

Jesus called us to be ‘salt’ and ‘light’ in this world. (Mt. 5:13-14)

Before we can be ‘light’ we must first be ‘salt’.

That means we are to have an influence.

It is of little value to have the truth of God’s Word, and know the way to salvation, if we cannot influence others that they might see the ‘light’ of the Gospel.

So how do we become a positive witness for Christ with others?

How can we influence others with the Gospel?

It begins with an understanding of what the Bible teaches concerning being a friend to others.

<sup>24</sup> *A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.* (Prov 18:24)

Very few of us desire to live the life of a hermit.

We want friends, but what happens (especially in a church) is that we gain a certain amount of security in limiting the number of people we allow to become close to us.

We develop a small circle of friends...others would refer to that as having ‘clicks.’

Unfortunately they would be correct much of the time.

With our small circle of friends we tend to build walls to keep others out rather than bridges to allow others in.

If we are going to be a positive influence for Christ and reach others with the light of the Gospel, we need to build bridges to develop new friendships.

God has given us some principles to guide us in accomplishing this task.

**I. Choosing Sides Is A Poor Way To Cultivate Friends.**

<sup>18</sup> *Casting the lot settles disputes  
and keeps strong opponents apart.* (Prov 18:18)

A. There are always those who want us to choose sides.

1. Especially if you choose their side!
2. This becomes their way of having and keeping friends.
3. If we go this route, we will find that we must choose and choose again.
4. The process is never ending.

B. Building true friendships with such people is nearly impossible.

1. They use their little circle as a means to control or manipulate others.
2. Ex. You can only be my friend if ...
3. They will use their friendship to get you to make choices against others to prove your allegiance.
4. If you fall into this trap, there will be no escape without alienating others.

C. There are times we need to choose.

1. However, our choices must be based upon the principles established by God's Word, not personal manipulation.
2. Biblical principles are never based upon personalities.

<sup>14</sup> *The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal 5:14)*

## II. **The Lord is Our Source for Building Present Friendships and for Reaching New Friends.**

### A. God desires us to be a friend to others.

1. I have heard some say, "But I am not a people person!"
2. That may be true, but it isn't a valid excuse.
3. One of the great things about being a child of God is that He can change us!
4. Consider for a moment all of the changes that He has made in our lives...now can He change us in the area of making friends?
5. Of course He can!

### B. He is our Strength and our Supply.

1. We cannot change ourselves, but God can enable us and bring about the changes necessary in our lives...if we will let Him.
2. The beginning of change comes when I realize that I need to change!

<sup>17</sup> *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Cor 5:17)*

3. This verse doesn't end with salvation, it continues on throughout our lives as God shapes us and conforms us to the image of Christ.

### III. Guidelines from Scripture on Friends and Friendship.

#### A. Make sure of your friends and covet their friendship.

*<sup>3</sup> then do this, my son, to free yourself,  
since you have fallen into your neighbor's hands:  
Go and humble yourself;  
press your plea with your neighbor! (Prov 6:3)*

1. What is the biggest problem in building and maintaining friendships?
2. Our selfish pride!
3. Humility acknowledges that we need friends, and there is an emptiness in our lives without them.

#### B. Understand that a friend's love is a very real strength in our hour of adversity.

*<sup>17</sup> A friend loves at all times,  
and a brother is born for adversity. (Prov 17:17)*

1. God never intended for us to have to go it alone.
2. We need each other and others need us.

*<sup>9</sup> Two are better than one,  
because they have a good return for their work:  
<sup>10</sup> If one falls down,  
his friend can help him up.  
But pity the man who falls  
and has no one to help him up! (Eccl 4:9-10)*

3. I believe that Mary and Martha felt much better about their brother's death with Jesus standing with them.

#### C. Sacrifices are willingly made by friends for their friends.

1. The Lord is our supreme illustration of this truth.

*<sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)*

2. That was the ultimate sacrifice for His friends, but there are many sacrifices made in a relationship.
3. That is the nature of friendship...it isn't self-centered, but always looks to others.
4. Someone has said that 'Friendship doubles our joy and divides our grief.'
5. If one is unwilling to 'do' for another, then they are unwilling to 'be' a friend.
  - a. How can we increase our friendliness?
  - b. Decide in our hearts that we will love people.
  - c. Smile when we look at people and continue smiling.
  - d. Be gracious and happy to see a familiar face.
  - e. Talk pleasantly not dominating the conversation.
  - f. Avoid the inclination to think that we are always right.
  - g. Do for others without expecting them to return the favor.
  - h. Pray that God would make us friendly.

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- Do we want to influence people with the message of Christ?
- Are we willing to be a true friend?
- What is the condition of our present friendships?
- Are we actively looking to build new bridges that God might use us?

*<sup>17</sup> Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it, sins. (Jas. 4:17)*