

Closer Than a Brother



Week Seven

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
1 Samuel 18:1-5

THE HUMAN NEED FOR FRIENDSHIP

The saying goes, “Blood is thicker than water.” Yet Solomon exclaims that “there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). While we cannot pick the family we are born into, we can pick our friends (who become like family), so it is essential that we choose wisely.

Friendship constitutes one of the most important types of relationship in our lives. Sharing mutual affection with someone increases our chances of being happy and finding fulfillment. It is no wonder, since we were created as social, emotional beings who thrive in healthy, close relationships (cf. Gen. 2:18). Think about it: even the most antisocial person still enjoys the occasional interaction with a like-minded individual.

Not every friendship develops into a deep relationship or lasts forever, and that’s not necessarily a bad thing. We gain friends and sometimes lose friends, but there are some friendships that last a lifetime. In our need for friendship, we sometimes end up forming superficial companionships. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, the Greek philosopher Aristotle categorizes friendship into three classes: (1) utility friendship—based on how you can benefit from the other; (2) pleasure friendship—based on the pleasant qualities of the other or enjoyment of each other’s company; and (3) goodness friendship—based on mutual respect and admiration. The first two can be fleeting, because needs and pleasures are bound to change over time. But goodness, on the other hand, is an enduring attribute. It may take time to develop these friendships, but they are more fulfilling and lasting.



inScribe

Write out 1 Samuel 18:1–5 from the translation of your choice. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline, or mind map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you



Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?



Memorize your favorite verse in 1 Samuel 18:1-5. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

Compare 1 Samuel 14 and 17. What common traits did David and Jonathan share? How would their similarities have formed a foundation for their friendship?



Read more at www.inverseible.org/will7-3

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS

“The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray” (Prov. 12:26). The Bible admonishes us that failure to choose our friends wisely can have catastrophic results. We dedicate time and effort when developing business plans, choosing a good holiday destination, and even choosing our clothes. That is all right. However, many of us leave the development of our friendships to chance. Or even if we do make an effort to choose, we base our choices on faulty standards. Sadly, too many of God’s professed children have lost their calling as a result of their casual approach to making friends.

The Bible delivers various cautionary statements with respect to friendship:

“Be not deceived: ‘evil company corrupts good habits’ ” (1 Cor. 15:33).

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful” (Ps. 1:1).

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov. 27:6).

“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Prov. 13:20).

What friends do is infectious; friends affect each other. For better or worse, our perceptions are influenced and our standards may shift.

Common criteria used in selecting friends include proximity, similar life experiences, shared interests, pleasure, ease of accessibility (e.g. working at the same organization or attending the same gym), same social class, tribal or racial congruence, or even sharing a common enemy. It is true that many friendships just naturally develop, but God urges us to be prudent in the friendships we allow to grow and influence our life choices and ultimately our eternal destiny. We should choose friends who will help us build character that we will take to heaven when Jesus comes.

While no earthly friendship is perfect, two people who share devotion to Christ are better than two who are pulling in different directions. When Christ is part of their relationship, the cord of friendship is even stronger and very difficult to break. Christian friendships have in common a shared commitment to Christ. But to choose good friends we must first be good friends ourselves, lest we be the ones to cause their downfall.

WHEN A FRIENDSHIP HAS GONE SOUR

“Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, ‘Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.’ Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ and kissed Him. But Jesus said to him, ‘Friend, why have you come?’” (Matt. 26:48–50).

Jesus had His share of fair-weather friends. In fact, when we consider the cross, His closest friends, the ones He spent the most time with and opened up to most intimately, were really just fair-weather friends. One completely betrayed Him, another outright denied their friendship, while all the rest did their best to dissociate themselves from Him in the time of His greatest need.

Judas, after being with Jesus for three and a half years, following Him everywhere and acting like His friend, betrayed Jesus with a fake kiss. Judas had even gone out with the other disciples to preach and cast out demons. Jesus specifically addressed Judas as “friend” and received the betrayer’s kiss. Clearly Judas was not acting as a friend toward Jesus, but Jesus still cared for him as a friend. Their friendship had become murderously toxic, and yet “the Saviour did not reproach His betrayer. . . . Jesus spoke no word of condemnation. He looked pityingly . . .” (*The Desire of Ages*, 722).

With all good intentions, even Peter rebuked Jesus (Matt. 16:22), trying to dissuade Him from His mission. Although theirs was a truly genuine, deep, and most loving friendship, Peter’s ignorance was toxic (v. 23). Worse still, Peter denied his Friend three times. Loyalty was replaced by fear, and Peter sorrowed for his sin. Ellen G. White comments that “the Savior’s manner of dealing with Peter had a lesson for him and for his brethren. It taught them to meet the transgressor with patience, sympathy, and forgiving love. Although Peter had denied his Lord, the love which Jesus bore him never faltered” (*The Desire of Ages*, 815).

What stands out from Christ’s example is the importance of being a friend even when the other individual is not being one—it is selfless friendship. Sometimes friendships can become toxic, or you discover that your level of commitment to the friendship was disproportionate. Toxic friendships negatively affect our mental, emotional, social, and physical health and well-being. It may be necessary to break off the friendship for the sake of our salvation. But we have a greater chance of developing transformational friendships when we cherish a selfless spirit about our relationships.



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

How do you deal with loss of friendship, when someone turns their back on you or betrays you?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/will7-4



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Genesis 40:1-23

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Luke 7:34

John 15:12-15



What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with 1 Samuel 18:1-5?

Review your memorized verse from 1 Samuel 18:1-5.

A FRIEND WHO STICKS CLOSER THAN A BROTHER

Christian friendships should be more about how we can serve God through them than they are now. Such friends as Jonathan and David, Ruth and Naomi, and Paul and Timothy are a testimony that it is possible to have wonderful friends in this life. First Samuel 18:1 describes an outstanding friendship between Jonathan and David. It clearly brings out the essence of friendship; to love the other as you love yourself. They were loyal to each other and made oaths that were fulfilled even after Jonathan died. Their friendship is a fitting example of sacrificial love, loyalty, and emotional openness—the three elements that psychologists consider essential for friendships to succeed.

Song of Solomon 5:16 records another wonderful friendship, in which the wife describes her husband as her beloved and her friend. Neglect can destroy even a very loving marriage. It is not automatic that the two just grow into close friends, and without giving each other attention, couples can easily grow apart. They should be intentional about cultivating friendship. A loving friendship in marriage can endure a multitude of challenges and is a blessing to everyone around.

In Jesus, we have our ultimate, superior, and purest best friend, who will never fail us. Jesus declares in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” Usually when a friendship involves two people of unequal standing such as a subject and a ruler, the subject is expected to show more love for the ruler rather than the reverse. Although He was God in every way, He demonstrated His love toward us while we were still sinners. He left heaven, lived the life of a vagabond, bore our sin, and died the death of a robber because He loved us. Most people want to be loved even without them loving. A true friend loves instead of waiting to be loved. Jesus, a friend who sticks closer than a brother, loves us.

Jesus calls us His friends (John 15:14, 15) and clarifies the beginning of our friendship (John 15:16). Jesus chose us; we did not choose Him. Although He could call us “servants,” He chooses to call us “friends” instead. He is the Author of our friendship, a friendship borne purely out of love. The cross was not an accident or coincidence. It did not happen by chance. Jesus chose us; it was planned. Jesus made a deliberate choice to come and die for lost humanity.

As our friend, Jesus does not fear to point out sin. He does not watch and fear that rebuking sin will cause friendship tension or cause the friendship to end. In His loving, kind, and merciful manner, but with authority, Christ rebukes, admonishes, and encourages His friends to choose life. He gives criticism that is in His friends’ best interest. Jesus is often heard telling His friends to “go and sin no more.”



inVite

Meditate on 1 Samuel 18:1–5
again and look for where Jesus is.



How do you see Jesus differently
or see Him again?

What kind of friendship does
Jesus call you to? With others?
With Him?

Prayer: How do you respond to
seeing Jesus in this way?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/will7-6



Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?



After this week's study of the chapter, what are personal applications you are convicted of in your life?

How do you explain the fact that Jesus chose Judas Iscariot who ultimately betrayed Him?



Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inverseible.org/will7-7

CHOOSING THE DISCIPLES

“Jesus frequently dismissed them to visit their homes and rest; but he gently though firmly resisted all their entreaties that he should himself rest. At night he found the seasons of prayer for which he could not claim time during the day. While the world he had come to save was wrapped in slumber, the Redeemer, in the sanctuary of the mountains, would intercede for man with the Father. Often he spent entire nights in prayer and meditation, going back in the morning to his active work. . . .

“The discourse ended, Jesus turned to Peter and bade him launch out into the deep, and let down his net for a draught. . . .

“Peter had seen Jesus perform wonderful miracles, but none made so strong an impression upon his mind as this miraculous draught of fish, after a night of disappointment....Peter was thrilled with a sense of the divine power of his Master. He felt ashamed of his sinful unbelief. He knew that he was in the presence of the Son of God, and felt unworthy to be in such companionship. He impulsively flung himself at the feet of Jesus, crying, ‘Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’ But even as he spoke, he was clinging to the feet of Jesus, and would not have been willing for the Saviour to take him at his word, even if he had attempted to do so.

“But Jesus understood the conflicting emotions of the impetuous disciple, and said to him, ‘Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.’ Similar words were afterward addressed to the three other fishermen, when they were all upon the shore. . . . These humble fishermen recognized the divine authority of Jesus, and forthwith gave up their regular occupation and left their worldly possessions in obedience to the command of their Lord.

“These four disciples were more closely associated with Jesus in his earthly life than any of the others. Christ, the light of the world, was abundantly able to qualify these unlearned fishermen of Galilee for the high commission he had chosen for them. . . . The quickening power of God, enlightening the minds of those illiterate fishermen, was to enable them to spread the doctrines of Christ far and wide, and others were to take up the task, until it would reach all lands, and be taught in all ages, winning many to salvation. Thus would the poor fishermen of Galilee be, indeed, ‘fishers of men’ . . .

“The Saviour ate with sinners, he spoke to them the words of life, and many accepted him as their Redeemer. The feast of Christ was holy; but the fasting Pharisees will have their portion with the hypocrites and unbelievers, when Christ shall come in his glory, and those whom they scorned will be gathered into his kingdom.”
(The Spirit of Prophecy, 2:183–186, 193)



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



Discuss some principles of friendship you find from the book of Proverbs. What friendship example from the Bible inspires you the most?

For a new church member, what are the challenges of making friends? How can these challenges be overcome?

How do you share the Word of God with your friends without pushing them away?

Jesus was, in practical terms, "a friend of sinners," yet His good morals were not corrupted. How can you witness to unbelievers and not be led astray?

Does friendship metamorphose as it goes through different seasons of life (college, marriage, and so on)? How do you manage the changes?