

Cultivating Healthy Friendships

*"A mirror reflects a man's face, **but what he is really like is shown by the kind of friends he chooses.**"*
Proverbs 27:19 (TLB)

I. Introduction

- ✓ A U.S. Surgeon General's report now warns that the physical consequences of loneliness and poor social connection can be devastating, including a 29% increased risk of heart disease; a 32% increased risk of stroke; and a 50% increased risk of developing dementia for older adults.
- ✓ 52% of Americans report feeling lonely, while 47% report their relationships with others are not meaningful.
- ✓ Only 59% of Americans say they have a best friend, and 12% say they feel they have no close friends at all.

"Isolation is being by yourself. Loneliness is not liking it."

II. How Do I Do This? The Six Biblical Keys to Wonderful, Healthy Friendships

1. I MUST BE _____

"A man of many companions may come to ruin but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24

*"Some friendships don't last, but **some friendships are more loyal than brothers.**" Proverbs 18:24*

*"David finished talking to Saul. After that, Jonathan became David's closest friend. He loved David as much as {he loved} himself...So **Jonathan made a pledge of mutual loyalty with David because he loved him as much as {he loved} himself.**" I Samuel 18:1; 3*

2. I MUST BE _____

*"**Friendliness** bears fruit for a man." Proverbs 19:22*

*"**Kindness** makes a man attractive." Proverbs 19:22 (LB)*

*"**Love forgets mistakes.** Nagging about them parts the best of friends." Proverbs 17:9*

Hallmark Card: "You're a good egg... Even if you are a little cracked."

3. I MUST BE _____

*"**A gossip betrays a confidence** but a trustworthy man keeps a secret." Proverbs 11:13*

"Gossip is spread by wicked people; they stir up trouble and can break up even the very closest of friendships." Proverbs 16:28 (TEV)

4. I MUST BE _____

"Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds of a friend can be trusted." Proverbs 27:5-6

"An honest answer is the sign of a true friendship." Proverbs 24:26

Inscription: "The words of a true friend are inscribed on the heart."

Rules for being candid:

1. You always complement in public but you correct in private.
2. You correct when people are up not when they are down -- when they're feeling good and can handle it. You don't kick them when they're down. Correct when they're up and comfort when they're down.
3. You never correct a person until you've first proven that you're also open to correction. Never rebuke your friend until first you've proven that you're open to rebuke from them about an area in your life where you have a blind spot or a need.

5. I MUST BE _____

"As iron sharpens iron, friends shape friends." Proverbs 27:17 (Knox)

"Do not be deceived: "Bad companions ruin good character." I Corinthians 15:33

Homework: Sixteen times in the book of Proverbs it says, "Don't hang out with this kind of person". There are different kinds of people mentioned in the book of Proverbs that says you should not have as your close friends. Read the 31 chapters of Proverbs again and find out the 16 references that says don't hang out with this kind of person. Parents, this would be a good thing to study with your kids. Teach them the kind of friends they ought not to have. Friends shape friends. It's always easier for someone to pull you down than it is for you to pull them up. Always.

Real friends are constructive. They build each other up. They raise each other up. They build self-esteem.

"A real friend makes us do all that we can do."---Ralph Waldo Emerson

Key Thought: A real test of friendship: How do you handle your friend's successes? When they get to do something you don't get to do? Or they get to buy something you don't get to buy? Even a job promotion can ruin a friendship. Choose to be enthusiastic about other people's accomplishments!

6. I MUST BE _____

***"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."* Proverbs 17:17**

*"Now we can rejoice in our wonderful relationship with God all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done in dying for our sins -- **making us friends with God!**" Romans 5:11 (LB)*

Always remember, the type of friend you are is the type of friend you will attract. What you sow you will reap! (See Galatians 6:7-10)

ANSWER KEY:

- 1. COMMITTED**
- 2. CONSIDERATE**
- 3. CONFIDENTIAL**
- 4. CANDID**
- 5. CONSTRUCTIVE**
- 6. CONSISTENT**

