



SERIES: FRIENDSHIP

Overview of Friendship

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The following is an example definition of a friend:

A friend is a trustworthy peer with whom we mutually choose to share life with for God's glory and our common good.

- **Trustworthy** – someone who is reliable in all circumstances
- **Peer** – someone who is your equal (differs from a mentoring relationship)
- **Mutually choose** – both you and the individual desire the friendship
- **Share life with** – a close bond is there; your lives are not separate from your friendship
- **For God's glory** – the friendship is one that God approves of and is honoring to him
- **Our common good** – both parties benefit from the relationship; each is serving the other

We seek out friendships and community because we have been made in God's image. God exists as a Triune Being where the Father, Son, and Spirit all have a perfect, loving relationship with one another. Thus, God has implanted in man the desire for meaningful relationships and it is something essential to our nature as humans. In Genesis 2:18 God declares that "it is not good for man to be alone". Friendships are a healthy and natural part of life and a piece of God's plan for our own benefit on earth.

Some of the blessings God intended through friendship include:

- Accountability
- Joy
- Companionship
- Support
- Service
- Sanctification
- Advice

It is important to understand what a true friend looks like because our world gives us different values and viewpoints on this area. Facebook is one primary example, where a person may literally have hundreds of online "friends"; this is a misunderstanding of friendship. The truth of the matter is that good friends are hard to come by and most people have no more than a handful of true, good friends. Not only that, but to have a solid friendship requires the investment of quality time, and so it is not possible for people to have dozens of "good friends" because the time is simply not there to invest. This is where it is important to understand the different lanes of relationships that exist.

Lanes of relationships is the idea that all people you encounter fall into one or more lanes of relationship with you. Knowing who is in what lane will go a long way to helping you know what to expect from each person and save you heartache and



grief. Below is an example of some lanes of relationships. You may want to think about adding more to the list.

STRANGER
ENEMY
PROBLEM PERSON
SOMEONE YOU KNOW
ACQUANTANCE
FRIEND
GOOD FRIEND
MENTOR
DISCIPLE
FAMILY MEMBER
CO-WORKER

Knowing who fits into what lane will help you define your relationship with each person. Also, it is important to know that your relationships with other people will change over time, and you may need to shift that person into a different category. When it comes to friendships, often this is a painful experience. One of the major shifts will come once you exit high school and move on to work/college/university. At this stage, you will need to perform many shifts, and you will likely lose touch with many people you once considered friends. It seems that every high school student thinks they will remain friends forever with their classmates. It is unthinkable that you would lose touch with people you see everyday. However, you will quickly learn that many relationships you have exist simply because you are placed somewhere at the same time (like school) and the relationship came about by circumstance and not choice. Once that natural connection is lost (by graduating and going different directions), you will become aware of whom your true friends really were.

Some shifts in relationship come about by changes in life stages (like leaving high school). However, some shifts may be necessary for other reasons as well. It may be wise, from time to time, to end a relationship altogether. Or, perhaps, it may be wise for you to pursue a relationship with someone new. Remember that your relationships will impact you dramatically, and you will do well to find the right lanes for the right people at the right time.

When it comes to friendship, one ought to be careful about who their friends are. The Bible has much to say concerning this:

- Psalm 1:1-3
- Proverbs 13:20
- 1 Corinthians 5:1-2
- 1 Corinthians 15:33
- Galatians 6:1

It is the clear teaching of Scripture that we are to be careful with whom we associate. This is because our relationships will affect us spiritually and will help or



harm our walk with Christ. Who we choose as friends will also do much to help or harm our Christian witness to others.

It is absolutely essential for Christians to have meaningful connections with other Christians who are mature and can be of good help. It is not wrong necessarily to befriend non-Christians but one must be careful when doing so and carefully consider all the ramifications of their decision.

Some things to ask when befriending non-Christians:

- Can I have a relationship with this person and still disassociate myself from their sin?
- Is this person dangerous? Could I be putting myself or someone in harm by pursuing this friendship?
- What values does this person hold? How will that affect me?
- What would my solid Christian friends think about my relationship with this person?
- What are the religious views this person holds? Do they respect my own religious views?
- Why do I want to be friends with this person in the first place?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What is my definition of a friend? Why?
2. Do I have a misunderstanding of who my friends are?
3. Are there people in my life who I need to change lanes of relationship with?
4. Am I thoughtful and prayerful in choosing my friends?