



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

BUILDING WISE FRIENDSHIPS

KEY PASSAGE: Proverbs 18:24 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 15:33

► SUMMARY

Friends are some of the greatest assets we have in life. But more is not necessarily better.

Proverbs 18:24 warns, “A person of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” In other words, it’s better to have one loyal friend who encourages, helps, and lifts us up than to have many casual friends who come and go. When we’re indiscriminate in our choice of friends, we’re headed for ruin because some of them will drag us down.

► SERMON POINTS

Devoted, intimate friendships don’t just happen; they require an investment of time and energy. The quality of the building materials we use determines how lasting and satisfying these relationships will be.

Cautions Regarding Relationships

- Because of the influence friends have in our lives, we must be careful whom we choose for friends. We need wise governing principles and standards to gauge the heart of potential friends.
- We must also be wise in how we form friendships. Scripture warns, “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Cor. 15:33). Bad company is anyone who draws us away from the Lord. If we build a relationship with someone with a corrupted nature, we’ll be affected in negative ways.

Impact of Friendships

Relationships have the power to affect us in both positive

and negative ways. They can . . .

- **Delight us.** Intimate relationships are often a great source of enjoyment.
- **Develop us.** Friendships teach us how to get along with others, shape our personality, and teach us to relate on a deeper level.
- **Drive us.** Close companions motivate and energize us to do our best.
- **Disillusion us.** Sometimes even the best of friends can let us down or walk away, but that is never a good reason to refuse to trust anyone again.
- **Distress us.** There may be times when we see a faithful friend violate God’s Word, head in the wrong direction, or even walk away from the Lord.
- **Drag us down.** If a friend drifts from God and no longer desires to please Him, he may pressure us to follow him down the wrong path. No relationship is so valuable that we can’t do without it. We may have to let go of a friend in order to stay true to the Lord.
- **Destroy us.** Unwise companionships may lead us to make decisions that will destroy our lives and futures.

Rewards of Friendships

Despite the risks, close relationships are very rewarding.

- **Acceptance.** They provide feelings of acceptance and belonging.
- **Love.** There’s also the encouragement of being loved.
- **Change.** Although bad company corrupts good morals, good company strengthens our character and devotion to Jesus Christ.
- **Intimacy.** When friendship reaches its deepest level, we can speak freely from the heart about our struggles, without fear of condemnation. Instead of being shocked

at our weakness or sin, an intimate friend walks with us through the challenges of life.

- **Fruitfulness.** Genuine friends inspire us to be productive. The joy we receive from their company gives us energy and excitement for life.
- **Security.** A loyal companion gives us a sense of security when we face criticism or the storms of life because we know we're not alone. Other than the Lord Jesus, there's no one more reassuring in life than a godly friend who walks with us through every circumstance.
- **Spiritual growth.** When two believers become devoted friends, their mutual interests are things of the Lord. Having developed an intimate relationship, they freely discuss God's character and seek to understand how He operates in their lives through the trials and sorrows. They're committed to growing in their relationship with Christ and in helping each other mature.

How to Build Close Friendships

- **Share a deep mutual interest.** This isn't the most important aspect of a friendship, but it's the one with which we generally begin a relationship.
- **Meet the needs of the other person.** The goal is not to focus on self but on our friends. We consider what's best for them and how we can build up and encourage them in their walk with Christ.
- **Risk rejection and pain.** To develop a genuine friendship, we must be willing to let our guard down, even if it means possible offenses or rejection. Sometimes we need to see past our hurt to discover that the relationship is worth pursuing.
- **Love sacrificially.** This means we're willing to give without expecting anything in return. Friendship is not all about receiving what we want and need. There may be times when we put ourselves second by laying down our needs and desires in order to help our friend.
- **Be open and transparent.** Authentic friendships are built on mutual transparency and the willingness to reveal who we really are.
- **Serve gladly.** Genuine friendships are not based on what the other person can do for us. Instead, we look

for ways to help and encourage our friend. There's great joy when we view the relationship as an opportunity to give of ourselves without hesitation to meet the needs of the other person.

- **Ask forgiveness.** In every relationship there will be occasions when we hurt or offend each other. If we refuse to acknowledge our wrong or forgive a wrong done to us, we hinder that relationship. How can we withhold forgiveness when our Savior has forgiven all our sins?
- **Accept criticism and praise gladly.** Most of us are much better at handling commendations than we are criticism, but to be a genuine friend, we must accept and learn from criticism, knowing that it's given to us by someone who loves us and desires our best.
- **Be committed to each other's spiritual growth.** When we truly love someone, our desire is to encourage them in God's Word and prayer and help them understand His ways. Conversations about the Lord, prayers for and with each other, and open sharing about our struggles are all part of building a relationship centered on Christ.
- **Let principles of Scripture govern your relationship.** When our words, reactions, and conduct in public and private are directed by God's Word, we have a strong foundation for true and lasting friendships.

▶ RESPONSE

- What has governed your choice of companions until now? What guidelines do you need to adopt to choose friends wisely?
- How many loving, devoted friends do you have? If you don't have any friends like this, are you willing to give the time and effort it takes to develop loving, devoted friendships?
- Does the prospect of letting someone know you intimately cause you fear? How has your past experience with relationships influenced your willingness to be open and honest? Are you willing to tear down any walls of separation and let someone into your life?

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