

5 Ways to Recognize False Friends

False friends. The Bible has plenty to say about them—and you’ve probably had one or two yourself. Of course, you probably didn’t know they were false when you first befriended them or you wouldn’t have put yourself through the grief!

In my role as editor of *Charisma* magazine, I’ve met my fair share of false friends. They usually walk in my life with a big smile on their face, suggesting they can lift my load, open new doors or be a confidential sounding board. I’ve fallen for it once or twice, but after getting a third-degree friendship burn, I learned how to spot false friends from a mile away.

I’m not flowing in suspicion, mind you. I’m operating out of discerning of spirits and what I’ve learned from past experience. I also lean heavily on the Word of God, which, as I mentioned, has plenty to say about the topic. Here are at least five ways to discern false friends.

Listen to Jennifer’s podcast on this topic: “Spotting False and Phony Friends.”

1. False friends bear rotten fruit. “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruit. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit. But a corrupt tree bears evil fruit” (Matt. 7:15-17).

This verse mentions false prophets, but you can identify a false friend with a fruit inspection just the same. False friends make a lot of promises but don’t do the works to back up their words. False friends may tell you what you want to hear with words smooth as butter (Ps. 55:21) to get on your

good side because they want something from you, but when you need them, they are nowhere to be found.

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2. False friends betray your trust and stab you in the back.

The Bible says faithful are the wounds of a friend (Prov. 27:6), but that's in the context of a friend correcting an error in your life that you can't see. Sort of like iron sharpening iron. That's a lot different from someone who speaks cruel words behind your back or betrays your confidence.

That's painful, and David knew it all too well: "Yes, my own close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted up the heel against me" (Ps. 41:9). And let's not forget that Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss (Luke 22:47-48).

3. False friends won't respect your godly boundaries. False friends don't have any respect for your boundaries or your morals. They don't care if you've set your heart to study the Word every night or get up early in the morning to pray. They will tempt you to spend your time in ways that do not glorify God. Take Paul's advice: "Do not be so deceived and misled! Evil companionships (communion, associations) corrupt and deprave good manners and morals and character" (1 , AMP).

4. False friends won't show you kindness when you're in need.

The Bible says not to withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do it (Prov. 3:27). Many times, when we're going through a trial, we need kindness. Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit, and any friend operating in the fruit of the Spirit will show you kindness in a time of need. But false friends don't have your best interest at heart, and they won't offer genuine kindness. Job 6:14 puts it this way, "A despairing man should be shown kindness from his friend, or he forsakes the fear of the

Almighty" (MEV).

5. False friends bring strife and division into your life.

Proverbs 16:26-28 warns, "An ungodly man digs up evil, and in his lips there is as a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends." False friends bring drama and bad blood into your relationships with them and with other people. If someone is nothing but drama or is working to separate you from good friends who love you, take caution.

Those are just a few characteristics of false friends. You may think of others. Thank God, He sends us good friends and those we should treasure. Proverbs 27:9 tells us, "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so does the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel." Proverbs 18:24 speaks of a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs 17:17 reveals how a friend loves at all times.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 tells us: "Two are better than one, because there is a good reward for their labor together. For if they fall, then one will help up his companion." And Hebrews 10:24-25 admonishes us: "And let us consider how to spur one another to love and to good works. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but let us exhort one another, especially as you see the Day approaching."

I don't know about you, but those are the kinds of friends I want. Amen?