



MAKING FRIENDS FOREVER

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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Making Friends Forever

SERMON REFERENCE: Proverbs 17:17

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2001

One of the greatest and deepest needs we have as human beings is friendship. We all long for someone who knows, loves, and accepts us—someone who understands our wants, needs, hurts, and fears.

The Book of Proverbs is full of wisdom for making friends forever, and how to first be the friend we all need.

Proverbs 17:17 says, “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

There are certain marks of true friendship.

A friend is someone who shares his or her strengths, blessings, and hope; a friend will share in hard times and in celebration; a friend loves at all times.

A true friend is also someone who sharpens; Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” A good friend is the sharp edge of our lives, who encourages, challenges, and confronts us when necessary; true friends make us better people.

And a friend is someone who sticks; Proverbs 28:14 says, “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

There are some important things to remember when making friends:

We make friends by being friends; it is wise to remember that people want to be accepted, acknowledged and appreciated. We need to pay attention to people, become great listeners, and find something to compliment.

People also want to be affirmed and assured; in this negative world, the most beautiful thing we can do is empathize with one another.

When we build friendships, we must remember to maintain them. Adrian Rogers says, “You can have a lot of acquaintances, but genuine friends are costly. They cost time and effort; there is an investment; don’t have more friends than you can show yourself friendly to.”

Finally, we must remember the ministry of a friendship. There are lost people in this world who need the love and friendship of Jesus Christ; as His Body, we have the responsibility of loving as He loved.

Life Application

Are you in the ministry of making friends? If you are a leader, set the tone and the atmosphere; be approachable and real. As a church member, learn how to greet people, and remember to be warm and welcoming to the people the Lord brings in.



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) "A friend loveth at all times."
 - i) Proverbs 17:17
- b) One of the greatest and deepest needs of human hearts is for friendship.
 - i) We have a longing for someone who knows, loves, and accepts us.
 - ii) Somebody with whom we can share.
 - iii) Somebody who understands our deepest needs, hurts, fears, and victories.
 - iv) We need friends.
 - (1) To say that we do not need a friend would be to deny our humanity.
- c) Today's message is about how to make friends forever.
 - i) It will show us how this can be one of the greatest ministries we can ever do in the name of Jesus and for the glory of Jesus Christ.

2) THE MARKS OF A FRIENDSHIP

- a) A friend is someone who shares.
 - i) Some definitions of friendship:
 - (1) A friend is somebody who multiplies our joys and divides our grief.
 - (2) A friend is someone who understands our silence.
 - (3) A friend is someone who comes in when the whole world goes out.
 - ii) Proverbs 17:17
 - iii) We need friends who will:
 - (1) Strengthen us with their prayers.
 - (2) Bless us with their love.
 - (3) Encourage us with their hope.
 - iv) A friend is on the scene when we need him or her.
 - v) A friend is someone who is wise enough to leave us alone when we want to be alone.
 - vi) A friend is there to help us celebrate when there is something to celebrate.
 - (1) A friend is a cause for celebration when there is nothing else to celebrate.
- b) A friend is someone who sharpens.
 - i) Proverbs 27:17
 - ii) A good friend will put a keen edge on our lives.
 - (1) A good friend sharpens us; a false friend will blunt and dull our lives.
 - iii) Our English word "friend" relates to the word "freedom."
 - (1) A friend is someone who sets us free to be all that we can be.
 - iv) A friend is someone who encourages us.
 - (1) They know how to speak the word that will draw us out and lead us on.
 - v) Friends make us better people.



- vi) Our best friend is Jesus.
 - (1) He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.
 - (a) Proverbs 18:24
 - (2) He sharpens us by His constant presence with us.
- vii) It is a wonderful thing when the person we are married to is a friend.
- viii) Friends sharpen us not only by constantly encouraging us, but also by challenging us and confronting us when we have done wrong.
 - (1) Proverbs 27:6
 - (a) A friend will love us enough to confront us when we've done wrong.
 - (b) In this verse, "kisses of the enemy" are flattery.
 - (i) There are a lot of people who love to flatter us.
 - (ii) The difference between a flatterer and a hypocrite:
 - 1. The hypocrite will say behind your back what he will not say to your face.
 - 2. The flatterer says to your face what he will not say behind your back.
 - (2) Thank God for those who love us enough to tell us when there is something that needs to be corrected.
- c) A friend is someone who sticks.
 - i) Proverbs 17:17
 - ii) If you want to know who your real friends are, then make a mistake.
 - iii) A real friend is someone who stays with us.
 - (1) Proverbs 18:24
 - iv) Proverbs 27:10.
 - (1) Do not forsake a friend.
 - v) A friend is someone who walks in when the whole world walks out.
 - (1) Not like a fair-weather friend who jumps on board when the sun is shining or jumps overboard when the rough times come.
- d) We all have a lot of acquaintances, but thank God for friends.

3) THE MAKING OF A FRIENDSHIP

- a) Friendships are built.
 - i) They do not happen overnight.
- b) Five secrets in making a friend:
 - i) All five of these secrets come out of one great principle given by Jesus.
 - (1) Luke 6:31
 - (a) "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."
 - ii) "We can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than we can in two years by trying to get other people interested in us."
 - (1) Many people are self-centered.
- c) Here are the five secrets in making a friend:
 - i) People want to be accepted.
 - (1) Jesus called His disciples friends.
 - (a) They were not perfect, but Jesus accepted them.



- (b) Jesus does not change us so He can love us, He loves us so He can change us.
 - (2) We are accepted by the grace of God.
 - (a) We ought to accept others by the grace of God.
- ii) People want to be acknowledged.
 - (1) If we accept somebody, then we have to acknowledge them.
 - (a) We have to know that they are there.
 - (2) The road to the heart is often through the ear.
 - (a) Pay attention to people.
 - (b) When people speak, give them your full attention.
 - (i) Give them eye contact.
 - (3) Active listening is a God-like quality.
 - (a) Psalm 34:15
 - (i) God's eyes and ears are on us.
 - (ii) If we want people to know, love, and appreciate us, then we have to put our eyes on them and open our ears to them.
 - 1. And we will be like God.
 - (b) Psalm 116:1
 - (4) When we acknowledge a person, that says they are important to us.
- iii) People want to be appreciated.
 - (1) Find something in somebody that you can complement and appreciate.
 - (2) "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated."
 - (3) Paul had to address a lot of problems when dealing with people in the Bible and we see in the epistles that almost every time before he corrected them, he would say a word of appreciation or commendation, not condemnation.
 - (4) Learn to appreciate people.
- iv) People want to be affirmed.
 - (1) We live in a negative world.
 - (2) People have difficulty doing these steps in making friends because they themselves have such a negative self-image.
 - (3) There is a problem of teenage suicides today.
 - (a) Many of these are with teenagers who need to be affirmed.
 - (b) They need to be loved.
 - (c) They have a negative self-image.
 - (d) They are victims of constant put-downs.
 - (e) They feel that they are not appreciated.
 - (i) Therefore, they are not affirmed.
 - (4) Proverbs 11:9
 - (a) Evil words destroy; godly skill rebuilds.
- v) People want to be assured.
 - (1) They want empathy.
 - (2) They want understanding.
 - (3) Romans 12:15



- (4) When people are going through heartache and problems, they are not primarily interested in our answers or solutions.
 - (a) But they will be interested if we sit down and cry with them and assure them that we care.

4) THE MAINTENANCE OF A FRIENDSHIP

- a) When we build a friendship, we have to maintain it.
- b) Proverbs 17:17
- c) Friendships are difficult to maintain.
 - i) Do not have too many of them.
 - ii) Proverbs 18:24
 - (1) One translation of this passage says, "He who would have many friends must show himself friendly."
 - (2) The New American Standard's translation says, "A man of many friends will come to ruin."
 - (3) These two translations are just the same thing rendered a different way.
 - (a) This verse means to not have more friends than we can show ourselves friendly to.
 - (b) Don't get overextended with our friendships.
 - iii) We can have a lot of acquaintances, but genuine friends are costly.
 - (1) They cost time and effort.
 - (2) There is an investment.
 - (a) But it is worth it.
- d) Benjamin Franklin said, "Be slow in choosing a friend and slower in changing a friend."
- e) Friends can bring personal, social, emotional, and financial demands.
 - i) Friendships need to be maintained.

5) THE MINISTRY OF A FRIENDSHIP

- a) The Lord Jesus ministered to us.
- b) John 15:13-14
 - i) In this passage, the Lord Jesus Christ is talking about His ministry; laying down His life for His friends.
- c) Jesus was a friend of sinners.
 - i) That is why they crucified Him.
 - ii) The lost need the love and friendship of Jesus Christ.
- d) We are now His body, and we are to reach out to those who are perishing.
 - i) Practical ways we can do this:
 - (1) We as the leaders (Sunday school teachers, deacons, church staff), need to set the tone and the atmosphere.
 - (a) We need to be approachable and real.
 - (b) We need to learn people, not as simply numbers, but as names.
 - (i) Memorize names.
 - (2) We as the church need to learn how to greet people.
 - (a) We need to learn how to shake hands.



- (i) Give a good, warm handshake and a friendly touch.
- (b) Meet people with a look, a word, and a touch.
 - (i) A look: a smile upon your face.
 - (ii) A word: say, "Good morning!"
 - (iii) A touch: just a hand on the shoulder.
 - 1. Don't be overly aggressive.
- (3) The church needs to influence.
 - (a) It is more important to influence people than it is to impress them.
- (4) Put a welcome sign on your face.
 - (a) Learn to smile.
 - (b) Learn to laugh.
 - (i) Laughter is music.
 - (ii) Learn to laugh at ourselves.
- (5) We need to watch our first impressions.
 - (a) Research shows that people make up their minds in the first twelve minutes whether or not they are going to feel at home or like a church.
 - (b) People need to be warmly welcomed in the church.
 - (c) First impressions are very important.
 - (d) Think about the stranger who is coming for the first time.
 - (i) Many of them do not even understand Christ.
 - (ii) They don't know who we are or what we do.
 - (iii) Don't take for granted that everybody else is just like us, that they understand what we understand.
 - (iv) Take the fear element out by gentleness, winsomeness, and love.
- (6) Don't embarrass guests.
 - (a) The three biggest social fears people have:
 - (i) Gathering with strangers
 - (ii) Making a speech
 - (iii) Answering a personal question in public
 - (b) They are with strangers, and we ask them to stand up and tell about themselves.
 - (i) We think we are being friendly, but we are scaring them.
 - (ii) People do not want to say, sing, sign, or sacrifice anything.
- (7) There needs to be an atmosphere in the church where people are welcome and feel at home.
 - (a) The Sunday school class needs to show hospitality.
 - (i) Serve refreshments.
 - 1. Some of the greatest times Jesus had with His people were when He was feeding them at a meal or serving refreshments.
 - 2. John 21:9-13
 - 3. It relaxes people.
 - 4. We are sharing together.
 - 5. That is what fellowship is.
 - e) We have to begin to love people to Jesus.



- i) There is a ministry of friendship.
 - (1) Show the beauty, love, grace, and kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (2) Most of our so-called fellowships are sacred societies for snubbing sinners.
 - (a) We have our little holy huddles, and standing over there is a sinner.
 - (i) They are never invited in.
 - (b) Not every visitor is a sinner; not every member is a saint.
 - (c) We need to include people; Jesus did.

6) CONCLUSION

- a) If you do not have any friends, then make some friends.
 - i) Make some friends for Jesus.
- b) Jesus did not condemn lost people.
 - i) There is a difference in acceptance and approval.
 - (1) You can accept people without approving of what they do.
- c) Jesus was crucified for being a friend of sinners.
 - i) Matthew 11:19
 - ii) Jesus loves you.
 - iii) All have sinned.
 - (1) Romans 3:23
 - iv) If Jesus were not a friend of sinners, then we all would be lost.
- d) Thank God that He loves us.
 - i) And if God has loved us, then we need to love others.
 - ii) If God has accepted us, then we can accept others.
- e) We need to be a family of friends as a church.
 - i) Begin to make some friends, not merely for time, but for eternity.
- f) Because of the best friend, the Lord Jesus, may you be His friend and a friend to those whom He loves.
- g) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- h) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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Turn to Proverbs chapter 17 and verse 17. The Bible says, “A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity.” “A friend loveth at all times.” We say our church is a family of friends and a friend to the family. One of the greatest and deepest needs of human hearts is for friendship. We have a longing for someone who knows us and loves us and accepts us, somebody with whom we can share, somebody who understands our deepest needs, our hurts, our fears, our wants, our victories. We need friends, and to say that you don’t need a friend would be to deny your humanity. So I want to talk to you today about how to make friends; “Making Friends Forever.” Now I want to show you how that can be one of the greatest ministries you can ever do in the name of Jesus and for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Now think with me for a moment about **the marks of friendship**. But what is a friend, anyway? Let me give you what I consider to be three marks of friendship. There are many more, but these stand out in my mind. First of all, as I’ve already said, a friend is **somebody who shares**. Proverbs 17:17, “A friend loveth at all times.”

There was an English publication that ran a contest for a definition of friendship, and there were some wonderful definitions. One of them was, “A friend is somebody who multiplies our joys and divides our grief.” Isn’t that beautiful? “A friend multiplies our joys, a friend divides our grief.” Another one; “A friend is somebody who understands our silence.” We don’t have to be talking for a friend to really understand who we are. Sometimes just being there. But here’s the one that won the prize in this English publication for a definition of a friend; “A friend is someone who comes in when the whole world goes out.” That is a friend.

And, folks, we need friends! We need friends who will strengthen us with their prayers. We need friends who will bless us with their love. We need friends who will encourage us with their hope. Now, a friend is on the scene when you need him. A friend is somebody who is wise enough to leave you alone when you want to be alone. A friend is there to help you to celebrate when there’s something to celebrate, and a friend is a cause of celebration when there’s nothing else to celebrate, just celebrating the presence of your friend. So, put it down, a friend is somebody who shares. He loveth at all times.

But secondly, a friend is **somebody who sharpens**. Proverbs 27 and verse 17, listen to it, “Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” Do you know what a good friend will do? A good friend will put a keen edge on your life. A good friend will sharpen you, but a false friend will blunt and dull your life. Our English word friend relates to the word freedom, because really a friend is somebody who sets you free to be all that you can be. He puts the keen edge, the sharp edge on your life. A friend is somebody who encourages you, who knows how to speak the word that will draw you out and lead you on. Somebody has written these words. I think they’re beautiful. One friend is talking to another friend and telling that friend why he loves that friend, and he said this; “I love you, not for what you are, but for what I am when I am in your presence. I love you, not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making of me. I love you for not closing your ears to the discord in me, but adding to the music in me by worshipful listening. You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign, you have done it just by being yourself. Perhaps this is what being a friend means most of all.” Now folks, that’s a wonderful, wonderful thought.

I have friends who make me a better person. I have friends who sharpen me. Of course my best friend is who? Jesus. Read Proverbs 18 verse 24, He’s, “A friend that sticketh closer than a brother,” and He’s a friend



that just sharpens me by His constant presence with me, but you know I have another friend, and thank God I'm married to her. You know, it's a wonderful thing when you can be married to a friend. It's another wonderful thing when the person you're married to is a friend. But I can say beyond a shadow of any doubt, without any stammer, stutter or apology, that I'm a better person because of Joyce. And I have other friends, that when I'm in the presence of these people, they sharpen me. They are friends. Do you have friends like that?

A friend sharpens you, he puts the keen edge on your life. And let me tell you another way that he sharpens you: not constantly encouraging you, but **challenging you and confronting you when you've done wrong**. Look in Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 6. The Bible says there, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." Do you see that? "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." A friend will love you enough to confront you when you've done wrong. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." You know what the kisses of an enemy are? That's flattery. Now we have a lot of people who love to flatter us, but flattery is a lot like perfume. You can sniff it, but don't swallow it. You know the difference between the flatterer and the hypocrite? They're first cousins, but the hypocrite will say behind your back what he will not say to your face. The flatterer says to your face what he won't say behind your back. That's, "The kisses of an enemy are deceitful." "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." Thank God for those who love us enough to put their arms around our shoulders and tell us when there's something that needs to be corrected. You see, a friend shares.

I'll tell you what else a real friend does. **He sticks**. Remember our text, Proverbs chapter 17 verse 17, "A friend loveth at all times." If you want to know who your real friends are, make a mistake. But a real friend is a man who stays with you. Now the Bible says in Proverbs 18 verse 24, "There's a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." He sticks, he stays! And one of the great admonitions about friendship is found in Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 10, "Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not." Don't forsake a friend. "Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not."

Remember that definition of friendship? A friend is somebody who walks in when the whole world walks out. Not a fair-weather friend who jumps on board when the sun is shining and the wind is soft, but gets overboard or steps off when the rough time comes.

Charles Colson was called the hatchet man in Richard Nixon's cabinet. A brilliant lawyer. He was somehow wrapped up in the Watergate mess that caused Richard Nixon to lose his presidency and to resign in disgrace before impeachment. And people hated Richard Nixon, especially on the campuses, and people hated the Watergate debacle and they hated that coterie of friends that were there in that inner workings of the White House. But through all of that, Charles Colson came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. He spent some time in prison. He came out of prison and wrote a book called, "Born Again." Because of that book, he began to lecture some, and he was speaking to a group of students in a western university. And they were very hostile, hostile toward Nixon and hostile to anybody that had a part in the Watergate thing, and after Charles Colson spoke they began to bombard him with questions. And the questions got sharper and sharper and more hostile.

And one of the students stood up, and he read a criticism that Henry Kissinger had made of Richard Nixon, a very biting, hard, vitriolic criticism of Richard Nixon. And then that student said, "Mr. Colson, I want to know, do you agree with what Mr. Kissinger has said?" Colson in his book said he scanned the audience, he knew that every ear was listening to hear what he would say. It was one of those moments. He thoughtfully replied, and here's what he said. "We all know Mr. Nixon's negative qualities. He has been dissected in the press like no one in history. I can tell you his good points, but I don't believe that I can persuade you to



accept them. But what it comes down to is, no, I don't go along with Mr. Henry Kissinger's comments. Mr. Nixon is my friend and I don't turn my back on my friends." When he said that, in this university, there was a moment, he said he thought the roof would fall in. There was a moment of silence. Nobody knew how they would respond. And then, do you know what happened to that hostile audience? They stood on their feet like one man and gave Charles Colson a thunderous applause, an ovation. Even hostile students like that could appreciate loyalty to a friend. "Mr. Nixon is my friend and I will not turn my back on my friends." A friend is somebody who shares. A friend is somebody who sharpens. A friend is somebody who sticks. And if you've got some friends, thank God for them. We all have a lot of acquaintances, but thank God for friends.

Now that, those are the marks of friendship. How do you make friends? Let's talk about **the making of friends**. You say, I want a friendship, I want some friends. Well let me tell you that friendships are built. They don't happen overnight. They're not like toadstools; they're more like oak trees. There are five secrets in making a friend. I'm going to give them to you in a moment, but all five of these secrets come out of one great principle. And that principle was given by the Lord Jesus Christ, not pop psychology, but deep, deep truth. It's found in Luke chapter 6 and verse 31, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Now that is the principle. Now there are five secrets that come out of that principle.

As a matter of fact, there was a man named Dale Carnegie who wrote a book, "How to Win Friends and Influence People." I don't know whether you agree with all of Dale Carnegie or not, certainly he was not writing by divine inspiration like the writers of the Scriptures, but he said one thing in that book that was absolutely true in my estimation. Here it is, "You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you." So many of us are so self-centered, are we not? Jesus said, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also likewise to them."

What are these five secrets? Number one, **people want to be accepted!** Jesus called His disciples friends. Were they perfect? They were a motley crew. But Jesus opened His arms, His heart, His love, His mind. He accepted them. I've told you before, Jesus does not change us so He can love us; He loves us so He can change us. We are accepted by the grace of God, and we ought to accept others by the grace of God. Acceptance, that's the first one of these five secrets.

Number two, **people want to be acknowledged.** If you accept somebody, you've got to acknowledge them; you've got to know that they're there. The road to the heart is often through the ear. We need to pay attention to people. When people speak, when they're around us, give them your full attention, give them your eye contact. Don't be like that husband who said, "I'm concerned about my wife, she always goes around the house talking to herself." And his friend said, "Does she know she's doing it?" He said, "No, she thinks I'm listening to her." I can say this: that that husband wasn't much of a friend.

Did you know that active listening is a God-like quality? It's a God-like quality. Psalm 34 verse 15, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open unto their cry." Do you know what that means? God's eyes and God's ears are on you. If you want people to know you, love you, appreciate you, put your eyes on them, open your ears to them, and you'll be like God. The Psalmist said in Psalm 116 verse 1, "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplication." When you acknowledge a person, do you know what you're saying to that person? You are important to me. People need acceptance. They need to be acknowledged.

The third thing they need, **they need to be appreciated.** Find something in somebody that you can complement and appreciate. Psychologist William James said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated." People want to be appreciated. Mark Twain said that he can live three weeks on a compliment.



You'll find in the Bible when the apostle Paul, he had a lot of problems he had to deal with with people in the Bible, and he wrote those epistles. But almost every time before he was about to jump on them for something wrong that they'd done, he would say some word of appreciation or some word of commendation. Appreciation. Learn to appreciate people.

People want to be accepted, they want to be acknowledged, they want to be appreciated. And **they want to be affirmed!** We live in a negative world. Do you know why people have difficulty doing these first three things? Because they themselves have such a negative self-image. We have a problem of teenage suicides. So many of these teenage suicides are with teenage kids who need to be affirmed. They need to be loved, they have a negative self-image, they are the victims of constant put-downs, they live in a fearful society, they feel they cannot cope, they feel they're not appreciated, therefore they're not affirmed, and many of them have the idea, "Well, I'm nobody on campus. My parents don't appreciate me. They never affirm me. But if I'm dead, maybe there'll be some tears shed for me at the school. Maybe then, somehow, I will be the subject of somebody's sympathy and affirmation."

Now people want to be affirmed. The Bible says in Proverbs 11 verse 9, "The hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbor, but through knowledge shall the just be delivered." That's been paraphrased, "Evil words destroy, godly skill rebuilds."

And people **want to be assured.** I mean by that they want empathy, they want understanding. The Bible says in the book of Romans chapter 12 verse 15, "We're to rejoice with those that rejoice and weep with them that weep." I want to tell you something. When people are going through heartache and tears and problems, they're not primarily interested in your answers to their problems. They're not primarily interested in your solutions, your cure. But I'll tell you what they will be interested in: if you'll sit down and cry with them a little bit. Just assure them that you care, that you know! A gentle touch, a tender hand.

Now we've talked to you about the marks of true friendship, we've talked to you about the making of true friends. Let me talk to you about **the maintenance of a friendship.** Because, you see, when you build a friendship, you've got to maintain it. It's got to be maintained. Remember our text in Proverbs 17:17, "A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity." Adversity! Friendships are difficult to maintain. Don't have too many of them. Now, Proverbs 18 verse 24, one translation gives it this way, "He who would have friends must show himself friendly." But the New American Standard renders it this way, "A man of many friends will come to ruin." I thought, well how could they say that? "He who would have friends must show himself friendly." "A man of many friends will come to ruin." Doesn't even sound like the same verse. When you think about it, it's just the same thing rendered a different way. I prefer, "He who would have friends must show himself friendly," but what it means is this: don't have more friends than you can show yourself friendly to. Don't get overextended with your friendships. You can have a lot of acquaintances, but genuine friends are costly. They cost time, they cost effort, there is an investment. A friend is born, a brother is born for adversity, and you've got to maintain your friendship. It's costly, but it's worth it.

C.S. Lewis, a brilliant thinker, said this, "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping your heart intact, you must give your heart to no one. Wrap it carefully with hobbies and little luxuries. Avoid all entanglements. Lock it safe in a casket of your own selfishness. There it will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable." What's he saying? He's saying, "Hey, it'll cost you."

Parents who have children that they love have had their hearts broken by those children. You've had your heart broken by your husband, by your wife. My friends, that will happen, but you've got to maintain that friendship. That's the reason old Ben Franklin said, "Be slow in choosing a friend and slower in changing



a friend." Friends can bring personal, social, emotional, and financial demands upon you, but you've got to maintain your friendship.

Now here's the last thing I want to say. We've talked to you about the marks of a friendship, we've talked to you about the making of a friendship, we've talked to you about the maintenance of a friendship. Now church, listen to your pastor, I want to speak to you about **the ministry of a friendship**.

Now let me tell you what the Lord Jesus Christ did with His friendship. The Lord Jesus ministered to us. Look if you will in John chapter 15 and verses 13 and 14, "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." Now the Lord Jesus Christ here is talking about His ministry, laying down His life for His friends. Jesus was a friend of sinners! That's why they crucified Him. There are lost people out there who need the love and the friendship of Jesus Christ, and we are now His body and we're now to be reaching out to this community that is perishing for love and for friendship.

Now let me give you some practical ways that we can do this as a congregation. Number one, **we as the leaders**, and I'm talking about Sunday School teachers, I'm talking about deacons, I'm talking about staff, I'm talking about committee personnel, **we need to set the tone and the atmosphere. We need ourselves to be approachable and real**. We need to learn people, not as simply numbers, but as names. Memorize names.

Number two, **we as a church**, and I'm talking to all of us now, **we need to learn how to greet people**. We need to learn how to greet people, to shake hands. Do you know how to shake hands? I mean, not one of those cold, clammy kind of things. Man, I hate those. And not one of those bone-crushers that will put you on your knees. Some little ladies have arthritis and so forth. Give a good, warm handshake and a friendly touch! Give everybody who comes into this church when you meet them a look, a word, and a touch. A look! A smile upon your face. A word! "Good morning!" A touch! Just a hand on the shoulder. I'm not talking about being overly aggressive in touching people, but people want to be met up close. We want to influence our church. Listen, it's far more important that we do it up close. It's more important to influence people than it is to impress them. This place is impressive, just coming in here because it's so big.

Now next, listen, I'm just talking about practical things, church. **Put a welcome sign on your face**; put it on your face. Learn to smile. Learn to laugh! Laughter is music. Learn to laugh at yourself. You've got a lot to laugh about. We as a church need to watch our first impressions when people come in here. Statistics say that people make up their mind in the first 12 minutes whether they're going to feel at home or whether they're going to like a church or whether they're not. The first 12 minutes when they come here. Sometimes it starts on the parking lot. But it certainly starts when they come in these doors. I don't want them to meet an usher who looks like an advanced agent for the undertaker. They need to be warmly welcomed in our church. And friend, you may be the first person they meet when they get on these grounds.

I want to ask you a question. Who is more important to an airline? The president of the airline, the pilot, or the person who writes the ticket and the steward in the airplane? Well obviously, the president and the pilot are more important than the person who writes the ticket or the steward. Now, I'm not trying to put the ticket writer or the steward down. But where do you get your biggest impression about that airline? Most of you never see the pilot, and you will never know or meet the president. Is that right? Where do you get your impression of that airline? You walk up there and if that person who writes the ticket is horsey with you, or pays no attention to you, or the steward pays no attention to you, you say, "I don't like this airline." Is that not right?



Now folks I'm going to tell you that the people who meet you out there as you're coming in this church will get an impression of this church, it doesn't matter who the pastor is. It doesn't matter what goes on behind the scenes in the deacon's meetings. We're the people, and first impressions are so very, very important! So therefore what we need to do is to be an easy place to be around. This place is big, it's intimidating to some people, did you know that? You ever heard anybody say that? Well you know what they say? They say, "We came and we got hooked." Why do you think that it gets big? Because people are having their needs met, because people are loving and there's a friendly spirit. It is the first impression that is so very, very important.

Now, you're at home here, but you think about the stranger who's coming for the first time. Many of them don't even understand Christ. They don't know what we do. They're scared to death. Now folks, don't take it for granted that everybody else is just like you, that they understand what you understand. Take the fear element out just by gentleness, winsomeness, love.

Don't embarrass guests! Don't do it in your Sunday School class. Do you know what the three biggest fears that people have, social fears? Number one is a gathering with strangers. Number two, making a speech. Number three, answering a personal question in public. What do we do in the average Sunday School class. They get in with a bunch of strangers, we say, "Well, stand up, tell us who you are, tell us about this or that." We think we're being friendly; we're scaring them to death. I'm telling you, today people don't want to say anything, they don't want to sing anything, they don't want to sign anything, they don't want to sacrifice anything. You say, "Well they ought to." But they're lost! They don't know Jesus!

What we've got to do is to get an atmosphere here in this church where they can be welcome, where they can feel at home. In the Sunday School class, learn to show hospitality. Have Sundays where you have big name tags, and write the names big enough so people like me who wear glasses can read them without putting their glasses on. Now look, folks, put those name tags on there real big. You don't have to say, "Ajax Sunday School class" in letters that big. They know they're in Ajax Sunday School class. Just put the name real big and the Sunday School class name real little on there so people can see it.

Serve refreshments! You say, "Well, should we serve?" Sure! Jesus, some of the greatest times He had with His people were when He was feeding them at a meal or serving refreshments. Jesus went to a party; He provided the refreshments at a party. There's something about that that relaxes people. We're sharing together. That's what fellowship is.

What am I trying to say? I don't want to give you a whole course in this. What I'm saying is, folks, listen, we have got to begin to love people to Jesus! There is a ministry of friendship. We've got to show the beauty, the love, the grace, the kindness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You say, "Oh, but Pastor, our class is so friendly." You may think it is. You may think that you were friendly this morning when I said, "Turn around and shake hands." You probably shook hands with four people you knew and didn't meet a stranger. Most of our so-called fellowships are sacred societies for snubbing sinners. We have little holy huddles, and we say, "Oh, don't we love one another." And over there standing alone is a sinner, and we never invite him in. Now not every visitor is a sinner. And not every member's a saint. But what I need to say is that we need to include people. Jesus did.

Now folks, listen to me. You say, "Well, Pastor, this is not all that inspiring." I'm not trying to be inspiring, I just want to be helpful. You say, "Well, Pastor, I just don't have any friends." Well make some friends, make some friends for Jesus. You say, "Well I thought I was supposed to be separate from sinners." Well, Jesus did not condemn lost people. There's a difference in acceptance and approval. You can accept people without approving what they do.



Listen to me. Jesus was crucified for being a friend of sinners. If you're here today without Him, I want to tell you He loves you more than I can say. You say, "Well, I'm grateful for His love, but do I have to admit that I'm a sinner to have His love?" All have sinned. If Jesus were not a friend of sinners, I would be sunk. I would be sunk. Thank God that He loves me and if God has loved me, then I need to love you. If God has accepted me, then I, for Christ's sake, can accept you. Folks, we need to be a family of friends as a church. Not merely for a time, but for eternity.

Let's bow our heads together in prayer. Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus, that You will lay this truth upon our hearts. And Lord, because of the best friend, the Lord Jesus, may we be His friend and a friend to those that He loves. And Lord, teach us how to make friends forever.

Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, will you just pray that God will lay some souls upon your heart? Would you pray anew and afresh that God will make you a soul winner? That God will make you a maker of friends? We're not talking about button-holing people and saying, "Brother, are you ready to meet God?" We're just talking about showing the love of Jesus, caring about people, making them feel at home when they're at God's house. Making friends and bringing them to special opportunities. Would you pray that God would do that in your heart and in your life?

And if you've not yet met the Lord Jesus as your personal friend, would you like to pray right now and invite Him into your heart? I invite you to pray this way, "Dear God," if you're not certain that you're saved, pray this way. "Dear God, I need to be saved. My sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. Jesus, You died to save me, You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus." Would you pray that prayer? Pray it in your heart. "I do trust You, Jesus. Right now this moment I trust You to save me. I receive You by faith now as my personal Lord and Savior. Thank You for saving me. I receive it by faith. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my friend. And Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You and I will not be ashamed of You because You died for me. In Your name I pray, Amen.



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