

Pathway

PERSONAL CHRISTIAN GROWTH SERIES

Set aside a special time each day to go through a *Pathway* study. Even if you miss a day or two, don't skip those studies. Begin again where you left off! Each daily study is designed to take only 10-12 minutes, or longer ... it's up to you! Be honest with yourself. This is a private time just between you and God.

Introduction — *What's a Friend?*

What are friends like? What is it that makes one person just someone you know, another person your friend and perhaps a few others your best friends? We all want good friends. But to have good friends, you've got to be one! In this *Pathway* series, you'll take a look at what the Bible has to say about how you can be a great friend to those around you!

DAY ONE — What's a Friend?

Talk to God: Ask God to enable you to show His kind of love to others.

Verse to Think About: *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (1 John 4:10-11).*

By My Side

What is a best friend like?

“My best friend always sticks up for me.”

“Sometimes we just hang out, you know?”

“She never laughs at me.”

“He’s got a good sense of humor.”

“We do stuff together, like shopping.”

“We talk about our cars.”

“Never talks about me behind my back.”

What is it that makes one person just someone you know, others your friends and perhaps a few your best friends?

What qualities do you want your friends to have? **Write them here, in order of their importance.**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

We all need friends. But what’s a friend supposed to be like? This week you’ll be taking a look at what the Bible says about how you can be a good friend to those around you.

A Look in the Book: David knew he could count on his friend, Jonathan. Even though David had grown up working in fields with sheep and Jonathan was the king’s son, the two were good friends. Read 1 Samuel 18:3. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

Things got tough — and interesting — for these friends. Even before David and Jonathan had established such a close friendship, Samuel, the prophet, had already anointed David to be the next king. Then, David had killed the giant Goliath, and all the people praised him for his bravery. King Saul, Jonathan’s father, was furious! He wanted to kill David. Saul wanted his own son to be king after him.

Jonathan could have turned against David because he was going to be the next king. But he didn’t. Instead, Jonathan saved David’s life twice when Saul wanted to kill him.

David, in turn, promised Jonathan that he would never hurt him or any of his family after he became king. You can read about this in 1 Samuel 19:1-6 and 20:1-42.

So what happened after that? Saul and Jonathan were killed in a war, and David became king. It was the custom to kill all the descendants of the previous king so they couldn’t regain the throne. But David remembered his promise to Jonathan. When he found out that Jonathan had a son who was still alive, he brought him into the palace and took care of him.

That must have been some friendship between David and Jonathan! Scripture tells us that their souls were *knit together*.

The word for “friend” in the Bible really means someone who is loved or dear. Read Proverbs 17:17. *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*

What does this verse say about friends?

In this verse, Solomon talks about God’s kind of love, not romantic love.

Now read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

In this passage, you can see how God’s love shows in a believer’s actions.

Love is caring about someone enough to:

- not act as if you’re better (v. 4)
- not say or do unkind things (v. 4)
- put him/her first (v. 5)
- be forgiving (v. 5)
- be honest and reliable (vs. 6-7)
- be encouraging (v. 7)

Wow! That’s God’s kind of love. Wouldn’t it be great to have a friend like that?

What about you? Do you care about your friends the way Jonathan and David cared about each other? In what ways do you need to improve your friendships? **Write your thoughts here.**



DAY TWO — What's a Friend?

Talk to God: Tell God how you would rate yourself at telling the truth. Ask Him to help you always be honest in a kind and loving way.

Verse to Think About: *Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are His delight (Proverbs 12:22).*

You Can Believe It

Curt squealed his new set of wheels into the driveway of Pete's house. There was a grin on his face. He hit the horn twice, and out came his friend.

"Hey, Pete," Curt shouted over the roar of the engine. "What do you think?" Pete knew a lot about cars, and Curt really wanted to know how he would rate this one.

"You got it?"

Curt grinned and jumped out of the car. "You bet I did. This was the best-looking one I could get for the money. And she runs great."

Pete walked slowly around the car. It was rust-covered and dented on one side, and black smoke puffed from the tail pipe.

"She might need a little work, but my brother said he'd help me with it. What do you think of it?"

Pete hesitated. The car was a trash heap. What should he say?

When Jamie got her test back, she took one glance at the grade and flipped the paper upside down on her desk. She'd failed. She looked over to see if Karen had noticed.

Karen wasn't looking. She was busy looking at her own test.

"Oh, good," Karen said with a sigh of relief. "B plus. I was so afraid I had bombed. What did you get, Jamie?"

Jamie frowned and looked down at the back of her test paper. "I didn't do too well."

"You couldn't have done worse than a C," Karen commented. "What did you get?"

Patrick sat down on the bench with a heavy sigh. He wasn't in as good shape as the other guys, and being overweight didn't help. He looked over at Cindy, watching the rest of the guys shoot baskets.

"You tired?" Cindy asked.

"Naw, not really. The guys are always teasing me about being overweight. I know I could lose a few pounds, but you don't think I'm fat, do you?"

Sometimes a lie can seem like the best way out of a tough situation with a friend. Can you remember a time when telling a lie seemed like the best thing to do? Or have you

ever been afraid that a friend would get mad if you told him or her the truth? Think of a specific example, then **describe it**.

A Look in the Book: One of the first laws that God set down for the nation of Israel had to do with being honest. Read Exodus 20:16. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*

The Israelites were told not to bear false witness or tell lies about others.

Now turn to Proverbs 6:16-19. *These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*

These verses talk about six things God hates. It should be easy for you to pick out the two things that have to do with lying. **Write them here.**

1. _____
2. _____

What about the times when telling the truth would make your friend mad? God hasn't said there are some times when it's okay to lie. God hates lies. Telling the truth in a kind way is always better than telling a lie.

Take a look at the instance you wrote about earlier, when telling a lie seemed best. Did you lie or tell the truth? On the lines below, **write how you could have told the truth** — or told the truth more kindly.

DAY THREE — What's a Friend?

Hiding It in My Heart: How did you do on the questions? A verse to help you remember to watch what you say is James 1:19. Memorize it today.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

Talk to God: Talk to God about how you use your tongue. Ask Him to help you guard the words that come from your mouth each day.

Verse to Think About: *Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man (Colossians 4:6).*

What Do You Say?

Your friend's mom invites you to stay for dinner. She's prepared a special meal. But she isn't a very good cook, and the food tastes awful. When your friend asks if you liked the meal, you say:

"Your mother is a lousy cook."

"Your mother makes meatballs so rubbery they bounce."

"Your mother works hard at making her meals."

You notice that your friend has very bad breath. Everyone else knows it and is making fun of your friend. You say:

"Your breath smells like the bottom of a bird cage."

"I can't believe how bad your breath is."

"Would you like a breath mint?"

What you say and how you say it can have a big effect on your friendships. As you can tell, some of the above responses are humorous, and some can hurt; only two are positive.

Learning to control your tongue can help you become a better friend. Using your tongue for kindness is part of exercising God's love and being a friend.

A Look in the Book: James has a lot to tell you about your tongue. Read James 3:2-4. *For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.*

What you say controls your life just as the rudder on a ship controls where the pilot wants the ship to go. Now look at James 3:6. *And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so*

is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

It says that your tongue can be dangerous. It's a *fire, a world of iniquity!* What do your words show about the direction your life is taking?

Can you remember a time when you said something and then wished you had never said it? **Describe the situation.**

It's important to guard what you say. In Ephesians 4:29, we read these words of Paul: *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

Take some time to answer the following questions. As you do, think about the words you say.

1. I complain:

- a lot.
- sometimes.
- almost never.

2. I give sincere compliments:

- a lot.
- sometimes.
- almost never.

3. I interrupt others:

- often.
- at times.
- hardly ever.

4. I wish I could take my words back:

- many times.
- sometimes.
- not very often.

5. When I tease someone:

- it usually hurts.
- sometimes it hurts.
- it almost never hurts.

6. I say bad things about others:

- quite often.
- sometimes.
- not very often.

7. I listen seriously to others:

- hardly ever.
- sometimes.
- often.

DAY FOUR — What's a Friend?

Talk to God: Tell God how you feel about yourself. Ask Him to help you be humble and see yourself the way He does.

Verse to Think About: *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (Romans 12:3).*

Being Real

“Diane is such a snob,” Becky complained.

“Diane? She’s always smiling, and she always talks to me,” Chris replied.

“Well,” Becky conceded, “she does say ‘hi’ to me every once in a while. She even stops by my locker to talk sometimes. I guess she tries to be nice. But she just acts like she’s too good.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean,” Chris frowned. “She’s always talking about her new clothes.”

“Or about how many dates she’s had.”

Chris nodded.

“I wouldn’t mind it so much,” Becky said, “if she just talked about that stuff. But I hate it when she acts like she’s better than us because of everything her family has.”

You probably have felt as Becky and Chris do about Diane. It’s no fun to be around a girl or guy with a “better than you” attitude.

Take a moment to think about it. **How do you feel** when you’re with someone who acts “too good” for you?

Pride, or thinking you are “too good,” is dangerous. It can destroy a friendship and keep you from making new friends.

A Look in the Book: Think about Jesus’ life. He was perfect. He is the only person who ever was truly better than the people around Him.

Jesus didn’t talk just to rich people or heal only the wealthy. He went to Samaria and talked with a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42)). The Jews hated Samaritans. Jesus also healed lepers (Luke 17:11-19) who were outcasts. Another time, He befriended

Zacchaeus, a tax collector, who was hated because he cheated people (Luke 19:1-8).

Now take a look at what Paul says about the Lord. **Read *Philippians 2:5-8*.**

Jesus Christ was humble. Although He was God, He took a human body and became a servant.

That’s pretty fantastic. Think about it! God, who has all power, who is absolutely perfect, became a servant. And Paul says we should imitate Christ’s humility.

Being humble means thinking of your friends first and not thinking that you’re better than they.

Be honest. How often have you caught yourself looking down on someone else?

Describe one of these situations.

Maybe you’re a person who doesn’t look down on others. But do you think about their feelings at all? **Write your honest opinion** of how much you consider how others feel.

Read *Philippians 2:3-4* for some clues that Paul gives us about how to be humble.

Read these verses twice, then write what you discovered.

Being humble doesn’t mean thinking you’re no good, or you’re not worth anything. God loves you and sent His Son to die for you. You’re worth an incredible amount to Him!

Write a description how you want to act (and think) toward others. Consider the areas of being real, humble and loving.



DAY FIVE — What's a Friend?

Talk to God: Tell God how you feel about forgiving others. Thank Him for His forgiveness and ask Him to help you forgive.

Verse to Think About: *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye (Colossians 3:12-13).*

First Aid for Friends

“We had a big argument. You know, the kind when you both get really mad and yell a lot. Then later, you don’t talk to each other.

“We used to be friends. Yet after the things we said, I don’t think we can ever be friends again. We see each other in the halls at school, maybe at a game. But we never even look at each other. And you can believe that I’m not going to be the first one to speak.

“Sometimes other people ask me if we are going to make up. I say ‘no,’ and they think it’s too bad because we used to be such good friends.

“But I could never forgive him after what he did. If other people really knew what happened, they would understand.”

You know what it’s like. Your friend does something really stupid, something that makes you mad. Or maybe your friend says something that hurts you. What happens to your friendship then?

Think of a time one of your friends did or said something that bothered you a lot. How long were you angry? Does it still make you angry, or did you forgive your friend? **Write what happened.**

A Look in the Book: God tells us that we should forgive one another. **Read Colossians 3:13:** *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

If you are a Christian, you should forgive others, even as Christ has forgiven you.

Peter knew that he should forgive others, but he had some questions. He asked Jesus

how often he should forgive someone (Matthew 18:21). Most people thought that forgiving someone three times was sufficient. So Peter asked Jesus if forgiving someone seven times would be enough. That was better than twice the usual, remember!

Jesus’ answer may have surprised Peter. Look at it in Matthew 18:22. *Jesus saith unto him, “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”*

Jesus didn’t mean just 490 times, He meant many, many times. You can’t get away with keeping track up to 490 and then quit forgiving. If you really love people as Christ did, you won’t keep track of how many times you’ve forgiven them.

Jesus then went on to tell Peter a parable, or a story. **Read about it in Matthew 18:23-30.**

(The king illustrates the love and forgiveness of God, and the servants represent mankind.) **Then write why you think it was wrong** for the first servant to send the other servant to prison for his debts.

What about you? If you have received Christ as Savior, He has forgiven you for everything. Is there someone you haven’t forgiven? Or is there a friend to whom you owe an apology? God can give you the courage to make things right.

On My Own: Almost everyone finds it difficult to forgive at times. Ask a Christian leader you know in your church about a time when he or she had difficulty forgiving someone. How did he or she handle the situation? **Write what you learned.**



DAY SIX — What's a Friend?

Talk to God: Ask God to point out opportunities you have to encourage your friends. Then ask Him to give you the strength to be an encouragement to someone who is discouraged.

Verse to Think About: *Blessed be God ... who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).*

A Real Lift

Discouragement. It's easy to get down. Everyone does at one time or another. You can become discouraged about many different things.

- A tough class
- A part-time job
- A teacher with whom you don't get along
- What to do after graduation
- Too much homework
- Relating to your parents
- Family problems
- How unpopular you are
- Not getting the grades you want

When discouragement sets in, you really need a good friend. A good friend can understand and give you the courage to hang in there.

Think of a time you really felt discouraged. Did anyone say or do something that gave you the courage to keep going? If someone did, how would you feel about it? If no one did, what do you wish someone would have done?

A Look in the Book: The Thessalonians were discouraged. They were concerned about their Christian friends who had died. They wondered if they had gone to heaven and if they would see them again. Paul wrote to tell the Thessalonians that believers do go to heaven when they die. He encouraged them by telling them that someday believers will be reunited and be with the Lord Jesus forever! He told them to encourage each other

with these truths. **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11.** *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*

Earlier, Paul had told the Thessalonians to comfort each other "with these words"

(1 Thessalonians 4:18). The words he was talking about were God's promises. Reminding someone of God's promises is a great way to encourage him or her. You can share verses that helped you when you were discouraged.

Let's keep looking at encouragement. **Read Romans 12:15.** *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

This verse tells you to rejoice, or be happy, when something good happens, and your friend is rejoicing. It also says to cry with those who are suffering.

Think about that for a minute. This verse isn't just talking about an outward show. It's talking about really identifying with your friend and the way he or she feels.

Do you ever let friends know you're glad that they're happy, or feel bad when they're down?

___ Yes ___ No

Knowing that someone else cares and feels the same way you do can be a real boost. You can deepen friendships by putting yourself in your friend's shoes and encouraging him or her day-by-day.

Hiding It in My Heart: A verse that helps you remember to encourage your friends is Proverbs 12:25. **Try to memorize it today.**

Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

Can you remember a time when someone displayed great friendship to you? **Write about it here.** Then thank God for the friends in your life.
