



Practical Christian Living

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you". Matthew 6:33
Course 4 Lesson 19



KEY VERSE:

*"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."
Proverbs 13:20*

Loneliness has been called the most prevalent problem of our time. This world is filled with lonely people. A person may be surrounded by people and yet be lonely because he does not have any real friends.

Why do we have such a deep need for friends? The reason is that we were made with a need for friendships and relationships. Concerning the man which He had created, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone."¹ We are social beings and we need the companionship and encouragement of friends. To feel lonely and rejected can make life almost unbearable.

THE INFLUENCE OF FRIENDS

All friendships are not alike. Concerning our relationships with others, we should understand that there are different levels of friendships:

1. acquaintance
2. casual friendship
3. close friendship
4. intimate friendship

Building Right Relationships

Part 1:
Making True Friends

We are not greatly influenced by acquaintances and casual friends, but we are influenced by those we choose as our close and intimate friends.

This brings us to an important principle regarding friendships: **We become like those we choose as our friends.**

SOME FRIENDSHIPS SHOULD BE AVOIDED

When we see our need for friendships we may think that we need all the "friends" we can get. But this is not so. It is better to have no friends than to have the wrong kind of friends. The Bible tells us plainly that we are to



"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise..."



We become like those we choose as our friends.



but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."
Proverbs 13:20

There are some associations over which we have no control. These associations usually have little influence over us. But the people we choose as our friends - those with whom we voluntarily spend our free time - do influence us greatly. This influence will be good or bad depending on the character of these people. The Bible says,

*"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."
Proverbs 13:20*

avoid certain friendships:

1. We must avoid close friendships with unbelievers.

When a person is first saved, he usually has a number of unsaved friends. These unsaved friends present a real danger to a new Christian. The danger is that they will draw him away from God and back into the world. You cannot maintain a deep friendship with an unbeliever without being influenced by him and adopting

some of his views and ways. The Bible says,

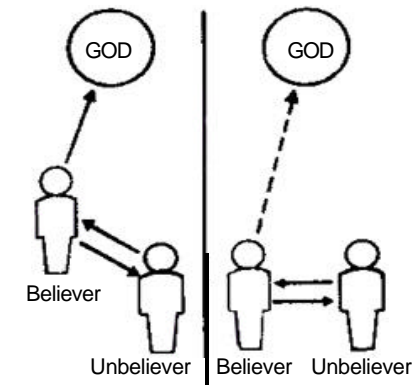
*"Do not be deceived:
Evil company corrupts
good habits."*

1 Corinthians 15:33 NKJB

You may still love a former friend, but your aim now should be to lead him to Christ. After a time, if he continues to reject Christ, you must not maintain a close friendship with him. If you do, your will be pulled down.

Once a young lady came to see the great preacher, Charles H. Spurgeon. She told him of a deep friendship she had with an unbelieving young man. She said that her aim was to lead him to Christ and that she had decided to be engaged to him fairly soon.

Since she was seeking his advice Spurgeon asked the young lady to stand on a table. Then he told her to grasp his hand and try her best to pull him up onto the table. She tried, but, of course, could not do it. Then Spurgeon said, "Now watch what happens when I pull you." With just one pull, she came down. Spurgeon then said, "It is easy to be pulled down, but hard to pull someone up." At once the girl saw what would happen in this relationship with the unsaved man.



A deep friendship with an unbeliever will pull the believer down.

We say again: You must not seek to maintain a deep relationship with an unsaved person. If you do, there can be but one result: **You will be pulled down.**

2. We must avoid friendships with scoffers and "fools."

God warns us against friendships with scoffers and "fools." The word "fool" in the Bible does not refer to a mentally deficient person but rather to one who has a rebellious attitude toward God and His Word. Scoffers are those who make fun of the things of God and scoff at the Bible. We are to avoid associating with such people. David said,

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

Psalm 1:1

If we want God's blessing upon our life, we should not "walk in the counsel of the ungodly" - that is, we should not seek or accept their advice. We should not "stand in the way of sinners" - that is, we should not go to the places to which they go. And we should not "sit in the seat of scornful" - that is, we should not fellowship with those who make fun of the things of God.

3. We must avoid friendships with those who have certain character defects.

The Bible not only warns us against associating with scoffers and fools, but it also warns us against making friendships with people who have certain character defects.

- **The gossip.** This is the kind of person who always has unfavorable news about someone which he passes on with great delight. The Bible says,

"He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him" Proverbs 20:10

- **The critical and discontent.** Beware of making friends with those who have a bitter and critical spirit, especially those who

are resentful and rebellious toward those in authority. If you associate with them, they will pass this critical spirit on to you.

- **The quick-tempered.** The quick-tempered person does not know how to control his anger. If you associate with him, you will learn his ways. The Bible says,

"Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul."

Proverbs 22:24,25

- **The immoral.** The Bible tells us to avoid associating with immoral people. (See Proverbs 7.) If I associate with those whose standards and conduct are contrary to God's Word, I am on the pathway to destruction. Over and over again, the Bible brings home this message: **We become like those whom we choose as our friends.**

LEARN TO SAY "NO"

To have the right kind of friends, you must say "No" to the wrong kind of friends. The great lesson God wants us to learn from the book of Proverbs is this: **Do not allow other people to entice you into doing wrong.** The Bible says,

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

Proverbs 1:10

One of the most important words we can learn to say is the tiny, two-letter word "No." We must learn to say it lovingly, firmly, and finally.



Learn to say, "No."

When you are asked to do something that would violate your God-given convictions, say "No" and, at the same time, identify with Jesus Christ. That should end the matter. Here is an example of what we mean:

Friend: "Come on, let's do so-and-so."

You: (Smile) "No, thank you."

Friend: "Aw, why not?"

You: (Smile) "Because I have committed my life to Jesus Christ."

Before Tom became a Christian, he enjoyed drinking beer with his friends in the local beer joint. Then Tom became a Christian and things were different. He no longer wanted to go to the beer joint. His friends didn't like this. They teased and nagged Tom until he gave in. Soon he was running around with his old drinking buddies again. That gave Satan the chance he was waiting for.

One night Tom and his friends played "chicken." Tom lost. The car rolled over and then smashed. Tom's friends dragged him out of the back seat and stretched him out on the ground. They were too drunk to realize that they should have waited for the medics to move him.

Tom's back was broken just below the neck. He spent many days in the hospital with heavy weights on his hips, legs, and arms. Tortuous days and long dreary nights followed each other in weary succession.

Now Tom uses a wheel chair to get around. He will never walk again. He has artificial limbs to try to take the place of the hands that are there but unable to function.

Did he come back to the Lord? I don't know. I just know how he suffered and how I suffered with him. I was his night nurse in the hospital.²

THE FRIENDSHIPS WE NEED

We have seen how the wrong kind of friends can influence us in the wrong way. It is also true that the right kind of friends can influence us for good. But how do we get the right kind of friends?

We tend to think that having the right kind of friend depends on our **meeting** the right kind of person. But God's Word shows us that it depends more on our **being** the right kind of person. In other words, **to have the right kind of friend, I must be the right kind of friend.**

Let us consider now the qualities we want and need in a true friend. As we consider each of these qualities, let us ask ourselves, "Am I this kind of person? Do I have this quality in my life?"

- **I need a friend who loves the Lord Jesus.**

Since we become like those we choose as our friends, we should see to it that our best friends are those who know and love the Lord Jesus. David, the man after God's own heart, chose his friends wisely. David said,

*"I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts."
Psalm 119:63*

- **I need a friend who loves and accepts me.**

One of my deepest needs is that of being loved and accepted by someone who is important to me. A noted psychologist said,

At all times in our lives, we must have at least one person who cares for us and whom we care for ourselves. If we do not have this person, we will not be able to fulfil our basic needs."³

When we have a friend who loves and accepts us just as we are, it sets us free to enjoy the

relationship. To have this kind of friend, I must be this kind of friend.

- **I need a friend who shares my burdens.**

A true friend is willing to become involved with my problems and to share my burdens. If I want this kind of friend, I must be a friend who shares the burdens of others. The Bible says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."⁴

- **I need a friend who encourages me.**

We all need encouragement. Someone has said, "We live by encouragement and die without it, slowly, sadly, and angrily." Do I encourage others?

- **I need a friend who is trustworthy.**

A solid friendship is based on mutual trust and confidence. If I want a friend whom I can trust, I must be trustworthy.

- **I need a friend who is honest with me.**

A true friend is one who is lovingly honest with me - one who cares for me enough to correct me. The Bible says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend."⁵

- **I need a friend who is thoughtful of me.**

Thoughtfulness is a quality that we appreciate in others. Likewise, we may be sure that others appreciate this quality in us. Am I thoughtful of others?

BUILDING RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

We have seen the qualities that we need in a friend. Now let us consider the attitudes on our part that will help us build right relationship.

1. "I accept myself."

If I have not accepted myself, I will find it difficult to have friends and to share my faith with others.

To accept myself does not mean that I believe I am all I want to be or should be. It simply means that I see myself as a worthwhile person, created by God, redeemed by God, and precious to God. As I learn to think this way about myself, I will be able to accept others and to express God's love to them.

2. "I accept you."

Everyone has the deep, inner need of being accepted. Showing others by my attitude and actions that I accept them opens the way for them to accept me.

3. "I believe that you are valuable."

One reason why people were attracted to Jesus was that He valued them. He did not consider any person to be unimportant. He saw every person as a special creation of God and exceedingly precious to Him.

4. "I will express God's love toward you."

Love is the foundation upon which friendships are built. Whom-ever we meet, we can be sure that God loves them and that He wants us to express His love to them.

5. "I will be friendly."

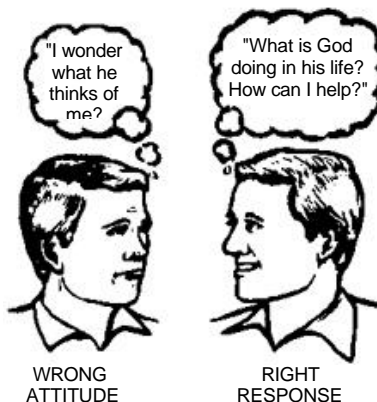
If we want friends, we must be friendly. The Bible says, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly."⁶

6. "I am interested in you."

You will make more friends by becoming genuinely interested in other people than you can ever make by trying to get other people interested in you.

If we are constantly thinking about ourselves and what others think of us, we become uncomfortable and self-conscious around people. We need to ask God to set us free from ourselves so that

we can reach out to other people with love and sincere interest. If your attitude needs changing, you can change it with God's help.



One way we show people that we care about them is by listening to them. A vital part of a good relationship is being able to share burdens and seek solutions to problems. This requires listening carefully without interrupting. It is important that we develop this ability. Poor listeners do not make good friends.

7. "I will treat you as I want to be treated."

Jesus gave us the golden rule in relating to other people. What is it? It is simply this: **Treat others as you would like them to treat you.** Jesus said,

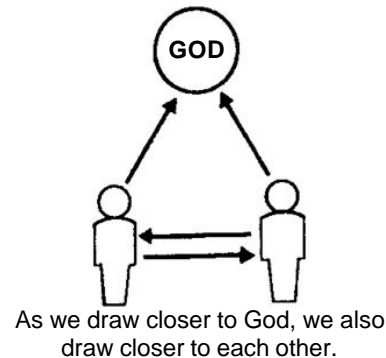
"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them"
 Matthew 7:12

YOU NEED TRUE FRIENDS

You need at least a few close friends you can depend on. If you do not have them, ask God to direct you to those whom He would like to be your friends. Make it your purpose to be a true friend to them. As you do, you will find that they will become your true friends.

As we choose our friends, our main concern should be that those who will most deeply affect

us are those who know and obey the Lord Jesus. The strongest and most lasting friendship between two people is one in which both are growing spiritually and are intent on following God and doing His will. As both friends draw closer to God, they draw closer to each others.



Remember always that the Lord Jesus is the Friend of friends. The Bible says, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."⁶ Jesus Christ Himself is that friend, and He should be your closest and most intimate friend. As you spend time with Him, you will become like Him. The Bible says,

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass (a mirror) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."
 2 Corinthians 3:18



Discovered Gem

We become like those we choose as our friends.

1. Genesis 2:18
2. Joyce Dix
3. William Glasser in "Reality Therapy"
4. Galatians 6:2
5. Proverbs 27:6
6. Proverbs 18:24

MEDITATION GUIDE

(TO STUDY AS YOU PREPARE FOR THE NEXT LESSON)

INSTRUCTIONS

On the following pages there is a Meditation Guide for each of the three lessons in this booklet. Each Guide has a key verse, comments, and questions that will help you to see from the Bible the main message of the lesson.

AFTER YOU FINISH the Question Pages, and have sent them in, we suggest that you work on the meditations. Do NOT send in your meditations. They are for you to personally use and keep.

THE PURPOSE of the Meditation Guide is to help you learn how to study the Bible on your own. It will help you to think (meditate) about a portion of Scripture in order to understand it. It will help you learn how to get in touch with God through His Word and through prayer.

MEDITATION. What does "meditation" mean? It does not mean to let your mind go blank. Quite the contrary, meditation means that you get hold of your thoughts and bring them all

together to concentrate on a portion of God's Word. As you do this, it gives the Lord an opportunity to make Himself known to you.

PAUSE TO PRAY. Before beginning each meditation, pause to pray, quieting your heart before the Lord so that you will be ready to hear what He has to say to you from the Bible.

If there are any words you do not understand, be sure to look them up in a dictionary.

MEMORY VERSE. You may wish to memorize the Key Verses, or other verses found in these Meditation Guides. Memorizing Scripture is one of the best means to meditate on God's Word. It would also be very helpful in keeping before you the main truth of each lesson.

NOTE: The King James Bible was used in preparing these Meditation Guides.

KEEP THIS GUIDE - DO NOT SEND IT IN

Lesson 19: Building Right Relationships - Part I: Making True Friends

Key Verse:

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."
Proverbs 13:20

The main truth of this lesson is this: We become like those we choose as our friends. The key verse points this out very clearly.

Psalm 1 also helps us to see the difference between the wise (godly) person and the ungodly (foolish) person.

Read Psalm 1 through several times, carefully noting the difference between the ungodly person and the person who is blessed by God.

From Psalm 1:1, the person God blesses does not:

1. walk _____
2. stand _____
3. sit _____

From verses 2 and 3, write in your own words a description of a godly person, the person God blesses. (What does he do and what is he like?) _____

What will happen to the ungodly? (Verse 6) _____

Are you the kind of person that God blesses? Do your friends fit the description of verses 1, 2 and 3 of Psalm 1?

In prayer thank God for blessing those who delight in Him and those who mediate on His Word.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Turn to the Question Page as you finish each lesson. Fill in the answers for that lesson before going on to the next lesson.
- 2. When you have studied all the lessons and have completed the Question Pages, prepare for mailing. Don't forget to write in your name and return address. Send in your ANSWER SHEET ONLY!

EXAM

Lesson 19

- 1. An important principle regarding friendships is this: _____

- 2. If you maintain deep relationship with an unbeliever, what will be the result? _____

- 3. The great lesson God wants us to learn from the book of Proverbs is this: _____

- 4. List seven attitudes that will help us build right relationships:
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
 - 4. _____
 - 5. _____
 - 6. _____
 - 7. _____
- 5. The strongest and most lasting friendship between two friends is one in which _____

Send your exam to the following address:
Latin Evangelical Outreach
 P.O. Box 549
 Irvington, New Jersey 07111-0549

Your Name and Address.....Please Print

Complete Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

ZIP Code _____

Do you have friends who would like to receive these lessons?

Please send us their address:

Complete Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____