

My Friend Brings Out the Best in Me and Challenges Me to Grow

Lesson 9

Introduction:

- A. A good friend is not a “yes-man.”
- B. A friend reinforces my strong traits and challenges me to grow in areas of weakness.

As iron sharpens iron,
So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend (Proverbs 27:17).

- C. Jesus is that kind of friend to me and encourages me to be that kind of friend to others.

I. MY FRIEND STRENGTHENS MY GOOD POINTS BY WHAT HE GIVES ME.

- A. Ability and opportunity.

“For *the kingdom of heaven is* like a man traveling to a far country, *who* called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.

“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away”
(Matthew 25:14, 15, 29).

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was* with me (1 Corinthians 15:9, 10).

- B. The freedom to start where I am and to grow.

“He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what is* least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10).

- C. Compliments when I succeed.
 - 1. I need to know how to give a compliment.
 - a. Tell what you like.
 - b. Tell why you like it.
 - c. Ask a question.
 - 2. I need to know how to receive a compliment.

Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth;
A stranger, and not your own lips (Proverbs 27:2).

- a. When complimented, say, “Thank you.”
- b. Accept good gifts.
- c. Don’t insult people by denying what they say good about you.

II. A GOOD FRIEND WILL CHALLENGE ME TO DO THE RIGHT THINGS FOR THE BEST REASONS.

- A. By moving my motivation more and more from fear to faith, hope, and love.
 - 1. Fear of punishment motivates and is scriptural.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences (2 Corinthians 5:10, 11).

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

- 2. As I mature, my motivation grows in the direction of
 - a. Faith.

For we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

b. Hope.

For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees (Romans 8:24)?

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:1-5).

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15).

c. Love.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love (1 John 4:18).

B. However, fear of the wrong thing will motivate in the wrong direction.

1. God doesn't give that kind of fear.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

2. In place of timidity, there should be

- a. Power.
- b. Love.
- c. Sound mind.

III. A GOOD FRIEND WILL REBUKE, CORRECT ME WHEN I AM IRRESPONSIBLE.

Open rebuke *is* better
Than love carefully concealed.
Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend,
But the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful (Proverbs 27:5, 6).

- A. Why is open rebuke better than secret love?
- B. When would a friend wound you?
- C. How can I correct in the right way?
 - 1. Be truthful.

Therefore, putting away lying, “*Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,*” for we are members of one another (Ephesians 4:25).

“But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37).

But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – (Ephesians 4:15).

- 2. Keep current.

“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:26, 27).

“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny” (Matthew 5:23-26).

3. Attack the issue, not the person.

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers (Ephesians 4:29).

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matthew 5:21, 22).

4. Act, don’t react.

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:31, 32).

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

5. Suggest positive traits to replace negative habits. Ephesians 4:25-32

Conclusion:

A. Friendship is complicated and powerful.

1. For good.

As iron sharpens iron,
So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend (Proverbs 27:17).

2. For evil.

Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits"
(1 Corinthians 15:33).

B. For our last class, consider:

1. How can I be a friend to Jesus?
2. How can I be a friend to others?
3. How can I be a friend to myself?
4. How can this class be improved?
5. How will I end this class and say good-bye?