Respect opens doors/hearts. Regard their value. Protect their dignity. Get on their physical level.

Practical Measures

Giving:

Luke 11:5 "Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.'

Hospitality is an essential ingredient of a spiritual life.
(Rev 3:20 "we will share a meal together as friends")

Proverbs 19:6 Everyone is the friend of a person who gives gifts!

Jesus told a story with this purpose:

Luke 16:9 Here's the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends.

Revealing:

John 15:15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.

Sympathizing:

I will share with you a tragic story from the pages of the Old Testament, but looking past the tragedy of it, my point is found at the very end.

Judges 11:30 Jephthah made a vow to the Lord. He said, "If you give me victory over the Ammonites, ³¹ I will give to the Lord whatever comes out of my house to meet me when I return in triumph. I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

Judges 11:34 When Jephthah returned home to Mizpah, his daughter came out to meet him, playing on a tambourine and dancing for joy. She was his one and only child; he had no other sons or daughters.

³⁵ *When he saw her, he tore his clothes in anguish. "Oh, my daughter!" he cried out. "You have completely destroyed me! You've brought disaster on me! For I have made a vow to the Lord, and I cannot take it back."*

³⁶ *And she said, "Father, if you have made a vow to the Lord, you must do to me what you have vowed, for the Lord has given you a great victory over your enemies, the Ammonites. ³⁷ But first let me do this one thing: Let me go up and roam in the hills and weep with my friends for two months, because I will die a virgin."*

³⁸ *"You may go," Jephthah said. And he sent her away for two months. She and her friends went into the hills and wept because she would never have children.*

This is what friends do. They share one another's burdens and pain. They empathize.

Job 2:11 When three of Job's friends heard of the tragedy he had suffered, they got together and traveled from their homes to comfort and console him.

A good friend is one who multiplies joys, and divides grief.

*I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you;
I love you not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making of me;
I love you not for closing your ears to the discords in me, but for adding to the music in me by worshipful listening;
You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign. You have done it just by being yourself.
Perhaps that is what being a friend means, after all.*

Power of Ten

In his book, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Norman Vincent Peale suggests:
Get a deep spiritual experience so that you have something to give people that will help them to be stronger and meet life more effectively. Give strength to people and they will give affection to you.

Once that is in place, here are Ten Commandments of human relations:

1. Speak to people. There is nothing as nice as a cheerful word of greeting.
2. Smile at people. It takes 72 muscles to frown; 14 to smile.
3. Call people by name. The sweetest music is the sound of his own name.
4. Be friendly and helpful.
5. Be cordial. Speak and act as if everything you do is a genuine pleasure.
6. Be genuinely interested in people. You can like everybody if you try.
7. Be generous with praise—cautious with criticism.
8. Be considerate of the feelings of others. It will be appreciated.
9. Be thoughtful of the opinions of others. There are three sides to a controversy: yours, the other fellow's, and the right one.
10. Be alert to give service. What counts most in life is what we do for others.

Remain True

Sam Rayburn, democratic leader from Texas, served for more than forty-eight years in the U.S. House of Representatives (1913–61), including seventeen years as speaker. At the height of his career, he was one of the most powerful men in the world, but he never outgrew his friends.

One night, a friend's teenage daughter passed away. Early the next morning the man heard a knock on his door and when he opened it, there was Mr. Rayburn standing outside.

"I just came by to see what I could do to help," said Rayburn.

"I don't think there is anything you can do, Mr. Speaker," said the broken father. "We are making all the arrangements."

"Well," Mr. Rayburn said, "have you had your coffee this morning?"

The man replied that they had not taken time for breakfast. So Mr. Rayburn said that he could at least make coffee for them. While he was working in the kitchen, the man came in and said, "Mr. Speaker, I thought you were supposed to be having breakfast at the White House this morning."

“Well, I was,” Rayburn said, “but I called the President and told him I had a friend who was in trouble, and I couldn’t come.”

Don’t Procrastinate

Don’t hold off on making friends until you have it all together. For one, that day may never come. And if it does, you’ll forever regret the multitude of opportunities you missed while waiting.

Donald Vairin of Oceanside, California, wrote in *Guideposts Magazine* of serving as a young hospital corpsman in the invasion of Guam during World War II. While navigating some dangerous waters, his boat hit a coral reef and came to a sudden, grinding halt. The commanding officer, realizing the ship was sinking, ordered everyone off at once.

Donald jumped into the ocean and sank like a rock, his carbine rifle, medical pack, canteen, and boots dragging him down. He forced himself to the surface, gasping for air, only to sink again. He tried to pull off his boots, but the effort exhausted him, and he began to sense he wasn’t going to make it.

Just then he saw a man thrashing in the water next to him, and in desperation he clutched onto him. That proved enough to hold him up and get him to the reef where he was picked up by a rescue boat. But Donald felt so guilty about grabbing the drowning man to save himself that he never told anyone what had happened.

About six months later on shore leave in San Francisco, he stopped in a restaurant. A sailor in uniform waved him over to sit with him, and as he did so he announced to his friends, “This is my buddy. He saved my life.”

“What are you talking about?” asked Donald.

“Don’t you remember?” asked the man. “We were in the water together at Guam. You grabbed on to me. I was going down, and you held me up.”

Even when our lives seem to be falling apart, in God’s grace it sometimes happens that in receiving help, we somehow impart it also. That is friendship—people who need each other and, in clinging to one another in hard times, find unexpected mutual strength.

Overcoming Obstacles

Some people make enemies instead of friends because it is easier.

Friendships don’t come easily for everyone. Whether we look at friendship as a desirable possibility or a divine obligation, natural difficulties face us. We have emotional hurdles to jump and misconceptions to overcome.

The beginning of an answer, in each case, is to recognize your difficulty and ask God for help.

Romans 5:11 *So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.*

I’ll speak more about overcoming next Sunday.

Taking the Initiative

Never ask yourself, “How can I find good friends?” Ask instead, “How can I be a better friend to someone else?” Imitate our Lord, who always takes the initiative in loving us.

- Find needs and meet them.
- Look for the lonely and love them.
- Remember birthdays.
- Make calls.
- Send notes.
- Be there in difficult times.
- Laugh with those who laugh, and weep with those who weep.

Keep your friendships in good repair, and you’ll be the richest person on the block.