

Relating to Friends, Part 1

By Patricia Ennis

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

The **Real-Life Scenario** states that Ashley was a kind friend. Ephesians 5:21; Colossians 3:13; and 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14 describe behaviors a friend should practice. Read and prepare to share the character qualities found in these verses.

Assignment Two

Read 1 Samuel 18:4; 19:1-17; 20:24-33; and 23:16-17. Prepare to describe the sacrifice Jonathan made for David.

Assignment Three

Read Luke 1:39-56. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What does Elizabeth's life teach us about trustworthiness and confidence?

Scripture to Memorize

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

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will be able to recognize the qualities of a biblical friendship.

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She is the author and coauthor of several books, including *Becoming a Young Woman Who Pleases God*. Pat's life's mission is to:

- Love her Lord with ALL of her heart (Matthew 22:37).
- Walk worthy of her calling (Ephesians 4:1-3).
- Train the younger women to fulfill the Titus 2 mandate so that God's Word will not be discredited (Titus 2:3-5).

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

I call her cell phone. I hear my best friend's voice, but I know she cannot answer because a reaction to her most recent chemo treatment caused her to lapse into unconsciousness. Memories flood my mind as I recall her kindness as a friend. A sobering question fills my mind: Did I tell her how much she means to me? *Dear Lord*, I prayed, *please wake Ashley up so I can tell her how special she is to me*. Several days later the Lord said yes to my prayer, and I was quick to tell her how much her faithful friendship means to me. Have you had a similar experience?

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:24-33; 23:16-17; and 2 Samuel 1:17 out loud.

Studying the Passage, 1 Samuel 18:1-2

Verse 1. As soon as . . . finished speaking. One of the most memorable descriptions of friendship recorded in Scripture is that of Jonathan and David. It teaches us that faithful friendship requires effort and sacrifice. In our twenty-first-century society, many friendships are based on surface attributes and selfishness. Jonathan's initiation of his friendship with David reflects a willingness to cross social barriers and personal desires to develop a true friendship.

Verse 2. Saul. Saul is Jonathan's father and is the king. Saul probably saw David as a threat to his son's inheritance as the future king. He wanted David to stay in his palace in order to watch him carefully.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on the qualities of a true friend found in Ephesians 5:21; Colossians 3:13; and 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14.

Discussion Question: What is a covenant?

Studying the Passage, 1 Samuel 18:3-4

Verse 3. covenant. A covenant is an agreement between people or groups that involves promises on the part of each to the other. It is more involved than a contract. A contract often involves the sharing of a skill like completing a task for a friend and usually has an ending date. For example, I will mow your lawn for you while you are on vacation. A covenant is a permanent arrangement that involves a person's total being. Jonathan and David made the covenant because they had a godly love for each other.

Verse 4. Jonathan stripped himself. Friendship involves sacrifice. Unselfishness is always necessary to practice true friendship. Each individual must be willing to give up something treasured. Jonathan voluntarily gave up his robe and belt along with his armor and sword. By giving these items to David, he freely surrendered his rightful position as king to David.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on the sacrifice Jonathan made for David found in 1 Samuel 18:4; 19:1–17; 20:24–33; and 23:16–17.

Studying the Passage, 1 Samuel 19:1-10

Verse 1. kill David. As David's popularity increased, Saul was unable to hide his hatred for David. God protected David by providing informants who told him of Saul's plot to kill

him. Friendship promotes the best interests of the other. Jeopardizing his own safety and relationship with his father, Jonathan sought to alert David to potential danger.

Verses 4-5. Jonathan spoke well. Jonathan defended David to his father and tried to cultivate a spirit of reconciliation between them. **he has not sinned.** Jonathan reminded his father that David did nothing to deserve death. Jonathan also reminded Saul of the good works David did for him.

Verse 6. shall not be put to death. Saul backed off for a period of time only to later have his heart dominated by jealousy and rage.

Verse 10. When Saul allowed anger to control him, he again sought to murder David.

Studying the Passage, 1 Samuel 20:24-33

Verse 30. Then Saul's anger. Friendship is willing to take the brunt of another person's circumstances. Every person needs someone to "go to the wall" for him or her. Against insurmountable odds, Jonathan did "go to the wall" for David. Second Samuel 1:26 clearly describes that David's love for Jonathan was returned. This is the affection commanded by God when He said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).

On Your Own

In the space below describe some specific and practical ways you can show biblical friendship to those you consider your friends. When everyone is finished, the group can share their responses.

Practicing Faithful Friendship

Read Luke 1:39-45 out loud.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on what Elizabeth's life can teach us about trustworthiness and confidence, as found in Luke 1:39-56.

Studying the Passage

Verse 39. Mary arose. Mary had confidence that she would be welcome in Elizabeth's home. Since cell phones and text messages did not exist, Mary had no way to alert Elizabeth of her intention to come for a long visit.

Verse 40. greeted Elizabeth. Mary chose to share freely her situation with her older relative Elizabeth. This action suggests Mary trusted Elizabeth to believe the best rather than the worst about her.

On Your Own

In the space below describe some specific and practical ways you can offer support to a friend who is experiencing a difficult situation. When everyone is finished, the group can share their responses.

Discussing the Passage

Verse 40-41. Elizabeth's life teaches us about the trustworthiness and confidence we should extend to a friend who is experiencing personal challenges. What specific things did Elizabeth do to encourage Mary?

Studying and Applying the Passage

Your friends should sense a spirit of trust and confidence in their shared relationship with you.

Verse 41. heard the greeting of Mary. As a friend, Elizabeth showed the characteristics of trust and confidence. She waited for Mary to share the reason for her visit rather than immediately questioning her or preempting the situation by sharing her good news. **filled with the Holy Spirit.** Elizabeth was a clean vessel the Holy Spirit could use to affirm the Lord's work in Mary's life. Notice that she was never critical or judgmental.

Verse 56. Mary remained. Elizabeth offered extended hospitality to Mary. Since Mary arrived when Elizabeth was six months pregnant, she evidently stayed until John the Baptist was born. This was not necessarily the most convenient time for a long-term guest; yet there is no record of any tension between them. Friendship is one of the most precious of God's gifts to us. Are you willing to evaluate yourself as a friend and consider how you can apply the qualities Jonathan and Elizabeth modeled in their lives to yours?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your thoughts have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your hear for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

If you want to be known as a faithful friend, you will need to invest time, energy, and resources. See 2 Corinthians 9:6 for a simple farming principle. The harvest one receives is directly proportionate to the amount and quality of seed sown. Galatians 6:7-10 reminds believers that we will reap what we sow. Galatians 6:10 teaches believers that our love for fellow Christians is the primary test of our love for God. Perhaps these principles will assist you in becoming a trustworthy friend:

- Take the time to truly know your friends. This means learning how to share yourself intimately and appropriately, sharing at the same level of disclosure your friend is sharing, moving into intimate sharing slowly, and exhibiting a willingness to share strengths and weaknesses, failures and fears, as well as victories and successes.
- Wholeheartedly listen to your friends when they are speaking—even if you think you might be told something you don't want to hear. Often when friends begin to communicate something we are not excited about knowing, our first reaction is to build our defense rather than completely tracking with them.
- Be trustworthy (Proverbs 20:6). You are to do all that is in your power to improve your friends' lives, seek to help them develop their potential to the fullest, and not compete with them. Instead, assist them in doing the work and will of God.
- Choose to practice consistency in your relationships, even when you do not feel like it. If you are going to follow the biblical model for friendships, then you will choose to "love at all times" (Proverbs 17:17). This means your warmth toward your friends is to be unswerving. Choose to regularly communicate that you like them, even when you don't approve of their choices.

Disciples who relate to their friends according to the teaching of Scripture are ready to join Christ in bringing His kingdom on earth for the glory of God.

Follow up Question

According to Scripture, what are some of the qualities of a good friendship?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.