BEING FRIENDS

Growing and Maturing in Our Friendships

NINE LESSONS

By

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INTRODUCTION

These lessons center around the theme "Growing and Maturing in Friendship." Ever wonder if you will have a friend? Discover how being one you will have one**.**

Do you wonder, is it right to have a friend? Why am I drawn to some and not to others? Who should I try to befriend? Why? How can I be a better friend? What are the limits God places on friendship? Who should be my VERY BEST FRIEND?

Questions such as these were directed to me, in ladies' meetings held in many parts of the country. These questions and others you may have were the foundation of my study.

As you work through these lessons, use a notebook to record your answers to questions or print out this series and write in, (underlined words may be blotted out and the sheet copied for a work sheet to be used in a class setting.) Go to your Bible and mark verses that you want to remember. Write down what impresses you most from each lesson in a notebook, and what God speaks to you about. Then pray daily for God to make it real in your life. May you sense that you are "Growing and Maturing in Friendship."

These principles apply to many areas of life including those in the home. (Specific studies of husband-wife relationships and raising children are found in other areas of this web sight)

Future lessons will include many subjects from a woman to women. Watch for them.

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FRIENDSHIP'S QUESTIONS

Lesson One

MEMORY VERSE: "A man that hath friends, must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

"**What is a Friend?"**

One whose thoughtfulness is exceeded only by her concern.
One whose helpfulness is second only to her awareness of your need.
One who believes in you so strongly that you are motivated to achieve beyond your fondest expectations.
One who strengthens you with her prayers.
One who blesses you with her love;
One who encourages you with her confidence and hope.
Author Unknown

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: I Samuel 20:1-17 tells us Jonathan and David were close friends. What do you think drew them to each other?

• Let's look for some qualities in each of their lives:

1. David had many outstanding characteristics. Read I Samuel 16:18. List some of David's admirable qualities:
2. Read I Samuel 14:52. How was David described?
3. In God's eyes, David was a man "after his own heart" (Acts 13:22). Read I Kings 15:5 also.
4. I Samuel 18:5 states that David behaved himself wisely. What was the result?
5. Jonathan, the king's son, was becoming a trusted leader. He was dedicated to God, although a loyal servant of the king. Because of his position, he had "inside" information. God used Jonathan to protect David's life.
6. David fled for his life from the presence of King Saul. What did he ask Jonathan? (See I Samuel 20:1).
7. David said "there is but a step between me and death" (I Samuel 20:3, 4, 9, 13). Jonathan's answer showed his love; what did he promise?
8. Jonathan asked David to show kindness to him during his life, but also to show kindness to whom? (I Samuel 20:15).
9. Why did Jonathan have the liberty to ask this of David? (20:15).
10. During Jonathan's friendship with David, he "strengthened his hand in God" (I Samuel 23:16).
11. After Jonathan's death, David stood alone in the midst of trial. He "encouraged himself in the Lord " (I Samuel 30:6).
12. David did not forget his promise to Jonathan. How did he carry out his promise later on? (II Samuel 4:4).

13. David and Jonathan's friendship progressed through three levels. *This is also true of our experience.* What are they?
    a. **Casual Friends**: we know who they are, their interests or what they enjoy.
    b. **Occasional Friends**: we know their names, what they do, we see them some.
    c. **Close Friends:** friendships that grow out of our shared enjoyments, convictions, accomplishments and concerns.

14. Think of someone in each of these levels, describe what you know about them:

When we are attracted to one who is lovely and Christlike, when we notice someone who is living a radiant Christian life, who is obedient to the Word of God, then this is an impluse to act upon. But it can be a costy mistake to have a *weak or disobedient* Christian for our best friend, for soon we will be like her.

• Let's consider how best friends have a solid base of:

1. **Mutual faith, and mutual interests,** "But if we walk in the light [of salvation and understanding the Word of God], as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," (I John 1:7).

"Lovers are always talking to one another about their love; friends hardly ever talk about their friendship. Lovers are normally face to face, absorbed in each other; friends side by side, absorbed in some common interest." - *C.S. Lewis*

2. **Mutual Concerns,** "Bear ye one anothers burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

3. **Similar Values,** "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (Ephesians. 6:23-24).

4. **Mutual Attraction,** "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you...even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as ... in my bonds...ye all are partakers of my grace," (Philippians 1:3-7).

5. **Mutual Enjoyment**, "the light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart; and a good report maketh the bones fat (brings pleasure)" (Proverbs 15:30).

6. **Warmth of Personality**, "...he that sheweth mercy, (let him do it) with cheerfulness" (Romans 23:8b).

7. **Strength of Character**, "...I have written unto you young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (I John 2:14b). "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10).

8. **Mutual Trust and Trustworthiness**, "And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever..." (I Samuel 20:42).

9. **Devotion:** committed to the friends best good, "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not..." (Proverbs 27:10).

10. **A Forgiving Spirit:** *good friends are good forgivers.* "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another...and above all these things put on charity (love) which is the bond of perfectness" (Colossians 3:14).

- To be close friends, we must have several things in common. List the most important areas:

- What can I do this week, to become a better friend to others about me?

"Friendship's Questions"
What is there that I can do, to be a friend to you?
How can I really be all that you mean to me?
How can I share your load on life's daily road?
How can I listen and learn when to someone you must turn?
How can I do my part to lift the burden of your heart?
What can I do to show that your heart's trust I know?
How can I really be all that you mean to me?
I surely don't know how, but before the Lord I'll bow
and seek Him and His grace to help me take this place.
And I will pray for you, dear friend, today.
-From *CARING by Joyce Watke*

"CHOOSING A CLOSE FRIEND"

Lesson Two

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: Psalm 101, Read carefully this Guide to Choosing Friends.

MEMORY VERSE: I John 4:7,8

THINKING QUESTIONS:

1. Why does God say we should not choose a gossiper as a close friend? (Proverbs 11:13; 17:9; 18:8; 20:19)

2. The Bible clearly says we should not choose an angry person as a close friend. What will happen if we disobey this command? (Prov. 22:24, 25).

3. In Psalms 144:14b-15, God says happiness is a characteristic of His people . What is another distinguishing characteristic He says should be true of us? (144:14b).

4. The disloyal and discontented person does not make a good friend. "...meddle not with them that are given to change: for their calamity shall rise suddenly. " (Proverbs 24:21-22) What does God also command us in Philippians 2:14?

5. We must choose our friends wisely. God says we should not choose self-indulgent people as close friends (Proverbs 23:19-21). Instead, whom should we choose? (Luke 9:23).

6. In Proverbs 7:24-25 God warns about the "strange" (immoral) woman. List some of her characteristics:

7. Who does the Psalmist say he would not choose to be close to him? (Ps. 101:7).

8. Who does the Psalmist say he would choose to be close to him? (Ps.101:6).

9. List some characteristics of those you should choose as close friends: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise..." (Proverbs 13:20). "We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company" (Ps. 55:14). "I

am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (Psalms 119:63).

Wherever we are, we are surrounded by potential friends. Remember someone said, "He who seeks a faultless friend rests friendless." The closest most precious friendship is with another ***in Christ.***

10. Close friendship begins with a response of our hearts: "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. 27:19).

"Walking Together with Him"
"Heart to heart friendship, mind with mind fellowship,
Moments of companionship, Response within of closeness.
In the love of Christ that binds us, His Holy Spirit seals us.
The Word of God instructs us. God the heavenly Father blesses.
Deep within I know it,never to forget it. So real, I need not feel it,
This love indeed is precious." From *Rejoice with Me,* by Joyce Watke

11. Practical advice: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor..." (Romans 13:10). "Let all your things be done with charity (love)" (I Corinthians 16:13).

12. In times of trials, God says,"Two are better than one...for if they fall, the one will *lift up* his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up" (Eccl. 4:9-1).

13. God gives us many practical guidelines for our friendships. One of them is about spending too much time with her. "Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor's house: lest he be weary of thee..." (Prov. 25:17).

14. We should observe the following limitations:

a. **Don't wear out your welcome,** respect her "time limits" and family needs.
b. Determine to **keep confidences, "**He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends," (Proverbs 17:9). "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly," (Proverbs 18:8).
c. **Don't talk about your friendship to others.** Avoid causing conflicts over your friendship.
d. **Don't give preference to your friend**, **or relatives** over your husband or children.

e. **Don't take her for granted;** don't assume or expect favors. Ask tactfully when you have a need, be alert to her needs you can meet. Show little kindnesses and be sure to express your appreciation.

15. We must find practical ways to show we value people more than things. List some:

16. We must keep in mind the following definition of friendship:

"What Friendship Is"

It is to know and be known, and still love and be loved.

It is to share and to bear, yet trust and be trusted by each other.

It is to give and be given, to protect and be protected by the other.

It is to pray and to play, to rest and be rested.

It is to walk and to talk, to know and to grow together in Him.

It is to laugh and to cry, bringing peace and release.

It is to love and be loved, to bless and be blessed,

By hearts knit together by love of the Lord.

From *Rejoice With Me* , by Joyce Watke

Spurgeon said, "Sincerity is to know and be known." Openness with one another is essential to a close friendship. But the knowledge we share about each other, must be "cloaked" with love. "Love...rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things; hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth" (I Corinthians 13:6-8).

"My friendship with the Lord must be the test of my friendship with people. If my friendships do not enable me to strengthen my friends in the Lord, I need to deepen my commitment to the Saviour."

From *Quality Friendship* by Gary Inrig

Commitment is one of the strongest ties in friendship as well as in marriage.

F--aithful Friends

A--lways concerned and available

I--nwardly committed, by inner heart ties.

T--rusting and true, trustworthy too.

H--onest, open-hearted, hopeful and happy.

F--irmly settled, fiercely loyal.

U--niquely ourselves, utterly devoted.

L--oving and longing, living for the Lord.

From *Rejoice With Me,* by Joyce Watk

MAKING NEW FRIENDS
Lesson 3

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: Colossians 3:12-16

1. If we want to make new friends, first let's examine our hearts and lives. Verse twelve gives characteristics we are to "put on." List them:

2. In verse thirteen God tells us to be forbearing and forgiving to others. What does "forbearing" mean to you?

3. What does God expect us to do when there has been a quarrel? (See verse 13.)

4. If we have love and compassion for others, it will show in our relationships. Why is this called "the bond of perfectness" (maturity)?

5. How do we get "the peace of God"? (3:15)

6. If the Word of God dwells in us "richly," we will be able to minister to others through:

7. Making new friends is easier if we develop a tender spirit (Read 3: 17.)

THINKING BACK:

1. Remember the three levels of friendship:
   - **Casual friends:** we know who they are, their interests or what they enjoy.
   - **Occasional friends:** we know their names, what they do, we see them some.
   - **Close friends:** friendships that grow out of our shared enjoyments, convictions, accomplishments and concerns.

2. Remember the basic elements of friendship:
   - **Common interests** - "We took sweet counsel together and walked unto the house of God in company" (Psalms 55:14).
   - **Similar values** - "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (Psalms 119:63).
   - **Appealing personality** - "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance" (Proverbs 15:13).
   - **Similar talents, convictions, opinions, like and dislikes** - "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatso ever I command you." (Jesus said in John 15:14.)
   - **A rejoicing spirit** - "But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice:...let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee" (Ps.6:11).

HOW WE GET TO KNOW OTHERS:

1. In our culture, when we first meet someone, **making a good impression** is easier if we smile and briefly look them in the eye. Proverbs 15:13 says "A merry heart doeth good like medicine." Proverbs 16:24 says "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to thesoul, and health to the bones." Psalms 43:5 says: "Hope in God... who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

2. **What should we say?** Introduce yourself clearly and loudly enough to be heard. You might say, "I don't think I know you." Repeat their names; at church write the names on your church bulletin. **Use their names** two or three times as you talk, then you willremember. Someone has said, "People are conditioned to tune in when they hear their first name. It shows you care."

3. **Make a habit of active listening.**

- Listen with your heart for hints of their hearts.
- Respond by rephrasing or restating the exact meaning of what was said.
- Remember there are four meanings to every statement made:
  What I thought you said,
  What you thought you said,
  What I thought you meant,
  What you meant to say.
- Never joke about or ridicule another's comments.
- Respond with questions "Do you mean...?" or "In other words..."
  Ask a question to break the ice- the more obvious it is, the better. Let them be the expert. Ask *"What do you think about...?"* to keep the conversation going.

HOW CAN YOU BE A BETTER LISTENER? Write in something from this list you want to practice:

HOW TO HAVE A MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION:

1. If we **have a plan**, or a guide for conversation in mind, it will be easier to keep the conversation going. Remember these letters, talk about these subjects:

"F" for family; "O" for occupation; "R" for religion; "M" for message.

2. Briefly tell others who you really are**:** talk about your job, trip or a project. Share your testimony, an experience or your thoughts and feelings about the sermon, music, or choir. Share how important the Lord is to you, or something you are trusting the Lord for. (Read Acts 4:18-21 for inspiration.)

3. Tell her something you like or admire about her or her home.

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov.25:11). Consider how much an apple weighs: multiply the ounces times the current price of gold to compute how much it would be worth. How valuable would an apple of gold be today? _____

HOW TO MINISTER TO ANOTHER: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

1. How can we meet more people in the church?

2. In the following week, what can we do to be a blessing to that person after meeting her?

HOW TO REACH ANOTHER'S HEART:

- Who are some forgotten people in the church?
- What should we look for, to notice someone who needs us?
- What should we do for them immediately?
- What should we do for them during the week?

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves ..." (Romans 15:1).

HOW TO HANDLE THOSE WHO DON'T "WARM UP"

- Notice who their friends seem to be. Do they have more than one or two friends?
- Observe their basic personality traits. What do they seem to be like?
- Ask yourself, "What do I really know about this person?"
- What can I do, even though this person does not seem to be friendly
- If a friendship does not develop, what should my attitude be?

MEMORY VERSES: "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly ..." (Proverbs 18:24). "A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it" (Proverbs 17:8). *GIVE YOURSELF*

"If every church member was like me,
What kind of church would my church be?"

BEING A GOOD FRIEND

Lesson 4

MEMORY VERSE: "And above all these things, put on charity (love) which the bond of perfectness (maturity of godliness)," (Colossians 3:14).

"Deeper Than That?"

A smile or a greeting, in a moment fleeting; A sigh or a silent cry, a tear in one's eye is understood, but it is deeper than that.

A comfort, a cheer, bringing God very near; the care, the concerns in one's heart burns, when given is deeper than that.

A gentleness of heart in a sense lifts loads that seem immense. A simple deed, or a cheery word and a prayer that is heard brings relief, though it's deeper than that.

A thoughtful act that stems from the fact there is love that God placed there, so another's burdens we may bear, yet we know that it is deeper than that.

The oneness in heart and desire to be all for Him does inspire, while living or working side by side, trials and troubles we override. When this occurs is anything deeper than that?

The Holy Spirit in our hearts unleased by love does his part bringing fellowship one with another of a blood-bought sister or brother, strengthening one's soul and nothing is deeper than that. -From *C-A-R-I-N-G* By Joyce Watke

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: Ruth 1. Notice friendship between two generations.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. Key Moments to affirm our love are: *Parting scenes* and *greeting scenes*. Ruth 1:8-15 discribes a tearful parting. Orpah kissed her mother- in-law goodbye (1:14). But her sister-in-law Ruth clung to her (1:14).

2. It was a moment of decision. Ruth declared, "...whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." She was turning from idols to the living God**.** Why was her commitment so important?

3. Words of blessing or encouragement came from *Naomi* (1:8,9). She told them to go home to their mother's house, that the Lord would be kind to them, and give them rest. Later *Boaz* commended Ruth for all she had done for Naomi, he added blessings to her life, (2:12) "The Lord recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel..." After Boaz took Ruth for his wife, they had a son, "And the *women* said unto Naomi, 'Blessed be the Lord

which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman that his name may be famous in Israel'...and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David" (2:14, 17).

4. Ruth's dependence on God more than on a friend is seen in 2:12. Boaz said to her: "The Lord God...under whose wings thou art come to trust..."

5. Ruth's dedication to Naomi is seen in Ruth 3:5. She said, "All that thou sayest unto me I will do." How did she carry out her promise?

6. Commitment is carrying out your promise even if the circumstances have changed**.** What do we see in Ruth 1:16-17? She said, "Whither thou goest, I will go..and thy God (shall be) my God." What is said of her determination in Ruth 1:18? "She was stedfastly minded to go with her..."

How important is com*mitment to you as a Christian? Do you understand the full meaning of commitment? Is your word your bond? Loyalty and commitment are reenforced when we put them into words. Declare your commitment to the Lord and to your friend, TODAY.*

7. How was unfailing love proven, by Naomi, next by Ruth and then by Boaz?

8. In a greeting scene Boaz gave Ruth a blessing**.** Ruth 2:8 Boaz says "...abide here fast by my maidens." Why did he say this?

9. Requirements of Becoming a Good Friend:

- Knowing her heart**.** "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man (woman) to man (woman)" (Proverbs 27:19). "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love..." (Colossians. 2:2).
- Loving her as she is means acceptance, see Romans 15:7: "Wherefore receive ye one another and thus fulfil the law of Christ."
- Pleasing her but not compromising your convictions. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith...let all your things be done with charity (love)" (I Cor.16:13-14). "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor" (Rom.13:10). "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself..." (Rom. 15:1, 2).
- Giving time**:** lay aside your own problems to bear her burdens to the Lord in prayer. Take time to listen and minister to her. "Bear ye one anothers' burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).
- Standing by her in trying times**.** "...For better is a neighbor that is near, than a brother far off " (Proverbs 27:10).

10. Recognize the difference between dependency and commitment.

- If we are dependent on our friends for our joy, purpose, and emotional well being, we need to examine our personal walk with the Lord**,** clearly something is wrong.

"It's important to love our friends, to cherish them, and to be committed to them. Girls and women are good at that--and it's a beautiful side to our friendships. But we need to learn to be dependent, leaning on God, (not upon our friends) because He's the only one who never betrays us or dies or moves away." -From *Friendships of Women* by Dee Brestin

- **Our commitment:**
  First of all, should be to "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength..."
  Secondly to "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:30, 31).

"A Tribute To a Friend"

Your smile, your cheer, your gentleness so dear,
Lift others' hearts from gloomy parts,
TO A CLOSER WALK WITH HIM.
Your life, your concern will cause others to turn
To the Saviour you adore, who is life evermore,
AS YOU WITNESS FOR HIM.
Your prayers, your fears, your cares and tears,
Are His to bear, Because He cares
AS YOU CAST YOUR ALL ON HIM.

From *C-A-R-I-N-G*, By Joyce Watke

To have a friend, first be a friend.

MEASURING MY FRIENDSHIPS
Lesson 5

THOUGHT TO PONDER: "The measure of my friendship with others is determined by my relationship with the Lord and his Word."

MEMORY VERSE: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18).

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: Colossians 3:14-25

1. In Colossians 3:14, the phrase: "And above all these things" is followed by the command to "put on *charity* (love)." Describe how God expects us to show love:

2. In I Peter 4:8, the same phrase is followed by "have fervent *charity* (love) among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." Explain how love in our lives can cover a multitude of sins:

3. The love of God creates *a bond of love* among believers, because each one is "in Christ" by the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. Actions of love are a sign of Christian maturity. How can friends show love discreetly?

4. The second and third ingredients to greater spiritual health as seen in Colossians 3:15 are: (#2) "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; (#3) and be ye thankful." How are these three statements related?

5. Without practicing the truth of verse 16, we would be unable to produce the fruits of the Spirit as seen in this portion. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom..." How is this possible?

6. According to verse 16, name a direct result you will experience when you regularly meditate on the Word of God.

7. Whatever we say or do should be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus." List some frequenty heard words or phrases that are unbecoming to a Christians speech?

8. "...Giving thanks to God and the Father by him," verse 17. Name an area of life or a person you need to regularly give thanks for. How does giving thanks affect your attitudes ?

9. When we are working on putting all these ingredients into practice, how will our response to God's command in verse 18 be effected?

10. Read verses 20-22. Here we see instructions: to husbands, to children, to fathers, and to servants. List them.

11. Verses 22 and 23 sum up this powerful portion of Scripture. What does "singleness of heart" mean?

12. Why should we fear God? See Romans 14:12.

13. "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). Define "heartily."

14. In our friendships, why should we beware of the temptation to be "men (women) pleasers"?

"...Even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts" (I Thessalonians 2:4). Who must we seek to please first of all?

15. The law of sowing and reaping is seen in verse 25. "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons." How does this apply to friendship?

16. "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ " Colossians 3:24. Of what can we be confident? Explain:

17. Note Ephesians 1:11-12: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance. . . "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." Does this include friendships? Explain.

UNDERSTANDING FRIENDSHIP

1. A friend makes you comfortable. Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loveth at all times." A true friend is one who not only loves you for yourself, but inspite of yourself. (*We must be that kind of a friend to the unsaved though they may be unlovely.)* Think of someone who may be difficult, whom you must love.

2. A friend recognizes your imperfections, frailities and weaknesses and chooses to go on loving you anyway. *(We must go on showing love to an unsaved one.)*

3. A friend's motive is to *give*, not to get. Paul said to the church in Corinth, "Behold the third time I am ready to come to you: and I will not be burdensome

to you: for I seek not yours, but you....And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." (2 Corinthians 12:14-15) *We must have this kind of motive in order to win the lost*. Explain what this means to you.

A true friend can be trusted.

1. Friends may not always agree on all things, but they can agree to disagree and still remain friends. They can respect each others' right to their opinion. *(Don't argue with unsaved friends, but lovingly seek to point them to Christ.)*

2. There are times when a sincere rebuke is essential to friendship. He is no friend at all who allows wrong to continue uncorrected. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend..." (Proverbs 27:6). Loving rebukes are no threat to true friendship because true friends can be trusted. *Loving confrontation with the gospel is necessary to win the lost.*

A friend gives encouragement.

1. A true friend is one who helps you through the trials and tests of life. *(If you minister to an unsaved friend in a time of crisis, you may win a hearing for the gospel at a later time.)*

2. When the world and the devil attack you from the outside and the flesh is undermining your strength within, a friend will be there to encourage and build you up. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel" (Proverbs 27:9). "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17).

A friend will make sacrifices.

1. Friendships are not found, they are established and developed through investing time and effort. *(Friendliness is the first step toward winning a hearing for the gospel and giving your testimony.)*

2. Friendship involves caring for and sharing in the life of another. *(Be there for your friend.)*

"Walking Together With Him"

Heart to heart friendship, Mind with mind fellowship.
Moments of companionship, Response within in closeness.
In the love of Christ that binds us, His Holy Spirit seals us.
God the heavenly father blesses.
Deep within I know it, never to forget it.
So real, I need not feel it, This love indeed is precious.
From *Rejoice With Me* by Joyce Watke

How do my friendships measure up?

DANGERS FROM WITHIN
Lesson 6

MEMORY VERSE: "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26: 41).

THOUGHT TO PONDER: Eugenia Price, in her book, *A Woman's World,* differentiates between **loving a friend, and loving how that person makes you feel.** Genuine "agape" love focuses on the friend and meeting her needs. But we must heed the warning she makes, lest our friendship be a purely selfish one.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: I Sam. 9-16, Saul's life is like a three act, real life play.

Act I. Saul began well. God's prophet Samuel had anointed him to be the first king of Israel. "And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted and said, God save the king "(I Samuel 10:23). "...Saul, a choice young man, and goodly (person): from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people" (I Samuel 9:2).

Act II. King Saul's drift away from God began almost imperceptibly but became more noticeable as time went on. He acted **impatiently** as a military leader; then he made a **foolish** promise; the next step was **open disobedience** to God (I Samuel 13-15).

Samuel declared: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord: Behold to obey is better than sacrifice?...for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. *Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king*" (I Samuel 15:22-23).

Act III is a sad story of a rejected man, reaping the consequences of sin. It is the sad slow story of man moving farther and farther away from God. I Samuel 16:14 marks the start of the decline. "Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." "And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he *loved him greatly*; and he became his armourbearer. ... And it came to pass when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (15: 21-23).

A friendship began between David and the king's son, Jonathan, but was to be destroyed by Saul's jealous spirit. His final words to David were: "I have sinned, return my son David; for I will no more do thee harm...I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly" (I Samuel 26:21).

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these-- It might have been."
-Unknown

Israel's first two kings differed greatly. Read I Samuel 18:8-12.

I. Saul's jealous character is seen when his self-life was in control

- 18:8--"And Saul was very wroth, and the saying (of the people) displeased him. " Anger is the fruit of a jealous heart. God says "put off anger, wrath..." (Colossians 3:18).
- 18:9-- Saul "eyed" David. "Envy is the rottenness of the bones" (Proverbs 14:30).
- 18:10-- The spirit of an unsound mind, twisted by guilt and jealousy.
  18:12--Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul.

II. David's godly character comes from his spiritual life being in control.

- 18:5-- Wisdom, exceptional ability and courage, see 18:5, 14.
  18:10--Yieldedness, a godly character is a yielded character, Read Romans 13:1. *David knew full well a godly life yields to authority.*
- 18:12, 14--Spirituality, "and the Lord was with him." David was not jealous, not anxious to be crowned, not disrespectful. See Galatians 5:16.
- 18:16-- Love, the natural consequence of godliness. It was reciprocal **love.** *His godly life was a sharp contrast to Saul's life of selfishness.*

The flesh always produces works of the flesh. The spirit always produces fruits of the spirit. For the most part, Saul's life was dominated by the flesh, since he allowed the fleshly nature to have control, that nature produced jealousy, anger, envy, fear, and irrational behavior. By contrast, David lived the greater part of his life under the direction of the Holy Spirit. As a result, David's life reflected spiritual characteristics, such as wisdom, yieldedness, love and spirituality. **The actions of the men were determined by the controlling force in their lives, whether the flesh or the spirit.** It is important to understand this. **Saul** did evil things because he **was a carnal man.** He did not become a carnal man by doing evil things. **David** did good things because he **was a spiritual man.** He did not become a spiritual man by doing good things. - From *After God's Own Heart*

III. To *ruin a friendship* there are seven rules you can learn from Saul:

- *Make sure your friendship is based on what another can do for you:*
- *Be possessive.*
- *Cultivate jealousy*
- *Explode, don't discuss your anger and irritation.*
- *Avoid the person who threatens and annoys you. Stay out of their way.*
- *Cultivate envy.*
- *Harbor hatred in your heart, believe you are justified to feel that way.*

IV. If you want to remedy a disintegrating life and a destroyed friendship: Consider the remedy prescribed by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5:23,24.

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Four steps indicated by the Lord Jesus:

- **Admit--**"if thy brother have ought against thee," justified or not, deal with the particular issue right away.
- **Initiate--**"leave thy gift and go thy way," whenever I am aware of a problem, I must immediately take steps to resolve the problem, regardless of who is to blame.
- **Correct**--"first be reconciled to thy brother then come and bring thy offering."

"There is a holy urgency about our responsibility. Honest confrontation will solidify a friendship, but unresolved conflicts harden like concrete..." From *Quality Friendship*-by Gary Inrig

- **Love--**the emphasis is on acting in love, not acting on emotion.

There is the spiritual law revealed in the relationships of Saul and Jonathan to David. Both began with affection. But Jonathan's relationship was built on meeting his friend's needs as a giver, and the friendship flourished. On the other hand, Saul was a taker. He looked to David to meet his needs and, as a result, he could not practice love toward him. **When love is not practiced**, **disintegration is inevitable.** -From *Quality Friendship* by Gary Inrig.

Remember Thy Friends and honor them, (Romans 12:10)
"Forsake not thy friend," you will come again. (Proverbs 27:10)
"Make sure of thy friend" so it can be as it has been.
Make everything right when wrong come to light. (Proverbs 6:3)
Lift up that name in prayer and show how much you care.
"Go home to thy f riends," Tell them how good God has been. (Mark 5:19)
Secure you will be, In love, you will see.
Comfort and release bring courage and peace.
This love you know does surely grow, (I Thessalonians 3:12)
As you live in the light of the Word, And walk hand in hand with the Lord. (I John 1:7)
From *Rejoice With Me* by Joyce Watke

COUSINS - BEST FRIENDS
Lesson 7

MEMORY VERSE: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." Psalms 34:15

BACKGROUND:

Elizabeth means: "A worshipper of God." Her father was a priest of the house of Aaron, her husband, Zacharias was also a priest. They were a happy couple, both one in their love of God and their devotion to His law. The things of God were a priority in her life, from childhood on. *Two of the best people of their day, "they were both righteous before God," but there was a tragedy in their lives, they had no child.*

> *"A childless state*, more so for the daughter of a priest and the wife of a priest, *was humiliating*." - from *All the Women of the Bible*, by Herbert Lockyer

They were getting old, past the time of life for child-bearing, but they never wavered in their faith in God, or slackened in their zeal to observe all the requirements of the Law.

Mary was Elizabeth's younger cousin. When the angel told Mary of the happy event that was shortly to take place in Elizabeth and Zacharias' home, she immediately set out upon the long journey from Nazareth to their home in the south country.

The story of Elizabeth shows us she was the kind of woman who if we could stand before her, her life would convict us, and her faith challenge us today.

LOOKING FOR DETAILS (in Luke 1:5-45)

1. What evidences do we find in the following verses that Mary and Elisabeth lived righteous lives?
   a. 1:7

   b. 1:18-20

   c. 1:38

   d. 1:45

2. What specific needs were evident in their lives at this time?
   a. 1:7

b. 1:18-20

c. 1:24

d. Matthew 1:19

3. Describe some of the providential links that joined Mary and Elizabeth.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: Luke 1:5-80

1. What impact do you think it might have had on their marriages had Mary and Elizabeth discussed their husbands' lack of faith?

2. What is the danger in criticizing a friend's husband-even if the criticisms are true?

3. How can we help a friend if she begins criticizing her husband?

The meeting of the two women was a very memorable and happy occasion. Elizabeth becomes suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit and in a prophetic rapture hails her cousin as the mother of her Lord. Mary too, is filled by the Spirit, and returns her cousin's salutation in words that have become one of the most treasured hymns of the Christian Church. (Read Luke 1:46-55).

4. What do we learn about blessing and encouraging others from Elizabeth's blessing to Mary in their greeting scene? Luke 1:42-45.

Find two things in each verse:

1:42

1:43

1:44

1: 45

5. What were some ways God met the needs of Mary and Elizabeth through this friendship?

IF YOU HAD BEEN THERE: (Consider the following thoughts.)

Zacharias, Elizabeth's husband could not converse with Mary, he had not been able to speak since the angel Gabriel had appeared to him that evening in the temple...Mary learned the story from Elizabeth. Zacharias painstakingly wrote it all down for his wife so she could know all the angel said to him. "My dear husband was afraid though," the old woman may have said gently. -From *God Speaks to Women Today by* Eugenia Price.

Mary stayed with them three months. *Surely God was preparing her for her own natural child bearing***,** she must have been with Elizabeth to help deliver her baby. (Read Luke 1:56-69.)

> After nine months of divinely imposed silence, Zacharias was finally able to speak. He wrote on a parchment that the miracle baby born to him and Elizabeth would be named John. Then, filled with the Holy Spirit, Zacharias spoke of God's faithfulness and the salvation He would bring through the Messiah. -From *The Daily Bread*

Notice that the angel came to Zacharias, not to Elizabeth. Perhaps Zacharias needed convincing, *Elizabeth being strong in faith, accepted the news gladly, without doubting*.

> "Elizabeth seems to have been gifted with true discernment, real objectivity. She accepted her husband's behavior--she accepted her husband *as he was,* not as she might have wished him to be. She could have felt some jealousy of her young cousin, Mary, who was to be the mother of the Messiah, when her son was only to be the one who announced the coming of Mary's son... (But) she was balanced, sane, truly humble." -From *God Speaks to Women Today* by Eugenia Price

> "Elizabeth means 'God is my oath, a worshiper of God'. Two million women are named 'Elizabeth' in the United States alone, the name is a favorite for queeens and females of all walks of life. The son called John by divine command, means 'the mercy or favor of God'." -From *All the Women of the Bible*, byHerbert Lockyer

> "Two important truths illustrated by her story are: she had to learn that the child she had been given belonged to God. Secondly, the story of Elizabeth is another reminder of the selfless, self-sacrificing part that is the lot of all true mothers." -From *Mothers in the Bible*, by Donald Davidson

If you and I could have been there, we would have thrilled at the friendship of these two women, an older woman and a younger woman. Elizabeth could be considered a "mentor" for her younger cousin, Mary. *This was a successful intergenerational friendship, may we learn from their example.*

"In Fond Farewell"
In the warmth of love surrounded, A sweet peace spreads o'er my soul,
I am strengthened in life's journey, As strong arms 'round about me fold.
How the closeness of that moment and the choiceness of that hour,
So long will be remembered, From its mem'ry I will borrow.
From *Rejoice With Me*, by Joyce Watke

GETTING TO KNOW MARY
Lesson 8

SCRIPTURE : Luke 1:46-55

What were some ways God met the needs of Mary and Elisabeth through their friendship?

THINK ABOUT IT:

The name of "Mary" has been given at least 70 different interpretations in a frantic effort to get away from the Biblical significance of *bitterness*...As a name Mary is related to the Old Testament Miriam, *to Mara,* the name Naomi used to describe her affliction, and *to Marah,* the name of the bitter water reached by the Israelites in their wilderness journeys. *The original and pervading sense of these root-forms is that of 'bitterness' derived from the notion of 'trouble, sorrow***.** Mary the virgin certainly had many "bitter" experiences.

Centuries before Mary became the mother of the Saviour of mankind, it was prophesied that it would be so.

Mary, then, was selected by divine wisdom from among the humblest and it was in such an environment that the Father prepared His Son to labor among the common people who heard Him gladly...

Born of a peasant maiden, and having a foster-father who eeked out a frugal living as a carpenter, Jesus was best able to sympathize with man as man, and be regarded by all men as 'common'. -from *The Women of the Bible*, by Herbert Lockyer.

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat**,** *that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good***.** For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good...." (Isaiah 7:14-16).

" For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6,7).

Mary, retained a deep sense of personal unworthiness. She would have been the last to claim perfection for herself. Born like the rest of women in sin and shaped in iniquity, she had her human faults and needed a Saviour as others did. She expressed her heart's need, when she said, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." (Luke 1:47)

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:5-9).

It must not be forgotten that Mary not only bore Jesus, but also mothered Him for the thirty years He tarried in the poor Nazareth home...*Because of the character of Mary, we feel that her home was permeated with mutual trust and love and sympathetic understanding*. He had His pious mother in mind when He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

Another quality Jesus grew to appreciate in His mother *was the sense of the presence of God***.** Gabriel said to Mary, "The Lord is with thee" and this divine awareness surrounded the holy Child Jesus.

Obedience was another quality in which she trained her Son. An old saying says, 'The child that is not taught to obey his parents will not obey God.'

The one book in that Nazareth home was the Old Testament. (Can you imagine how she read, and quoted it to him, like Hannah must have done?) "And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither any rock like our God....for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (1 Samuel 2:1-3).

"His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen" (Psalms 72:17-19).

> **"Mary's mind was saturated with its promises and prophecies, as is evident in her song of praise.** She must have read this to Him, how interested He must have been. Then there came a time when He knew that the Scripture testified of Him: that He came to be the Living Word." -from *The Women of the Bible,* by Herbert Lockyer.

QUESTIONS:

- Among all the godly Jewish maidens of that time in Palestine why do you think God selected such a humble peasant young woman as Mary?

- Name one significant fact about her bloodline:
- What were some of the "bitter" experiences early on that she surely had?
- What events in the life of Christ would have torn at a mother's heart?

A LESSON FOR US:

• Mary was a humble peasant woman, but God lifted her up, and blessed her. We must follow her example. "...Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:5b,6).

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

• Please turn to someone near you, and give her a few words of praise, encouragement, a "blessing". (Do this often.)

• Think about a time when God was attentive to your cry for friendship. What did He do for you?

• Make a list of friends He has brought into your life at a crucial time, then take time to thank the Lord for each of them.

• Next, pray a sentence prayer for someone on your heart.

CONSIDER:

> "In the scene at the cross, Jesus transferred the bond of motherhoood from Himself to John His beloved disciple, so he could perform the duties of an elder brother, a kinsman-redeemer.
>
> Perhaps in John's home Mary would find the spiritual atmosphere more suited to her thirst for God, and in John find a soul on fire, similar to His own zeal for God." -From *The Women of the Bible,* by Herbert Lockyer.

Christ's Pattern of Friendship
Lesson 9

MEMORY VERSE: John 15:9, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love."

As you put Christ's friendship pattern into practice, a transformation will take place in your life, because each of these characteristics are Christ's characteristics. **YOU WILL BECOME CHRIST'S REFLECTION TO THE WORLD.**

A little girl, on her way home from church, turned to her mother and said "Mommy, the preacher said some things this morning that confused me." The mother said, Oh! What things?" The girl replied, "Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. Is that true? "Yes that is true," the mother replied. "He also said that God lives in us. Is that true, too?" Again the mother replied, "Yes." "Well," said the little girl. "if God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn't He show through?"

If God lives in us, then there's no way of keeping Him from "showing through." That's the essence of Christian living-living in such a way that people around us will see God in our lives. - From *The Gospel Tract Harvester* by Robert K. Marcho

1. Parting scene (a touching scene): (John 19:26-27)

"When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple (John) standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

Best friends can be as permanent as family.

2. Words of blessing or encouragement (Christ began saying goodbye) : (John 14:1-3)

"**Let not your heart be troubled:** ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

There is great value in expressing affection before a move or death prompts it.

3. Depending on God more than upon a friend:

"But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men" (John 2:24). "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works," (John 14:10).

"O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me," (Jn 17:25).

Christ mirrored to us what God is like.

4. Sharing vulnerability: Matt. 26:38

"Then saith he unto them, **My soul is exceeding sorrowful,** even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."

Other examples: Ruth told Naomi everything; Jonathan and David bared their souls to each other; Elizabeth was overjoyed to see Mary.

"Being vulnerable actually draws people to us, because the world is full of bleeding and hurting," said Ann Kiemel

5. Being sensitive to intuition and the Holy Spirit's leading.

"For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he,Ye are not all clean," (John 13:11). "The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city and saith to the men, Come see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:28-29).

Most women are blessed with intuition and must use it often .

Proverbs 22:3 says "A prudent man (or woman) foreseeth the evil and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished."

Remember: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." (Ps.119:105). We must seek its guidance, letting the Holy Spirit speak to our hearts.

6. Taking Risks --(Matt. 26:42)

"He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

A true friend knows your faults and still loves you. A true friend shares your sorrows and delights in your joys. A true friend never turns her back on you nor forsakes you. A true friend will be there for you in time of need. *Are you that kind of friend? Christ is!*

7. Making A Promise --(John 14:13-14)

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

Ruth gave her promise to Naomi in Ruth 3:5. See Jonathan's promise to David in 1 Samuel 20:4. *Each of them carried through.*

8. Praying and Commitment: (John 17:9-11)

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. and all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them...**Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.**" "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

9. Unfailing love: