

10 Tips on How to Make and Maintain Meaningful Friendships

After college, I was providentially placed in the community relations department at the AFL-CIO headquarters across from the White House. I completed my nine months of training with a heightened sensitivity to humanity's need for relationship and community.

At this same time, I was in the Jesus Movement and in a leadership role in a weekly teaching meeting of primarily young people 10 minutes away that grew from a handful to over 2,000 in three years. Looking out over the assembled multitude, I identified with Jesus: "When He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they fainted and were scattered, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36).

I discovered in spite of smiling faces of people projecting images of having it all together, there were lots of lost and lonely people with broken hearts in every pew. Knowing Christianity was not simply a service to attend but a life to be shared, I eventually joined with my friends to plant a local church that developed into a network of churches helping people move from superficial to substantive friendships in the context of a New Testament church.

The People of Destiny network grew exponentially as scores were attracted to a lifestyle of authenticity and connectivity. We simply lived out the Acts 2:46-47 model, "And continuing daily with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily those

who were being saved.”

This is the backstory of my passion to communicate the gospel and then help lonely, lost people establish relationships in Christian community. This witness draws people to the individual person of Jesus and His incarnate presence in a church, the corporate body of Christ.

We previously addressed the serious problem of mushrooming and deepening loneliness in today’s culture. I emphasizing how God designed us for human interaction, not creeping isolation. As we’re drifting into the selfishness of an increasingly secularist society, we’re reaping serious health consequences of pandemic loneliness. The addiction to and illusion of “friending” on social media is a shallow substitute leaving scores empty, yet ripe for the genuine kingdom alternative.

Finding Friendship God’s Way

Ken Burns, in his excellent documentary on major league baseball, presented Ty Cobb as baseball’s greatest hitter for over a century. He enjoyed luxury, fame and a phenomenal salary, but when he died, only four teammates showed up for his funeral. Near the end of his life, he lamented regretfully, “If I could do my life all over again, I’d have more friends.”

Aristotle said, “The desire for friendship comes quickly; friendship does not.”

Do you desire to make friends and maintain meaningful friendships? Desire and praying in faith is a starting point but Scripture tells us, “A man who has friends must show himself friendly” (Prov. 18:24a). We must put our faith into action, investing unselfishly in others, following the Golden Rule Jesus gave us: “Therefore, everything you would like men to do to you, do also to them” (Matt. 7:12a).

10 Characteristics of Friendship

Here's a biblically informed list of 10 characteristics of friendship to help us move out of comfort zones to take initiative in the adventure of making meaningful friends.

1. Friends are few. "A man of too many friends comes to ruin" (Prov. 18:24a, NASB).
2. A friend is a servant. "Greater love has no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13, MEV).
3. A friend invests in getting to know you. "I have called you friends, for everything that I have heard from My Father have I made known to you" (John 15:15b).
4. A friend loves unconditionally. "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Prov. 17:17).
5. A friend is available for counsel. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so does the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel" (Prov. 27:9).
6. A friend speaks the truth in love. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Prov. 27:6).
7. A friend is kind amidst adversity. "A despairing man should be shown kindness from his friend" (Job 6:14a).
8. A friend will clash with you. "Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Prov. 27:17).
9. A friend is sensitive to one's emotional state. "As a madman who casts firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, 'I was only joking'" (Prov. 26:18-19).
10. A friend is loyal. "He who repeats a matter separates friends" (Prov. 17:9b).

10 Tips to Make Friends

Dale Carnegie was a hard-working, humble farm boy raised in poverty in a Christian home during the Depression but had God-given passion to better himself and help others overcome their fears to make a difference with their lives. He taught interested students at the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) on how to communicate their ideas and improve in human relations. He drew from the teachings of Jesus and insights from interviews with J.C. Penney, Henry Ford, Charles Schwab and the lives of Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Dale was stunned when approached by a publisher to write a book on what he taught (initially turning down the offer), but eventually agreed.

His book became an instant bestseller. To this day it has sold over 15 million copies! *Time* magazine recognizes it as one of America's top 20 most influential books.

How to Win Friends and Influence People is a classic, making publishing history since its debut over 83 years ago. It still sells over 100,000 copies yearly and has helped people in 80 nations!

Mr. Carnegie stressed *sincerity* [emphasis mine], implementing principles in the book and in his leadership training course (taken by Warren Buffett, Lee Iacocca and Tom Monaghan—founder of Domino's Pizza—to name a few). Prideful and envious detractors have mocked the manual as “manipulative” and “ineffective,” but the Library of Congress honors it as the seventh most influential book in U.S. history.

The book was a life-changer for me when I read it 50 years ago. For teachable men and women of all ages who sincerely desire to make friends and enjoy meaningful friendships, I commend it for your consideration alongside alignment with the 10 biblical characteristics previously mentioned.

Here are a few practical pointers from *How to Win Friends and Influence People* to inspire you on your journey.

1. Don't criticize, condemn or complain.
2. Give honest and sincere appreciation.
3. Become genuinely interested in other people.
4. Smile.
5. Remember a person's name is the most important sound in any language.
6. Be a good listener.
7. Talk in terms of the other person's interests.
8. Make other people feel important, but do it sincerely.
9. Encourage people, and make others' faults seem easy to correct.
10. Show respect for the other person's opinion.

Here's the deal: Jesus told us at the end of the age, "Because iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12). Lawlessness leads to lovelessness, so may we seize this prophetic opportunity to present to the lonely and friendless a quality of life only found in repenting and becoming a "friend of the bridegroom" (John 3:29) and then becoming part of a vibrant community of people living under the lordship of Jesus Christ. {eoa}