



Friendships that **LAST**



*Transform Children to
Transform Their World*

PART OF THE DAVID & COOK MINISTRY FAMILY

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Day 1

The Foundation of Friendship

Sometimes it may seem easier to get things done when you work alone. But God's Word is clear that two are better than one. Think of a time when you were working alone and someone came along to help you. How did that affect the work? How did it make you feel to have someone working alongside you?

Most of us enjoy spending time with friends. But if you are struggling with something, do you ever hesitate to ask for help? Maybe it is pride that keeps us from wanting to ask for help from a friend. But true friends are gifts from God. When we rely on Him to lead us in our friendships, we often experience the caring relationships we truly desire.

Even the friends God brings into our lives will disappoint and hurt us. However, there is a Friend who will never leave you or forsake you. He is with you always. He laid down His life for you! His friendship can change your life for eternity!

Think of a friend who supports your pursuit of the Lord. In what ways could that friend help you? Think of ways that you could help that friend grow closer to God. Pray that Jesus, a true Friend, whose love is beyond compare, will bring the warmth of His friendship to you and your relationships in a very real and lasting way. Thank God for friends!

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Day 2

Friends Love Others

We know that we have been called to love others. But sometimes this is difficult to do. We may be busy, or we may be dealing with painful things in our own lives. We may have a broken relationship that causes us to distrust even those who are close to us. It can be hard to live in harmony with others. Feelings get hurt. Misunderstandings happen. People—including us—can be selfish. So how do we live in harmony with others? How do we love when we do not feel like loving? It is only possible through the power of God's Holy Spirit.

As this verse tells us, the Lord can make our love increase. Only as we receive His love deep in our hearts will we have love to give to others—and only as we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us and empower us will our hearts be so full of love that it overflows to others.

While we benefit from loving others, the purpose is bigger than just that. Loving others also brings glory to our heavenly Father, the Creator of friendship. He created us for relationship—with Him and with others. And when we love others, it brings glory to His great and loving name.

Spend some time praying and asking God to reveal His love for you. Ask Him to open your heart wide to receive His love fully so that it will overflow into your human relationships. Think about a friend who may need a reminder of God's love for him or her. Then, find an opportunity to demonstrate His love today.

*May the Lord make your love increase and overflow
for each other and for everyone else,
just as ours does for you.*

1 Thessalonians 3:12

Day 3

Gratitude for Friendships

We are surrounded by people—in our families, communities, and churches. However, we may not always stop to think about how important these people are to us and to God. It can be easy to live each day without stopping to be grateful for the people God has so carefully placed in our lives. As the apostle Paul reminds us, it is important to give thanks for and to these friends.

Paul models showing gratefulness for people in his letters. We can show gratefulness for others in these ways:

1. Pray for God to bless the person.
2. Thank God for the person.
3. Show the person that you are grateful for him or her.

Take a moment to reflect on the friends you are grateful for. Thank God for blessing you with these people! Then, think of a specific person you are grateful for and a reason you are grateful for him or her. Perhaps this person is always there to comfort you when you feel alone or afraid. Perhaps this person has helped you to see a problem from a different perspective. Take time to ask God to bless this person, and thank Him for this valued friendship. Take time to show your gratitude to this person as well. When you do these things, your relationships will grow.

*We always thank God for all of you.
We keep on praying for you.*
1 Thessalonians 1:2

Day 4

Forgiveness in Friendship

Free—released from anger, pain, bitterness. Free to live your life without the heavy burden of guilt and grief. What a wonderful thought! Is it possible to live in such a way? Forgiveness is what brings this blessed release and freedom.

God is the author of forgiveness. There is no one like Him. God delights in showing mercy. Because of this truth, we know that any forgiveness we can give others does not come from ourselves—it comes from God. He is forming our hearts to be like His so that we can love and forgive our friends as He does. Through Christ's sacrifice, we have received the gift of forgiveness, allowing us to become part of God's family. Jesus wants to experience this in our friendships as well.

Spend a few moments listening to the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to show you the hurt and anger that are keeping your heart from being free. Are there pieces of your heart that are dwelling in the darkness of bitterness and anger? Are you holding on to pain or resentment that darkens your friendships? Open the windows of your soul to His light and allow Him to clear away the darkness of your past hurts and allow His light to penetrate your heart and your relationships with others.

Let God, who shows us the example of true forgiveness, help you to delight in mercy. Pray that God will expose the places in your friendships that need His healing light. Pray that you and your friends will feel the warmth of His love, which casts out all darkness and fills the empty spaces in your heart with hope.

Day 5

Serving Friends Shows Love

God first loved us. Love is His idea. He is the source who shows us how to love. We can only love as we stay connected to Him. When we fully receive God's unconditional love, it changes the way we treat others. He moves us to show love to others in ways we may never have thought to do before. We begin to notice the needs of people around us and see how we can help them.

So what does love do? It acts! When we think of our love for others, we often think that we are doing what Jesus has called us to do. We treat our family members with kindness, and we help at church. We may take a meal to a sick neighbor or care for a young child whose mother needs to visit the doctor. These are all wonderful acts of service, and they reflect God's love in the lives of those around us. Jesus has called us to serve others as though we are serving Jesus Himself. Love sees people and responds to their needs. Love is what moves us to comfort, help, encourage, correct, and support others. Love is what causes us to put forth the effort to bring others to Jesus.

Think about the ways you show God's love to those around you. Are you loving and serving others as if they were Jesus? Ask God to help you to love your friends as He has called you to do and invite Him to transform your service to bring glory to His great name. You are the hands and feet of a loving God who has called you share His love with the world around you. Allow Him to use your service for His glory—and experience His transforming love in all new ways.

We love because [God] first loved us.

1 John 4:19

Day 6

Friends Are Loyal

We are all part of at least one community. That is because God created us to live with other people. He also created us to care about and love other people. He created us to be loyal to the people we care about. Loyalty goes beyond the things of this life and this world and helps us to become the people God wants us to be.

At times, we all need the love of a true friend. We need the support of someone who cares and understands. After all, a true friend loves you at all times. A true friend “sticks closer than a brother.” Are you a friend like that? Someone who faithfully loves and prays for others in their difficulties? When you share joyful and difficult moments with others, you develop meaningful and lasting relationships.

Friends are gifts from God. Think for a moment about a person who has stayed with you and helped you through a hard time. If that person did not leave when you or something in your life became difficult to be around, you know this person is loyal to you. Maybe you are loyal to someone you care about. Think about what you would do if that person were in trouble. You would do anything to help that person because of your loyalty to him or her. God puts us in each other’s lives to help us through hard times and to share our joy!

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

Day 7

Friends Trust Each Other

Having a friend you can rely on, someone you can trust completely, is rare. For you to trust someone absolutely, that person must know all about you—the good things, the difficult things, the joys, the hardships, the nice and the ugly. Is there anyone who knows you like that and can still be trusted to stay with you through difficult times? Most of us feel that if someone knew everything about us, that person would turn away from us. Our hard things would be too difficult to handle. Our ugly side would cause that person to want to leave us.

Pause for a moment to think about your friendships. Are there any relationships where trust has been broken? Feelings get hurt. Misunderstandings happen. People—including us—can be selfish. So how do we build trust in our friendships? Through the power of God's Spirit. Pause and ask Him for wisdom as you rebuild the broken trust.

Jesus sees all of you—the things you show the world and the things you would rather hide. He loves you. Jesus can be trusted absolutely. He is the One who will not disappoint you. Spend a couple of moments writing down things that you can entrust to Jesus right now. He will not disappoint you.

They trusted in you, and you didn't let them down.

Psalm 22:5b, NIV

*They will have no fear of bad news;
their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the LORD.*

Psalm 112:7

- **How can you begin building trust in your friendships today?**

- **What is one way you can rebuild trust in a broken friendship?**

Day 8

Honesty Deepens Friendships

Honesty builds relationships. How? When we are honest with others and speak the truth to them, this builds trust. Trust is an important part of a healthy relationship. When trust is there, it is possible to tell someone anything, even difficult things.

Cultivating honesty in friendships is one way to build this kind of trust. In a world of conflicting messages, it is rare to find friends who will be fully honest with us. Speaking the truth in love may not always be the easier choice, but it is always the better one. Jesus is both fully honest with us and fully loving towards us. We have an opportunity to demonstrate this truth and love in our friendships!

Pause for a moment to think of a time when telling the truth helped your relationship with someone. How did you show the person that you had pure intentions? Who were you trying to please by being honest? When you are honest in your friendships—even when it is hard—you please God. Perhaps this is why honesty can be so impactful in your relationships with others. Ask God to show you where you have been honest in your friendships and where you need to grow in that. Ask Him to fill you with truth and honesty.

*The appeal we make is based on truth.
It comes from a pure heart. We are not trying
to trick you. In fact, it is just the opposite.
God has approved us to preach. He has trusted us
with the good news. We aren't trying to please people.
We want to please God. He tests our hearts.*

1 Thessalonians 2:3-4

Day 9

Communication in Friendships

We communicate all the time with the people around us. We talk with family members, neighbors, and friends. God is also a communicator. Jesus Christ is the living Word of God to man. God used words in creation. When we read His Holy Word, the Bible, we discover His amazing plan for us.

If communication is important to God, then we should pay attention to the words we use. What we say shows what is in our hearts. Too often, our words are filled with complaining, bitterness, or anger instead of grace, kindness, and gratefulness. Matthew 12:34 tells us to speak words people want to hear. What words do you like to hear? Share those words with others. Whatever it is you like to hear, chances are good that your friends like to hear the same words.

Think about your conversations this past week. Did your words make those you care about feel good? Did they speak purifying truth to someone's heart? Did they show your love of God to a friend? Pause and ask God to let His love and forgiveness soak deeply into your own heart so that your words will be filled with grace. Pray that the words you use will build trust and joy in your friendships.

*You brood of vipers, how can you who are
evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks
what the heart is full of.*

Matthew 12:34

Day 10

Patience with Friends

God is kind and patient. His love is amazing! You can show God's love to others through your actions and words. Instead of saying or doing something that could be hurtful to someone else, you can choose to think before you do something you will later regret.

Think of a time when you needed to be patient with someone but your response was hurtful to him or her. What did the person do to make you upset? How did you respond? You know it is important to be patient with others, but that does not always make it easy. Sometimes, impatience causes other people to get hurt. Being patient with others can be difficult, but it offers an opportunity to show them the patience that their Heavenly Father has for them.

God wants you to show love to others. When you get into a situation that is difficult, be patient and take a moment to think. Remember to use gentle words and actions. By taking the time and care not to hurt the person you are dealing with, you will feel good about how you handled the situation. Know that God will give you the strength you need to step back, breathe, and make a choice that does not hurt anyone or anything.

Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not want what belongs to others. It does not brag. It is not proud.

1 Corinthians 13:4

*I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.*

Psalm 40:1

- Think of a time when someone was patient with you. How did it make you feel?

- How can you show love by being patient with a friend this week?

Day 11

Healing in Friendships

Sometimes, difficult things happen that cause separation between friends. Painful experiences can bring confusion and sorrow in friendships that once brought joy. Read Psalm 55:12–14 and notice how the psalmist grieves a broken friendship with someone he regularly worshiped with and someone he walked beside. When someone you care deeply about hurts you, the pain can be almost unbearable.

Do you have a friend who has hurt you deeply? Did it cause a separation between you? Do you want to fix your broken friendship? Consider how God can use your words to mend your relationship. Pray that He will guide what you say as you communicate His love in your friendships. If you let Him, God will help you.

Try to talk calmly with your friend about what happened to separate you from one another. Your kind and truthful words may not erase your friend's pain, but they may start the healing process. It may also help your friend to realize that you truly care for him or her—and that God does, too. Commit to listening even if you want to react and blame others for what has happened. Be willing to forgive to recover the friendship that once existed. God values friendship. Trust Him to help you mend your broken relationships.

*If an enemy were making fun of me, I could stand it.
If he were getting ready to oppose me, I could hide. But
it's you, someone like myself. It's my companion,
my close friend. We used to enjoy good friendship
at the house of God. We used to walk together
among those who came to worship.*

Psalm 55:12–14

Day 12

Friendship Requires Peacemaking

Jesus was born at a time when the government oppressed people. Armed soldiers were a common sight. Corrupt leaders lived richly while ordinary people lived in fear. God's people expected a Messiah who would overcome the Roman government with a sword. They wanted a revolution or a military coup. Instead God sent Jesus, who taught, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Most of us want peace in our own lives, including in our friendships. But too often we experience discontent, disagreement, and conflict with those we care about. Though not all situations are within our control, we are called as much as possible to live peaceably with others. In fact, Jesus tells us that peacemakers are blessed to be called sons of God. So how can we bring peace to our friendships in a world that is anything but peaceful?

Think about how your own attitudes, choices, and behaviors disrupt peace in your relationships with your friends. What changes can you make to bring peace instead of conflict? Spend some time praying about your role as a peacemaker in your personal life. Is there anger, confusion, or fear that you need to surrender to God? Are there active steps you can take to show God's peace to those you care about? Ask the Prince of Peace to fill you to overflowing. As God brings peace to your heart, you will begin to see it reflected in your words and your actions. As your relationships with your friends strengthen, you will begin to understand why Jesus calls peacemakers the blessed children of God.

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

2 Thessalonians 3:16
