

LIFEFAITHFUSION DEVOTIONAL

Friendship is a Sheltering Tree



LIFEFAITHFUSION DEVOTIONAL DAY FIVE

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Proverbs 18:14; 19:4,6; 14:20
 1 Samuel 17:50; 16:23; 18:7
 2 Samuel 23:15-17; 27-28
 1 Samuel 28:2; 13:14
 2 Samuel 6:20-23; 17:10
 1 Kings 1:1-6, 10; 5:3; 4:29-31
 Ecclesiastes 2:17-23
 Colossians 3:12-17

DIGGING DEEPER

Proverbs 19:6 reads “Many curry favor with a ruler...” In Hebrew, the literal translation would read “Many will entreat (will admit their needs and weaknesses) to a prince (him who is generous).”

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
 Give me the grace to invest my life in the lives of others. Show me how to devote my life to people rather than projects. Help me to love you and love others.
 Amen

MAKING AND KEEPING FRIENDS

Friendships require careful cultivation. Any relationship that is worth having will demand time, emotional energy, and commitment. But the reward far outweighs the investment. King Solomon knew the value of trusted friends. He also taught us how to develop intimate friendships. In Proverbs 18:14, the perceptive king penned these words:

“A man who has friends must show himself friendly.” (NIV)

Making and keeping friends is a challenge for most of us. Only a few party animals with sanguine temperaments naturally acquire a posse. The rest of us need a boost to initiate a relationship. King David was a charismatic leader. As a teenager, David’s audacious courage dazzled the Israeli army when he felled gargantuan Goliath with a slingshot (1 Samuel 17:50). David was a passionate poet and a skilled musician. His shepherd songs quieted the troubled heart of King Saul (1 Samuel 16:23). As a brave soldier, the Israelites sang, “Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7). David inspired great loyalty and trust from his army. His three mighty men risked life and limb to bring the warrior king a drink from his hometown well in Bethlehem (2 Samuel 23:15-17). One of the most remarkable accounts of David’s winning ways is found in 1 Samuel, chapters 27-28. David fled from Saul’s sword and found refuge in enemy territory. Fearing for his life, David sought asylum with King Achish, King of Gath (1 Samuel 21:10). Achish was the sworn enemy of the Israelites. In just a few short months, David won Achish’s favor and trust. The king of Gath gave David an entire town (Ziklag) for his men and their families (1 Samuel 27:5-6).

King Achish made David his personal bodyguard, and fearlessly asked David and his men to fight alongside the men of Gath against Israel (1 Samuel 28:2). David's delight in God was legendary. God himself called David "the man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). David danced before the Lord as he returned the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:20-23). The whole nation rejoiced with him (with the exception of Michal, his wife)! Even near the end of his life when his son Absalom almost succeeded in overthrowing David's empire, Israel still rallied around David (2 Samuel 17:10). Such devotion for one man is astounding!

- Whom do you admire? Why do they earn your respect?
- What lessons do you learn about leadership and friendship from him/her?
- What are some character qualities of a good friend?

Solomon must have learned a lot about friendship from watching his father. But Solomon had challenges of his own in making and keeping friends. He became king as a youth (1 Kings 1:10). He was a man of peace, not a valiant warrior (1 Kings 5:3). His foreign wives were women of royal birth (1 Kings 11:1-6). Such marriages were usually alliances with nearby countries to insure peace and safety for Israel. King Hiram (1 Kings 5:1) and the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1) were allies and admirers, but there is no record of a deep, lasting friendship with either monarch.

Solomon was the smartest and richest man in the world. He had no peer. Perhaps the dizzying intellect of this man alone would make it difficult for his subjects or his advisors to relate to him:

"God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man..." (1 Kings 4:29-31 NIV)

We know that Solomon spent most of his life building palaces, studying science, and amassing wealth, wives and concubines (1 Kings 11:3). One wonders if he knew whether someone was befriending him out of fear or faithfulness. Some probably sought his favor for personal gain:

"Many curry favor with a ruler, and everyone is the friend of a man who gives gifts." (Proverbs 19:6 NIV)

"Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend deserts him." (Proverbs 19:4 NIV)

"The poor are shunned even by their neighbors, but the rich have many friends." (Proverbs 14:20 NIV)

Solomon's only true friend on record was the Shunammite bride, his first love. She called him "my lover and my friend" (Song of Solomon 5:16). But where was she during his later years? When Solomon wrote his last book, Ecclesiastes, we find a sad man, jaded and cynical, with many regrets.

"So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun... So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless." (Ecclesiastes 2:17-23 NIV)

How much richer and happier Solomon would have been if he simply loved God and loved others! Many of us spend our lives investing in projects instead of people. Whether or not we have friends is our choice. Samuel Johnson said, "If a man does not make new acquaintances as he advances through life he will soon find himself left alone. One should keep his friendships in constant repair."

- How much time do you spend cultivating friendships?
- Is it easy to trust and confide in someone? Why or why not?
- Think about a few special friends that have touched your life. Write or call letting them know how much they have meant to you.

“A good friend looks a lot like Jesus, who was the ultimate friend to everyone. He was compassionate, encouraging, patient, loyal, understanding, loving. The best way to be a good friend is to be like Christ, to ‘clothe’ ourselves with the things of God, as it says in Colossians 3:12-17. That’s the ultimate definition of what a good friend looks like.” (Mark Moring, *A True Friend*, can be found at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/cl/2001/005/6.56.html>)

God created Adam. Then He said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” It was the first time God said, “It is *not good*.” It was very serious to God that Adam was lonely. It is *serious* to God that we have friends. Solomon spent his life observing those around him and we can learn from his insight and wisdom. Spend time reviewing the different sections over the five days that you want to go over again.

APPLYING THE TRUTH

Read: Proverbs 14:20; Proverbs 18:14; Proverbs 18:24; Proverbs 19:4; Colossians 3:12-17

In the area below, write out the Scripture(s), thought(s), and question(s) from today’s devotional that you want to spend more time thinking about. What will you apply to your life?