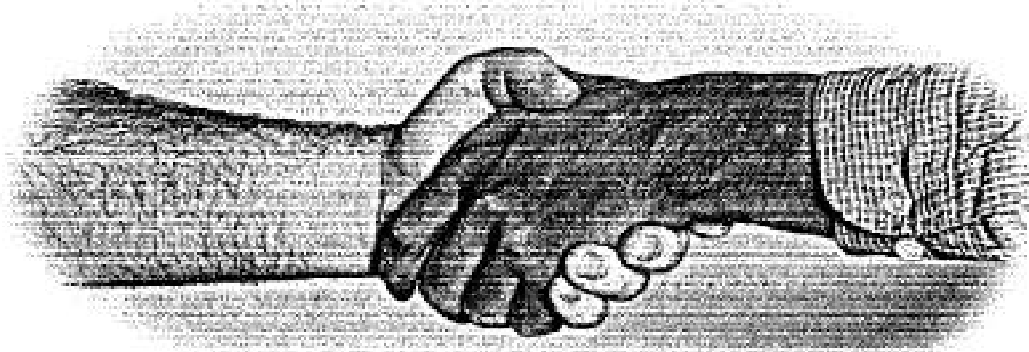


# Friendship



SABBATH—JUNE 24

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** 1 Samuel 20; John 15:12-15; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Philippians 2:3-8.

**MEMORY VERSE:** "A friend loves at all times. He is there to help when trouble comes" (Proverbs 17:17, NlrV).

**MANY PEOPLE BOAST THAT THEY HAVE LOTS OF FRIENDS.** But these people are friends only when friends are useful to them. True friendship does not focus on usefulness. Instead, true friendship shows a personal interest in other people. True friends are people with whom we can talk, listen, and share our time and emotions. True friendship is an example of what our relationship with God should be. So friendship must be based on something more than just a need to use someone to reach our goals.

"Our love for one another comes from our common connection to God. We are one family. We love one another as He loved us. This true friendship is different from the shallow courtesy of the world and the false show of two-faced friendship."  
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 211.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** How does the Bible picture friendship? How can friendship become a negative experience? How do friendships show our connection with God? What is the basic principle<sup>1</sup> behind true friendship? What must we experience in our hearts in order to be true friends?

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 31.

<sup>1</sup>principle—a basic rule that is the basis for a more specific rule.

## SUNDAY—JUNE 25

**WHAT IS A FRIEND? (1 Samuel 20).**

We cannot always choose our relatives. But we do have some freedom in choosing our friends. It seems normal for humans as social creatures to get in touch with people we think are true friends. But not all friendships are the same. Hundreds of years ago, the Greek thinker Aristotle named different kinds of friendships. He believed these different kinds of friendships were based on the reasons why people had friends. Since Aristotle, many other writers have discussed the very interesting subject of friendship.

**Think about someone who is, or was, a friend of yours. What special things helped to form your friendship with that person? How does Proverbs 18:24 show the characteristics (traits) that explain your experience of friendship?**

The word translated “friend” in the last part of Proverbs 18:24 comes from the Hebrew word for “love.” In other examples, that word means “lover.” A friend is someone with whom you have a close bond (tie). This bond is different from someone you just know or a coworker.

**Read the story of friendship between Jonathan and David in**

**1 Samuel 20. What characteristics come from this story that help us understand what friendship is? How do these characteristics compare<sup>2</sup> with the traits in Proverbs 18:24? How do Jonathan’s actions contrast<sup>3</sup> with what Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:1?**

God was the center of David and Jonathan’s friendship (1 Samuel 20:14).



Let God be the center of your friendships.

**Think about a friend of yours. How could you better show the traits of friendship that are in 1 Samuel 20 to this friend?**

## MONDAY—JULY 26

**BAD FRIENDS  
(2 Corinthians 6:14-18).**

The word *friend* does not have to mean something positive. Many lives

<sup>2</sup>compare—show how things are the same.

<sup>3</sup>contrast—show how things are different.

have been ruined because of bad friends. For example, many people who struggle with drug or alcohol abuse often admit they received this bad habit from their best friends. How strange, but how common, when best friends turn out to be bad friends.

For example, a young man was an outcast<sup>4</sup> in school. He came from a cold, uncaring family. But he found friends who made him part of their circle. He soon knew they would give their lives for him. He felt such a sense of belonging that he would have risked his life for them. Sounds like a great thing, right? Sounds like the beauty of friendship as shown in Proverbs 18:24, right? No! Because we are talking about a young man who joined a rebellious youth gang involved in violence, theft, and drug abuse. Friendship, even with a “good friend,” can be dangerous.

**Notice the differences (or opposites) in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. What do these differences tell us? We often use 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 to talk about who people should marry. But what principles in these verses help us understand the kind of friendships God wants us to have? How should these principles guide our friendships? In what ways can we take these principles too far? How do we balance being separate with Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:13, 14?**

“Paul is telling the Corinthians that they cannot have compromising<sup>5</sup> relationships<sup>6</sup> with unbelievers. We are not to have relationships that cut our connection with God.”—Adapted from W. Larry Richards, *2 Corinthians*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1998), pp. 148–150.

**How can you tell if your friendship with a nonbeliever is hurting you spiritually? If you believe your friendship with a nonbeliever is hurting you, what should you do?**

TUESDAY—JULY 27

**LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU  
(Philippians 2:3-8).**

As humans, we are selfish and self-centered. We always try at first to look out for “number one.” Some people may struggle with this problem more than other people. But all sinners like to look at themselves first. For any good relationship people need to keep these selfish traits under control. In the end, only the power of God working on the heart can make needed changes for a true friendship. In Sunday’s lesson, we saw that God was the center of the friendship between David and Jonathan. No friendship will succeed if the friends think of themselves only.

<sup>4</sup>outcast—a person who does not belong to any group; a loner.

<sup>5</sup>compromising—giving up a part of your faith so you can get something else that you want.

<sup>6</sup>relationships—the connections we have with other people in everything we do.

**What important principle do we find in Philippians 2:3, 4? Why is this principle so important for having true friendships?**

The key to a good friendship is found in the same principles for a good marriage: Each person must be willing to put the good of the other person ahead of herself or himself. Jesus is our example. He always gave Himself for the good of other people. Think of the kind of friendships we would have if we were to value other people more than we value ourselves. What if we looked not upon just our own concerns but upon the concerns of other people?



Jesus gave of Himself for other people.

The sad fact is that so many friendships are based on selfish motives.<sup>7</sup> “What is this friendship doing for me?” we often ask. When someone realizes there is no profit for her or him in the friendship, the friendship cools, or may end. We should put the needs of other people ahead of our needs. But often,

<sup>7</sup>motives—the reasons why we do what we do.

<sup>8</sup>events—things that happen.

we find that the jealousy of one friend for another friend ruins that friendship. In his *Confessions*, Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote about how many of his friends turned against him when he became famous. This is not unusual. It is human nature without the control of Jesus’ power working in our lives.

**What changes can we make in ourselves that encourage strong friendships? Philippians 2:5-8. Are your friendships marked by jealousy and selfishness? Think and pray about these verses in Philippians.**

WEDNESDAY—JULY 28

**HOW JESUS MADE FRIENDS  
(Luke 19:1-10).**

Jesus made friends by talking with people and by listening to them. He took time to eat with other people and to celebrate special events<sup>8</sup> with them.

**What do the following verses tell us about Jesus’ skills in making friends?**

John 4:4-26 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 19:1-10 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 14:1-14 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Jesus was good at making friends.

All these situations showed that Jesus came to people where they were. He joined them as one with them. He did not think that He was too good for the Samaritan<sup>9</sup> women or too low for the top Pharisee.<sup>10</sup>

Jesus was ready to listen, to get involved, and to show a real interest in other people. We will need to reach out to people, listen, be kind, and make

other people feel they are valued and accepted. Then we will be able to establish meaningful friendships with the most unexpected people.

Establishing meaningful friendships is important if we are to reach other people with the gospel. How are unchurched, worldly people ever going to listen to a sermon? How can they ever be encouraged to read a book about Jesus? Many people will be interested enough to decide they want to know more about Jesus only if they see Christianity at work in the life of a true friend.

**Jesus did not make friends just for the sake of making friends. He became friends with people so He could teach them about eternal<sup>11</sup> life. What encourages you to make friends with nonbelievers? If it becomes too clear that a friend is not interested in your faith, why should you remain friends with that person?**

THURSDAY—JULY 29

**NOT SERVANTS BUT FRIENDS  
(John 15:12-15).**

No matter how good our friendships are, we should never depend totally upon people (Jeremiah 17:5; Psalm 118:8, 9). Sooner or later people will fail us. And we fail people too. That is why our Best Friend must be Jesus. We can know and trust Jesus fully

<sup>9</sup>Samaritan—a person from Samaria. The Samaritans and Hebrews were enemies.

<sup>10</sup>Pharisee—a religious leader who believed a person must keep God's law to be saved.

<sup>11</sup>eternal—lasting forever.

(John 14:9). Human friendships are important. We can learn to trust in the love of friends. But we build upon a weak foundation if we do not build our faith upon Jesus first. Jesus is the Rock of Matthew 7:24, 25.



Jesus must be our Best Friend.

**What did Jesus call His disciples? John 15:12-15. What does it mean to say we are “friends” with Jesus, instead of His servants? What kind of relationship does Jesus want with us? What can we learn from our friendship with Jesus that can help us with other friendships? What is special about our friendship with Him that we can have with no one else?**

In John 15:13, Jesus tells us what the greatest of all love and friendship is like. Such love and friendship is a result

of wanting only the best for other people. In John 15:13, Jesus points to His own perfect example of giving His life for us on the cross. We have the assurance (hope), peace, and security (safety) that comes from knowing God as our Friend. Then we can give of ourselves to become a true friend to other people.

**John 15:13 shows a very good example of friendship. How many friends do you have for whom you would be willing to die? Do you have to be willing to die for someone so you can be called her or his friend? What do you think Jesus was telling us in this verse? What principle was He teaching?**

#### FRIDAY—JULY 30

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “Friendship may be the only form of human social relationship that is made strong by kindness. . . . A person may continue to be a parent, spouse,<sup>12</sup> worker, and neighbor, without being kind. . . . But with friendship, kindness is the glue that holds people together. If I should embarrass a friend, be unkind to the feelings of a friend, cause unnecessary harm or hurt to a friend, or in any way treat a friend for my own pleasure and satisfaction, the friendship goes away.”—Adapted from Ray S. Anderson, *Living the Spiritually Balanced Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House Company, 1998), pp. 78, 79.

<sup>12</sup>spouse—a husband or a wife; the person you are married to.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Research shows that new Seventh-day Adventists lose most of their old friends within seven years of joining the church. Their old friends are replaced by other friends whom they have met in their new church. When might it be a good idea for a new Seventh-day Adventist to lose his or her old friends? When would it be a good idea for a new Seventh-day Adventist to keep his or her non-Adventist friends of the past?
2. The Bible presents some high standards<sup>13</sup> for friendship. This includes the giving up of one's life for a friend. How do we balance that with our responsibilities to our family and to

God? What happens when our responsibilities to friends conflict with our responsibilities to our family or to God?

3. The ancient<sup>14</sup> poet Euripides wrote that "real friendship is shown in times of trouble. Prosperity (success) is full of friends." How does what Euripides wrote compare with what we have studied this week about friendship?

**SUMMARY:** The Bible presents some high standards for friendship. These standards do not come naturally to the human heart. But through Jesus' example and power, we can be the kind of friends God wants us to be.

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<sup>13</sup>standards—rules; examples.

<sup>14</sup>ancient—very old.