

**Studies show that 1 out of every 4 Americans are struggling with feelings of deep \_\_\_\_\_ today.** Everybody wants friends. Everybody needs friends. Loneliness is our number one emotional problem. When God made the world, He put man in a perfect environment and said, "It is not good for man to be alone." You need friends.

Proverbs 27:19 (Living Bible), "A mirror reflects a man's face. But what he is really like is shown by the friends he chooses." Circle "chooses." Friendship is not accidental.

DEFINITION OF FRIENDSHIP: **Friendship is a relationship where I can be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ without fear.**

**The type of friend I am is the type of friend I will \_\_\_\_\_.** In the book of Proverbs, there are six marks of a real friend. If you build these into your life, then you'll attract this kind of people in your life.

### 1. I must be \_\_\_\_\_.

Proverbs 18:24, "A man of many companions may come to ruin but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

"A man of many companions" – Is it wrong to have a lot of friends? No. Focus on quality, not quantity when it comes to having friends. You can't be committed to everybody. A friendship should add great things to your life, but it will also cost you something: time, energy, and commitment.

There are two major hindrances to being, having, and developing friendships:

1. \_\_\_\_\_: We're "too busy" to invest in our friendships.
2. \_\_\_\_\_: The gravitational pull of human nature is toward self, not toward others.

Proverbs 4:23 tells us that we are to guard our hearts and to make sure that anyone we let into our hearts and lives really deserves to have a place there.

Robin Dunbar, a leading expert on social networks, came up with a formula known as *Dunbar's Number*. That number is 150, which is the limit of the number of people we can have meaningful relationships with at any one time. Within that number are the following concentric circles:

- \_\_\_\_\_ CIRCLE – (Most have 3 to maximum 5) These are your BFF's. These are the people that you have regular contact with, a deep commitment to developing one another, and you feel the freedom to be completely open and vulnerable. We spend 40% of our time with our closest 3-5 people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ FRIENDS – (Up to 10 people) BF's are people you would consider to be your "greatest friends." You may share life goals with these people and you have the freedom of asking personal questions. These friends get 20% of our time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ FRIENDS – (Up to 35 people) You have regular contact with them, you have some common interests, and you're able to ask questions about their life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ FRIENDS – (Up to 100 people) These are the folks that you have infrequent contact with in life, shallow interaction, and most things are superficial in the relationship.

Proverbs 18:24 (Good News), "Some friendships don't last, but some friendships are more loyal than brothers." Loyal means committed. Friendship begins with commitment. In the Bible they made covenants of friendship (Joseph, David, Jacob). How many committed friends do you have? More important: Who are you committed to? Who knows that you are committed to them?

### 2. I must be \_\_\_\_\_.

Paul said, "We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us" (2 Corinthians 6:12). When a friendship feels like a one-way street, it starts to decay. **There are two kinds of friendships you can have: one that \_\_\_\_\_ you or one that \_\_\_\_\_ you.** In a friendship that involves no sacrifice or initiative on your part, your friend will eventually grow weary of you.

A friendship must have three elements:

- \_\_\_\_\_ – That means you have objective information about this person. You

know facts about them. Where they live. Their hobbies. Their faith. Their likes and dislikes.

- \_\_\_\_\_ – You want to spend time with each other. You're drawn to each other's presence. When life happens, for good or bad, you want them to know about it, and you want to know about their life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ – Friends spend time together. This is how knowing and liking actually happen. It may be a phone call, a lunch, an evening, a bike ride, a vacation. The more time together between two good friends, the better the relationship.

Proverbs 19:22, "*Friendliness bears fruit for a man.*" (Living Bible: "*Kindness makes a man attractive.*") Proverbs 17:9, "*Love forgets mistakes. Nagging about them parts the best of friends.*"

### 3. I must be \_\_\_\_\_.

To maintain a friendship, you must be honest and transparent. Genuine friendship is built on trust. And trust is built on openness, honesty, transparency, and vulnerability.

1. **You must be truthful about \_\_\_\_\_.** Life is too short to go through it without vulnerability. **If a friendship is when someone has access to the information that is you, then best friendship is when you hand over the \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_.** The best friendships are those that deepen the attachment through mutual vulnerability. In other words, both people must be vulnerable and open. Friendship is always a two-way street. "*Confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*"
2. **You must be truthful towards your \_\_\_\_\_.** A true friend will level with you. He or she will shoot straight with you. They'll tell you the truth, even when it's painful. Proverbs 27:5-6, "*Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds of a friend can be trusted.*" Proverbs 24:26, "*An honest answer is the sign of a true friendship.*"

Rules for being candid:

1. **You complement in public but you \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.**
2. **You correct when people are \_\_\_\_\_ not when they are \_\_\_\_\_.**
3. **You never correct a person until you've proven that you're \_\_\_\_\_ to correction.**

### 4. I must be \_\_\_\_\_.

Proverbs 11:13, "*A gossip betrays a confidence but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.*" Can you keep a secret? The quickest way to kill a friendship is gossip.

**Anyone who is a gossip \_\_\_\_\_ you, will also be a gossip \_\_\_\_\_ you.**

### 5. I must be \_\_\_\_\_.

Proverbs 27:17, "*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*" (Literally, "As iron sharpens iron, friends shape friends.") Most of the time we are unaware of how much influence we have over other people. **You are \_\_\_\_\_ everybody you come in contact with.** (And they're shaping you.) You're either building people up or you're tearing them down.

A good friend is constructive. They encourage people. They lift up our spirits. They build us up; they don't tear us down.

CHALLENGE: Sixteen times in the book of Proverbs it warns us of the kind of people we should avoid. Re-read the 31 chapters in Proverbs and find the 16 references of the kind of person we should not spend time with.

**It's always easier for someone to pull you \_\_\_\_\_ than it is for you to pull them \_\_\_\_\_.**

**A real test of friendship: How do you handle your friend's \_\_\_\_\_?** When they get to do something you don't get to do? Or they get to buy something you don't get to buy? **The secret to having a lot of friends: Be enthusiastic about other people's \_\_\_\_\_.**

How do you keep your friendships strong? (Robin Dunbar Research):

- For women, \_\_\_\_\_ keeps friendships from decaying.
- For men, \_\_\_\_\_ is what keeps friendships from decaying.

Proverbs 18:24, "*A man that has friends must show himself to be friendly.*" You must take initiative.

### 6. I must be \_\_\_\_\_.

Like anything in life, the more focus and energy you put into your friendships, the more you'll see their potential and value. (The less energy you exert, the more it will diminish.)

**Friendships will either improve or diminish depending on how \_\_\_\_\_ you are.** Don't treat your friendships as expendable. \_\_\_\_\_ destroys friendships. "*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity*" (Proverbs 17:17).

Studies show that 1 out of every 4 Americans are struggling with feelings of deep loneliness today. Everybody wants friends. Everybody needs friends. Loneliness is our number one emotional problem. When God made the world, He put man in a perfect environment and said, "It is not good for man to be alone." You need friends.

Proverbs 27:19 (Living Bible), "A mirror reflects a man's face. But what he is really like is shown by the friends he chooses." Circle "chooses." Friendship is not accidental.

DEFINITION OF FRIENDSHIP: Friendship is a relationship where I can be transparent and open without fear.

The type of friend I am is the type of friend I will attract. In the book of Proverbs, there are six marks of a real friend. If you build these into your life, then you'll attract this kind of people in your life.

### 1. I must be committed.

Proverbs 18:24, "A man of many companions may come to ruin but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

"A man of many companions" – Is it wrong to have a lot of friends? No. Focus on quality, not quantity when it comes to having friends. You can't be committed to everybody. A friendship should add great things to your life, but it will also cost you something: time, energy, and commitment.

There are two major hindrances to being, having, and developing friendships:

1. Time: We're "too busy" to invest in our friendships.
2. Self-Centeredness: The gravitational pull of human nature is toward self, not toward others.

Proverbs 4:23 tells us that we are to guard our hearts and to make sure that anyone we let into our hearts and lives really deserves to have a place there.

Robin Dunbar, a leading expert on social networks, came up with a formula known as *Dunbar's Number*. That number is 150, which is the limit of the number of people we can have meaningful relationships with at any one time. Within that number are the following concentric circles:

- INNER CIRCLE – (Most have 3 to maximum 5) These are your BFF's. These are the people that you have regular contact with, a deep commitment to developing one another, and you feel the freedom to be completely open and vulnerable. We spend 40% of our time with our closest 3-5 people.
- CLOSE FRIENDS – (Up to 10 people) BF's are people you would consider to be your "greatest friends." You may share life goals with these people and you have the freedom of asking personal questions. These friends get 20% of our time.
- CASUAL FRIENDS – (Up to 35 people) You have regular contact with them, you have some common interests, and you're able to ask questions about their life.
- ACQUAINTANCES FRIENDS – (Up to 100 people) These are the folks that you have infrequent contact with in life, shallow interaction, and most things are superficial in the relationship.

Proverbs 18:24 (Good News), "Some friendships don't last, but some friendships are more loyal than brothers." Loyal means committed. Friendship begins with commitment. In the Bible they made covenants of friendship (Joseph, David, Jacob). How many committed friends do you have? More important: Who are you committed to? Who knows that you are committed to them?

### 2. I must be considerate.

Paul said, "We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us" (2 Corinthians 6:12). When a friendship feels like a one-way street, it starts to decay. **There are two kinds of friendships you can have: one that replenishes you or one that depletes you.** In a friendship that involves no sacrifice or initiative on your part, your friend will eventually grow weary of you.

A friendship must have three elements:

- Knowing – That means you have objective information about this person. You

know facts about them. Where they live. Their hobbies. Their faith. Their likes and dislikes.

- **Liking** \_\_\_\_\_ – You want to spend time with each other. You're drawn to each other's presence. When life happens, for good or bad, you want them to know about it, and you want to know about their life.
- **Presence** \_\_\_\_\_ – Friends spend time together. This is how knowing and liking actually happen. It may be a phone call, a lunch, an evening, a bike ride, a vacation. The more time together between two good friends, the better the relationship.

Proverbs 19:22, "*Friendliness bears fruit for a man.*" (Living Bible: "*Kindness makes a man attractive.*") Proverbs 17:9, "*Love forgets mistakes. Nagging about them parts the best of friends.*"

### 3. I must be **candid** \_\_\_\_\_.

To maintain a friendship, you must be honest and transparent. Genuine friendship is built on trust. And trust is built on openness, honesty, transparency, and vulnerability.

1. **You must be truthful about yourself** \_\_\_\_\_. Life is too short to go through it without vulnerability. **If a friendship is when someone has access to the information that is you, then best friendship is when you hand over the keys to the vault** \_\_\_\_\_. The best friendships are those that deepen the attachment through mutual vulnerability. In other words, both people must be vulnerable and open. Friendship is always a two-way street. "*Confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*"
2. **You must be truthful towards your friend** \_\_\_\_\_. A true friend will level with you. He or she will shoot straight with you. They'll tell you the truth, even when it's painful. Proverbs 27:5-6, "*Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds of a friend can be trusted.*" Proverbs 24:26, "*An honest answer is the sign of a true friendship.*"

Rules for being candid:

1. **You complement in public but you correct** \_\_\_\_\_ **in private** \_\_\_\_\_.
2. **You correct when people are up** \_\_\_\_\_ **not when they are down** \_\_\_\_\_.
3. **You never correct a person until you've proven that you're open** \_\_\_\_\_ **to correction.**

### 4. I must be **confidential** \_\_\_\_\_.

Proverbs 11:13, "*A gossip betrays a confidence but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.*" Can you keep a secret? The quickest way to kill a friendship is gossip.

**Anyone who is a gossip to you, will also be a gossip about you.**

### 5. I must be **constructive** \_\_\_\_\_.

Proverbs 27:17, "*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*" (Literally, "As iron sharpens iron, friends shape friends.") Most of the time we are unaware of how much influence we have over other people. **You are shaping everybody you come in contact with.** (And they're shaping you.) You're either building people up or you're tearing them down.

A good friend is constructive. They encourage people. They lift up our spirits. They build us up; they don't tear us down.

CHALLENGE: Sixteen times in the book of Proverbs it warns us of the kind of people we should avoid. Re-read the 31 chapters in Proverbs and find the 16 references of the kind of person we should not spend time with.

**It's always easier for someone to pull you down than it is for you to pull them up.**

**A real test of friendship: How do you handle your friend's successes?** When they get to do something you don't get to do? Or they get to buy something you don't get to buy? **The secret to having a lot of friends: Be enthusiastic about other people's accomplishments.**

How do you keep your friendships strong? (Robin Dunbar Research):

- For women, **talking** \_\_\_\_\_ keeps friendships from decaying.
- For men, **doing stuff together** \_\_\_\_\_ is what keeps friendships from decaying.

Proverbs 18:24, "*A man that has friends must show himself to be friendly.*" You must take initiative.

### 6. I must be **consistent** \_\_\_\_\_.

Like anything in life, the more focus and energy you put into your friendships, the more you'll see their potential and value. (The less energy you exert, the more it will diminish.)

**Friendships will either improve or diminish depending on how proactive you are.** Don't treat your friendships as expendable. **Inconsistency destroys friendships.** "*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity*" (Proverbs 17:17).