

Wise Relationships

Step 1 Excite

True friendships bring us cheer, approval, comfort, love, and joy. We all desire friendships. God placed this desire in you. God designed you to have a personal relationship with Him through His son, Jesus Christ. He also placed a desire in you to want close friends. Your interaction with friends is an important element of emotional and spiritual growth. Friendships can have positive and negative influences. The friendships you make when you are young establish relational skills for the future.

In the book, *Relationships: What It Takes to Be a Friend*, Pamela Reeve explains, “We need relationships to help each other do God's will. When our hearts are heavy or anxious and we are struggling to accept God's will, we need someone to pray with us and for us.” Have your friends tried to push you into things that you don't want to do or know are wrong? As challenging as these pressures may be, they are an opportunity for you to learn to stand up to things that are not right.

Old Testament Law forbade yoking a donkey and an ox as a work team (Deuteronomy 22:10). Discuss why you think there was such a law. You'll see how this relates to friendship later in this lesson.

How many dependable, loyal relationships do you have? How did you choose each person as a friend? Brainstorm and make a list of character traits you see in your friends. Make another list of character traits you look for in finding new friends.

Step 2: Examine

Proverbs and Ecclesiastes speak of the benefits and requirements of friendship. Proverbs 17:17 says *A friend loveth at all times*. One of the greatest biblical examples of the “friend who sticks closer than a brother” is the relationship between David and Jonathan. Jonathan's loyalty to David runs deeper than his loyalty to his father Saul or to his own ambitions. Read and discuss 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:14-17.

Jesus is the ultimate friend of man. In the Book of John He said, “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Jesus tasted death for every man and shed his blood for the remission of man's sins (Hebrews 2:9;

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Matthew 26:28). Jesus offers man the ultimate friendship. He accepts people unconditionally. He listens and meets needs. He is faithful and He values you as a friend. If you are in need of a friend—begin with Jesus. He is your dearest friend.

Our earthly friends can bring help in time of trouble (Proverbs 17:17, 27:10; Luke 11:5-8), and help us with advice in confusing situations (Proverbs 27:9). Such as when Barzillai the Gileadite consoles David (2 Samuel 19:31-39), or when the friends of Jephthah's daughter help her mourn her early death (Judges 11:37-38). A friend may offer help at the risk of death, as Hushai the Arkite does when he spies for David in the court of Absalom the usurper (2 Samuel 15:32-37; 16:16-19; 17:5-16). A friend may rebuke in love, proving more faithful than a flatterer (Proverbs 27:6).

Friendship also has its dangers. Sometimes a friend can tempt you to evil, such as Judah's friend Hirah the Adullamite in Genesis 38:12-23, or Jonadab son of Shimeah in 2 Samuel 13:1-6. A wise relationship will refuse to be linked with evil. Commitment to Christ calls for purification “from everything that contaminates body and spirit” (2 Cor. 7:1).

The Bible is clear that we must be especially careful in choosing our friends. *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them* (Proverbs 12:26). ***He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed*** (Prov. 13:20). Friendships that are based on money (Prov. 6:1-5, 14:20, 19:4,6-7) or sin (Prov. 16:29-30, 1:10-19) are destined to be disappointing. So are friendships with people who have bad tempers (Prov. 22:24-25), who speak foolishly (Prov. 14:7), who rebel against authority (Prov. 24:21-22, NIV), or who are dishonest (Prov. 29:27). *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* ((Psalms 1:1-2).

To choose friends wisely, you must pray for discernment (Genesis 41:33, 39; 1 Kings 3:12; 2 Chronicles 2:12; Proverbs 10:13, 14:33, 16:21, 17:24,28) and ask your parents for advice.

Paul's urgent appeal not to be “unequally yoked” with unbelievers is an image from the Old Testament Law which forbade yoking a donkey and an ox as a work team (Deuteronomy 22:10).

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.¹⁷ Wherefore come out from

among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

Below are more resources about wise relationships:

Books



[Walking Wisely](#) 🔑 ♦

Read: Chapter 6 “Wisdom in Choosing Friends and Business Associates” (139-156) and Chapter 7 “Wisdom for Building Deep, Lasting, Godly Friendships” (159-182). You will be advised to read other chapters with upcoming lessons in this book.



[Our Father Abraham](#) ★

Read: “Marriage and the Family Through Hebrew Eyes (195-236).



[Faithfulness: The Foundation of True Friendship](#) by Jacalyn Eyre

Description: We all need faithful friends—people who accept us as we are, who seek our best interests, and who stick with us in crisis. Yet being a faithful friend is more important than finding one. This Fruit of the Spirit Bible study looks at sixteen essential qualities we need to become faithful friends. These qualities help us lay a foundation for lasting relationships. Designed for use in small groups or personal devotions, the interactive format will help you grow in your ability to reflect the character of Jesus. Six lessons are included with leader's notes. Paperback - 64 pages (2001) Zondervan; ISBN: 0310238633.



[Friendship Factor: How to Get Closer to the People You Care for](#)

by Alan Loy McGinnis

Description: Some people have countless friends—what's their secret? How can I get close and stay close to people I like? What's the key to a successful marriage? Alan Loy McGinnis, pastor and counselor, answers these and many more questions concerning the all-important topic of human relationships. Through the use of captivating case histories and anecdotes about such famous people as George Burns, Howard Hughes, Helen Keller, and C.S. Lewis, McGinnis shares the secret of how to love and be loved. Paperback - 192 pages (May 1979) Augsburg Fortress Publishers; ISBN: 080661711X.



[Friendship: Portraits in God's Family Album \(Fisherman Bible studies\)](#) by

Steve Brestin

Description: The Bible abounds with stories of deep and lasting friendship, portraits of characters in God's family. This study offers insights for better, more meaningful friendships by examining historical models, including Abraham, Ruth,

David and Jonathan, Mary and Elizabeth, Jesus, and Barnabas. The characteristics of commitment, unfailing kindness, and open sharing are repeated. Jesus is reflected in the faces of historical models, the One who models each of these characteristics perfectly. Fisherman Bible studies are among the most popular on the market. There are nearly sixty book, character, topical, or core studies to choose from, so you're bound to find something just right for your group. Each study features built-in leadership helps and a flexible format which you can use in all kinds of settings. Eleven studies for individuals or groups. Paperback (July 1999) Harold Shaw Pub; ISBN: 0877882878.



[Relationships: What It Takes to Be a Friend](#) by Pamela Reeve

Description: Explains how to make good relationships and how to avoid the pitfalls. This book incorporates life-changing principles needed to build and maintain healthy relationships. Hardcover - 96 pages (February 1997) Multnomah Publishers Inc.; ISBN: 1576730441.



[Virtues of Friendship and Loyalty](#) by William J. Bennett

Description: This book is a collection of character-building stories from the Bible, poetry, history, and mythology, revealing the many aspects of friendship and loyalty. The former Secretary of Education has brought together many genres of literature to create a portrait of the biblical principles of friendship and loyalty. It's a great book to read with your children to teach them the meaning of true friendship, and a great book for adults to gain a deeper understanding of the biblical principles of friendship. Hardcover - 140 pages (February 8, 2002) Word Publishing Group; ISBN: 0849917255.

Audio Tape



[Building Wise Relationships](#) by Charles Stanley

Description: David and Jonathan; Paul and Timothy. A true friend can accept the worst about you and still help you become your very best. In this three-tape audio series, Dr. Stanley describes relationships to avoid while he teaches that it takes sacrifice, time, and transparency to build deep, significant relationships. FRNDB Three audio tape series. Available from In Touch Ministries: 1-800-789-1473.

Step 3 Expand

Choose and complete one or more of the following activities:



Activity 1: Make a List

Make a list of statements about friendship from *Walking Wisely* by Charles Stanley, Chapter 6 (139-156). Examples: “A friend can drive you to excellence because....” or, “A friendship can drag you down because....” or “We should avoid the person that is rebellious because...”



Activity 2: Outline

Outline Chapter 7 of *Walking Wisely* by Charles Stanley. Write a summary [paragraph](#) for each of the Eight Steps to Building Wise Relationships.

1. Share concerns and interests
2. Focus on meeting another’s needs and not yours
3. Risk rejection and pain
4. Love sacrificially
5. Be open and transparent
6. Ask for forgiveness and be willing to accept forgiveness
7. Accept criticism and praise
8. Allow biblical principles to govern your relationship



Activity 3: Perform a Skit

King Saul’s oldest son Jonathan stripped himself of his own royal ceremonial dress and placed it on David in recognition of David’s divine election to be king (1 Samuel 18:4; cf. 23:17). The covenant of friendship between the two men is documented in the Bible. 1 Samuel says that “the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David.” Read about David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20; 23:16-18; 2 Samuel 1:17-27; 9:1-13. Write and perform a skit about their relationship for your family.



Activity 4: Dig Deeper

In 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, the appeal to *not be yoked together with unbelievers* means here not participating in pagan worship with unbelievers. This is made clear by the series of five rhetorical questions which follow in vs. 14b-16, especially the last one: *What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?* (16b). Believers cannot participate in idolatrous worship because they are *the temple of the living God*, and God has said, “*I will live with them and walk among them.*” Because a person cannot both walk with God and participate in idolatrous worship, believers must separate themselves from idolatry. Paul stresses this by appealing to OT calls to have nothing to do with what is *unclean* and OT promises of God to welcome as a Father those who turn from idolatry (17-18). In the light of these promises, Paul urges his readers to leave behind everything that contami-

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nates and to concentrate on *perfecting holiness out of reverence for God* (7:1). In Paul's time pagan worship was obvious. Think about and discuss what **pagan** means today. What are some pagan activities we should avoid?



Activity 5: Copy Passages

Copy at least five Bible passages or make a table of passages explaining how to identify people with true wisdom: Behavior (Proverbs 10:23), good deeds and humility (James 3:13), and what comes from the mouth (Psalms 36:3; Psalms 49:3; Proverbs 10:13-14,19,31; Proverbs 14:3; Proverbs 15:2,7; Proverbs 16:23; Proverbs 17:28; Proverbs 18:4; Ecclesiastes 10:12) are indicators of the presence or absence of wisdom. A wise person fears God's name (Micah 6:9), and obeys God (Matthew 7:24). Those who are wise bring joy to parents and leaders (Proverbs 10:1; Proverbs 14:35; Proverbs 15:20; Proverbs 23:24; Proverbs 27:11; Proverbs 29:3). A wise person listens to advice and instruction (Proverbs 12:15; Proverbs 13:1,10; Proverbs 15:12,31; Proverbs 19:20; Proverbs 21:11; Proverbs 25:12; Proverbs 29:15; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Ecclesiastes 9:17) and stores up knowledge (Proverbs 10:14; Proverbs 18:15; Proverbs 23:23). One with wisdom is wise about what is good (Romans 16:19) and shuns evil (Proverbs 3:7; Proverbs 10:23; Proverbs 14:16; Romans 16:19). He is not led astray by wine or beer (Proverbs 20:1), he shows restraint in the pursuit of riches (Proverbs 23:4), and he keeps his anger under control (Proverbs 29:11). One who is wise does not compare himself with or measure himself by others (2 Corinthians 10:12), and he does not show partiality in judging (Proverbs 24:23). A wise person does not boast of wisdom (Jeremiah 9:23) but is praised according to his wisdom (Proverbs 12:8) and inherits honor (Proverbs 3:35).



Activity 6 Make a List

Why does a friendship last or end? Make a list of benefits of friendship using the following verses: Proverbs 27:6,7,10, and 17:17.



Activity 7: Make a Contrast-and-Compare Chart

Look up two or three passages about friendships from the list below. Contrast and compare the chosen passages in a contrast-and-compare-chart.

- (a) Abraham and Lot, Gen. 14:14-16; (b) Ruth and Naomi, Ruth 1:16,17;
- (c) Samuel and Saul, 1 Sam. 15:35; 16:1; (d) David and Jonathan, 1 Sam. 18:14; 20; 23:16-18; 2 Sam. 1:17-27; 9:1-13; (e) David and Abiathar, 1 Sam. 22:23;
- (f) David and Nahash, 2 Sam. 10:2; (g) David and Hiram, 1 Ki. 5:1; (h) David and Mephibosheth, 2 Sam. 9; (i) David and Hushai, 2 Sam. 15:32-37; 16; 17:1-22;
- (j) David and Ittai, 2 Sam. 15:19-21; (k) Joram and Ahaziah, 2 Ki. 8:28,29; 9:16;
- (l) Jehu and Jehonadab, 2 Ki. 10:15-27; (m) Job and his three friends, Job 2:11-13;
- (n) Daniel and his three companions, Dan. 2:49; (o) Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and Jesus, Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-46; (p) The Marys and Joseph of Arimathea,

for Jesus, Mat. 27:55-61; 28:1-8; Luke 24:10; John 20:11-18; (q) Luke and Theophilus, Acts 1:1; (r) Paul and his nephew, Acts 23:16; (s) Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila, Rom. 16:3,4; (t) Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, Phil. 2:19,20,22,25.



Activity 8: Write a Poem

Write a memory poem about friendship. Follow one of the three traditional forms: Ballad, blank verse or Haiku (explained in “Related Forms,” *Writers INC.*) Follow the steps for searching, selecting, generating, writing, revising, and evaluating in “Writing Poetry” in *Writers INC* (includes a sample memory poem).

Step 4

Share at least one good thing that has resulted in your life from a good friendship. Then share at least one bad result in your life from a negative friendship. Are there more negative than positive results or vice versa? Discuss why this might be. Should you reevaluate your relationships? Do you think it is justifiable to have a negative friendship if your only other option is not having a friend? Ask yourself why you choose the friends you do. Do you feel it is necessary to have friends your own age? Do you consider your family members as your friends?

What kind of friend are you? Have you been a positive influence on your friends? Do they look to you for encouragement and advice? Do your friends trust you with their dreams and disappointments? Do you do most of the talking or most of the listening? Would your friends describe you as faithful? Do you share God’s Word with them? Do you pray for and with them?

If you aren’t happy with the answers to these questions, you should study the meaning of true friendship by reading one or more of the books listed in Step 2.

Sample Lesson from the [Wisdom Unit Study](#)
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