

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. Man is by nature a social creature. Genesis 2:18A; Ecclesiastes 4:7-12; Ps 68:6A
2. Man is also by nature an affectionate creature. We naturally form emotional ties to people we spend time and whose company we enjoy.
3. We have to be very careful about who we associate with, especially those we let into our heart, who we count as friends. Depending on their character, they can either be a blessing or a curse. Proverbs 27:17; 1 Corinthians 15:33
4. In this morning's lesson, let's discuss what makes someone a good friend—not a close friend, but a true friend and then make some applications of what we learn to our lives.

**DISCUSSION:** *Good friends are ...*

1. **Above all friends of God.** John 15:14; Deuteronomy 13:6-10A. Jonathan was a good friend to David because he put God before his family. 1 Samuel 20:30-32; 23:15-17
2. **Selfless.**
  - A. Good friends care about what they can do for people, not about what people can do for them. Proverbs 19:4, 6-7
  - B. Some people act like they are our friends for as long we are serve their purposes. But the moment we have served their purposes, or someone else would better serve their purposes, they are done with us and move on.
  - C. Jesus was a good friend because He did not sacrifice His friends for Himself, but Himself for His friends. John 15:13
  - D. "If we would build on a sure foundation in friendship, we must love our friends for their sakes rather than for our own" (Charlotte Bronte). "The loftiest friendships have no commercial element in them; to the contrary, they are founded on sacrifice. They neither expect nor desire gift for gift or service for service. No bushel of friendship for a bushel of favors" (Sarah B. Cooper).
3. **Loyal.**
  - A. "Firm and constant support or allegiance" (Oxford). Synonyms include "faithful, true, devoted; constant, steadfast, staunch, dependable, reliable, trusted, trustworthy, trusty, dutiful, dedicated, unchanging, unwavering, unswerving" (OAWT). 2 Samuel 16:15-17
  - B. God expects loyalty. Psalms 15:1-3. People need it. Betrayal by those who ought to be loyal friends is crushing. 2 Samuel 3:6-11
  - C. Good friends are always good friends—in season and out of season, when it is easy and when it is hard, when it costs us nothing and when it costs us everything. Proverbs 17:17
  - D. Onesiphorus was a good friend to Paul. 2 Timothy 1:15-17. "Lord Houghton was at party with some friends. When he left, one said of him, 'I have many friends who would be kind to me in distress, but only one who would be equally kind to me in disgrace, and he has just left the room'" (Sunday School Times).
4. **Trustworthy confidants.**
  - A. Good friends are people we can talk to about anything (Exodus 33:11A; John 15:15) because we know they will not violate our confidences (Proverbs 17:9).
  - B. According to an Arabian definition, "a friend is one to whom we may pour out the contents of our hearts, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will sift it, keep what is worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away." "A friend is one who knows all about you and loves you just the same."
5. **Wise and forthright counselors.**
  - A. Jonadab may have been Amnon's friend, but since he was not wise he was definitely not a good friend. 2 Samuel 13:1-29. Haman may have had friends, but since they were not wise they were definitely not good friends. Esther 5:14; 7:9-10
  - B. One person defined a good friend as someone who "is committed to my best under all circumstances regardless of the risks to our relationship." He was right. Proverbs 27:5-6
6. **Compassionate.** Good friends rejoice when we rejoice and weep when we weep. Job 2:11; 6:14; Luke 15:6

## 7. **Considerate.** Proverbs 27:14

A good “friend is a human soul whom we can trust utterly; who knows the best and the worst of us, and who loves us in spite of all our faults; who will speak the honest truth to us; who will give us counsel and reproof in the day of prosperity and self-conceit, but who will comfort us and encourage us in the days of difficulty and sorrow” (Kingsley).

**APPLICATIONS:** *We must:*

1. **Be a good friend.** *It is God’s expectation, other people’s desperate need, an incredible honor, a great act of faith, and an immeasurable blessing.*

2. **Seek good friends.**

A. *We need them.* Proverbs 18:24

B. *We must be a good friend to find good friends.*

1) Proverbs 18:24A NKJV, “A man who has friends must himself be friendly.”

2) “There is a magnet in your heart that will attract true friends. That magnet is unselfishness, thinking of others first ... When you learn to live for others, they will live for you” (Yogananda). “You can make more friends in two months by becoming really interested in other people, than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you” (Carnegie).

3) “Loneliness ... may be one’s own fault. People increase the potential for loneliness when they are intensely competitive, struggling for independence, preoccupied with themselves and their successes, inclined to be critical or intolerant, holding on the grudges, or demanding attention from others. When such attitudes persist, other people are driven away and loneliness intensifies” (Collins).

3. **Appreciate good friends.**

A. *Know who they really are.*

B. *Value their true worth—they are “more precious than gold.* There is no man so poor that he is not rich if he has a friend; there is no man so rich that he is not poor without a friend.”

C. *Recognize their true rarity—never take them for granted (Proverbs 20:6).*

D. *Listen to them (Proverbs 27:9-10).*

E. *Rejoice when they love us enough to tell us things that are hard to say/hear (Galatians 4:16).*

4. **Be very careful with money matters.** Job 17:5

5. **Not be discouraged when friends—good or otherwise—let us down.**

A. It will happen. Job 19:14, 19, 21A; Psalm 41:9; Hosea 6:4

B. Except for God, no good friend is perfect—and that includes us (Luke 14:7-11). We must be patient and forgiving towards people who are trying to be our good friends. Otherwise, we will be very lonely people. “He who seeks a friend without fault remains without one” (Turkish saying).

C. But most of us do not expect good friends to be perfect, just perfecting. What really hurts us to the core is discovering that people we thought were trying to be our good friends never really were, that they were only using us, that they never really loved us as they said and we thought.

D. In such cases, we must be:

1) *Patient and forgiving—they are probably not aware of what they have done and we do not want to be very bitter people.*

2) *As unconditional friends to them as they were conditional friends to us.*

3) *Vulnerable to similar hurt—the upside rewards of good friends are more than worth the downside risks of false friends (Proverbs 21:21).*

4) *Complete in the knowledge that God is a friend who will never let us down.*

**CONCLUSION:** Good friends—let us be them, get them, value them, and never allow false friends to rob us of the joy of true friends—the greatest of which is God.