

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 12 • Issue 11

SELF-PRESERVATION

Love trumps human nature

Keys to Communication

15 ways to win

The Bus Test

Christianity in crisis



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

You probably didn't understand the law of gravity in scientific terms until someone explained it to you, even though you've been subject to it since birth. You became aware of its basic effect as soon as

you were old enough to sit up and topple over.—“What goes up must come down.” When you got a little bigger, you learned “The bigger they come, the harder they fall.” Those were tough lessons at a tender age, but they are why you can now handle the good china without breaking it and climb a ladder without breaking your neck. Gravity has benefits as well as undesirable consequences, of course. Without giving it a passing thought, much less due credit, you use gravity to arch the ball into the basket, draw water from the faucet, check your weight, and perform a thousand other services.

Just as God created gravity and other laws of physics to govern our physical world, He created spiritual laws to govern our relationships with Him and others. If gravity is our starting point in learning about physical realities, parental love is our starting point in learning about relationships. Our parents' love is all we need as babies to feel secure and complete. But as we grow up, our worlds expand. Situations and relationships get more complex. We find that gravity isn't the only natural force at play, and that not everyone loves us the way our parents do.

Interpersonal relationships are one of life's greatest challenges, but also one of its greatest rewards. How can we both give and get the most from those relationships? Where do we even start? Jesus gave us the keys when He said, “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you,” and “Love one another as I have loved you.”¹ As sure as the law of gravity, the better we get to know Jesus, the more of His love we experience and the more it spills over to our relations with others.

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

1. John 15:9,12

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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DESK

BY NATALIA NAZAROVA

I WAS SUBMITTING SOME LEGAL PAPERWORK, and to my dismay there were several discrepancies in my documents. Something that at first appeared easy to rectify instead took several weeks and numerous appointments to sort out.

At one of the offices where I had been sent, I came face to face with Olga. She struck me as efficient, but rather curt. We got off to a rough start. Mine was probably the hundredth problem she had had to deal with that day, and it seemed I would get no sympathy from her. To make matters worse, her computer froze

and she had to reboot. She muttered that she was going to take an aspirin and would be back in a minute.

While she was away, I asked God for wisdom in handling the situation, and suddenly I saw things from a different perspective. For a moment I put aside my aggravation with how things were going and tried to imagine what it was like to sit on the other side of that desk.

As we waited for her computer to reboot, I asked Olga if she had encountered my specific problem before. That was the beginning of a dialog between two tired, frustrated women.

Olga explained that she had only been working at that job for a few

months. In the past year, she and her husband had divorced, and she had gone through a very difficult time adjusting to her new life as a single parent. I sympathized and explained that I was a missionary, here to share God's love with people whom I had also come to love.

Eventually, she was able to log back into the system and enter the correct information.

Over the next few days, we spoke on the phone a number of times as I checked on the progress of my paperwork. Each time our communications grew friendlier and more relaxed, and when I visited her office to collect the finalized document, Olga took extra time to verify that everything was correct. We parted as good friends.

I caught myself smiling as I stepped out into the windy evening. Taking a personal interest in someone else's problems had transformed a mutual ordeal into a mutually positive experience.

NATALIA NAZAROVA IS A TRANSLATOR AND LANGUAGE TEACHER IN ARGENTINA, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL (TFI). ■





self-preser

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

IN ONE EPISODE OF *FOYLE'S WAR*, a TV series set in Great Britain during the early part of World War II, the Nazis had already defeated France and an invasion of Great Britain seemed imminent. The uncertainty, fear, and instinct to take care of themselves and their own led some people to show less concern for others than they would in normal circumstances. Many hoarded. Others stole. Some even committed murder.

But some people, in contrast, reacted in a completely different manner. They were heroic, not by dint of performing great deeds, but because they performed small deeds selflessly. They faced their

difficulties with dignity. They helped one another. They looked out for the welfare of their neighbors and shared what they had.

Seeing the contrast between the two types of responses brought home the challenges we face when we find ourselves in uncertain, difficult circumstances. In times of economic or social turmoil, when the status quo changes, when everything seems topsy-turvy, it's natural for people to feel concerned for themselves first and foremost. Not everyone will respond in the same way, of course; the human instinct of self-preservation takes a more prominent role for some than for others.

When all around us is unstable, we become destabilized too. When what we thought to be solid ground begins to feel like shifting sand, fear can grip us—fear of the future and fear of the changes being thrust upon us. If we

allow that fear to overpower our faith, our trust in God's care diminishes and we feel that *we* must take control of events by taking matters into our own hands. This isn't necessarily bad, since the "fight or flight" instinct is built into our nature; we automatically respond to perceived danger with moves to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

The challenge we face, though, is finding the right balance between our human nature and our *spiritual* nature. As Christians, we are "new creations" who possess more than human nature alone. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."¹ We have God's Spirit dwelling within us. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"² We abide in Jesus and He abides in us. "Abide

1. 2 Corinthians 5:17

2. 1 Corinthians 3:16

3. John 15:4

4. Galatians 5:22–23

5. Philippians 2:4 NIV

vation

in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”³

Our responses to circumstances and events should be influenced by Christ’s presence in us. While we feel naturally driven toward self-preservation, the Spirit of God can temper that reaction and help us find a balanced response—one which is compatible with Christ’s nature. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”⁴

Such a response isn’t easy, because our human nature is so, well, human. It’s our default setting. Being concerned for others or their need, situation, or struggle isn’t naturally our first priority. Because of this, there is the danger that we will minimize or even ignore someone else’s needs in favor of our own.

If we plow forward with our self-serving plans without consideration for those around us, chances are we will make decisions that will hurt others. Promises and commitments that we’ve previously made will take a back seat, and we’ll gravitate toward what is best for *us*. This can cause disillusionment, resentment, and bitterness—any of which will damage friendships. Those left in the wake of our selfishness will suffer, because we allowed our human nature to override the Spirit of God within us.

When this happens, we suffer as well. It may not come in ways we can see, at least not immediately, but it invariably does us harm. We undermine God’s blessing, and we lose the respect of others. I read somewhere that in business, if someone is displeased with a certain product, as a rule they will tell about 50 other

people about it in their lifetime. If we have damaged someone’s faith in us by harming them with our self-preserving acts, they may never fully trust us again. And it’s possible, even likely, that they will convey that mistrust to others. It hurts them, and it hurts us.

Taking care of your own needs and the needs of your loved ones isn’t wrong, but as followers of Jesus, filled with the Spirit of God, we should step back from focusing only on our own needs in order to see the needs of others also. “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”⁵ Finding the proper balance in that should be our goal.

PETER AMSTERDAM AND HIS WIFE, MARIA FONTAINE, ARE DIRECTORS OF TFI, AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■



the lifesaver

Susan's personal problems were enormous. She was dealing with tough issues from her past. Her husband had emotionally withdrawn from her. The family was in financial trouble. Somehow she kept up a good front at work, even though she was thinking of suicide.

Then she received a Christmas card from her boss with these handwritten words: "I don't know what we'd do without you. Thank you for being so competent and helpful."

Later she commented, "I framed that card and put it up in my kitchen. It's like a sign that says, 'You're okay!'"

So send that card. Write that note. You may be giving someone just the lift he or she needs.

—David C. Egner

the respect effect

A banker always tossed a coin in the cup of a legless beggar who sat on the street outside the bank. But unlike most people, the banker would always insist on getting one of the pencils the man had beside him. "You are a merchant," the banker would say, "and I always expect to receive good value from the merchants I do business with."

One day the legless man was not on the sidewalk. Time passed and the banker forgot about him until he walked into a public building one day. There in the concessions stand sat the former beggar, now the owner of his own small business.

"I have always hoped you might come by someday," the man said to the banker. "You are largely responsible for my being here. You kept telling me that I was a merchant. I started thinking of myself that way, rather than as a beggar receiving gifts. I started selling pencils—lots of them. You gave me self-respect. You caused me to look at myself differently."

—Retold by Randy Stanford

the assignment

God puts people in our lives on purpose so we can help them succeed and help them become all He created them to be. Most people will not reach their full potential without somebody else believing in them. That means you and I have an assignment. Everywhere we go, we should be encouraging people, building them up, challenging them to reach for new heights. When people are around us, they should leave better off than they were previously. The Bible says that love is kind.¹ One translation says, "Love looks for a way of being constructive."² In other words, love looks for ways to help improve somebody else's life.

—Joel Osteen³

1. 1 Corinthians 13:4

2. *New Testament in Modern English* by J.B. Phillips

3. *Become a Better You*, Free Press, New York 2008

LOVING- KINDNESS IS TWICE BLESSED

BY LILIA POTTERS

THE WEATHER HAD BEEN DARK AND RAINY, and I felt just as gloomy. It happens to us all, I guess.

As I sat at my desk, I remembered it was the birthday of a longtime friend—a single, middle-aged woman who had dedicated the past 30 years to nursing and loved her work. Knowing that she didn't have family in town, I decided to give her a call. Sure enough, she was on B shift, scheduled to work late into the evening, and wouldn't have much of a birthday this year. As always, though, she sounded cheerful and was happy I had called.

After I hung up, I couldn't shake the feeling that she would really appreciate a little special attention on her birthday. Still feeling a little gloomy myself, I tried to put the thought out of my mind, but as the day passed I couldn't shake it. I finally gave in, and that evening set off to the hospital with a card, a slice of cheesecake, and a “flower” sculpted from balloons.

My friend's grateful smile and joyful exclamations assured me I had done the right thing and were a generous reward for the little effort it had taken.

When I got home, I realized that I had not only cheered up a lonely friend on her birthday, but I had caused my own gloom to dissipate in the process. Making her day had made my own.

Isn't that the way it is when we take the time and make the effort to do something for someone else? It's like the little saying, “Loving-kindness is twice blessed; it blesses him who gives, and him who receives.”

Life constantly presents us with opportunities to take an extra step or do a kind deed that will make a difference to someone. And the wonderful thing is that as we do, it changes things for the better for us too. Like a boomerang, the blessing comes back to us.

LILIA POTTERS IS A WRITER AND EDITOR WHO LIVES IN THE U.S. ■

“ THE MORE WE CARE FOR THE HAPPINESS OF OTHERS, THE GREATER IS OUR OWN SENSE OF WELL-BEING. REAL COMPASSION COMES FROM SEEING THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS. YOU FEEL A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY, AND YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING FOR THEM. —THE 14TH DALAI LAMA (B. 1935) ”

BY BONITA HELE

THE BUS TEST



I STOOD ON THE CROWDED BUS, heart pounding and feeling flushed. I had read somewhere that a pregnant woman at rest is in effect working harder than the average person climbing a mountain. But that wasn't the reason for my rapid heart rate and the resultant "glow."

I was fuming. Here I was, over seven months pregnant, and no one offered me and my prominent belly their seat. I had been one of the last people to board the bus because nearly everyone else had pushed ahead to secure themselves a seat.

I had been involved in volunteer work in that Asian country for a few years. After a long day at a program for the underprivileged, the only transport available was a city bus, stuffy and packed with commuters. I could understand their end-of-the-workday weariness, but not their lack of common courtesy. Who wouldn't offer a pregnant woman a seat? I stood there huffing to myself until I reached my destination.

The next day, I voiced my annoyance to a coworker. She sympathized and shared a few of her own experiences of having to deal with rude fellow passengers on buses. Back and forth we went about the lack of manners and consideration we sometimes encounter.

My husband listened silently for a few minutes, and then offered a few words of his own, which helped put things in perspective. "We want to make a difference with our projects and programs. The real test of our love, though, is the buses."

He was right. I dedicate much of my time to helping others, but here I was, in the comfort of my own home, surrounded by all that I need, being critical of those same people. Who qualifies for my love and empathy? Only those who exhibit certain social graces that I consider elementary?

Sometimes it is healthy to travel on a hot, crowded bus, to see and feel the things that others face on a daily basis, to remember how blessed I am, and to be reminded that everyone needs and deserves love, respect, and consideration.

BONITA HELE IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND EDITOR IN THE U.S., AND A MEMBER OF TFI. ■

BE SLOW—BE QUICK!

Be slow to suspect—quick to trust;
Slow to condemn—quick to justify;
Slow to offend—quick to defend;
Slow to expose—quick to shield;
Slow to belittle—quick to appreciate;
Slow to demand—quick to give;
Slow to provoke—quick to help;
Slow to resent—quick to forgive.

—Author unknown

IN PROSPERITY, OUR FRIENDS KNOW US; IN ADVERSITY,
WE KNOW OUR FRIENDS.—*JOHN CHURTON COLLINS*

BUILT TO STAND

BY YOKO MATSUOKA

AT ABOUT 3 PM ON MARCH 11, 2011, the Tohoku earthquake hit the northeastern half of Japan. It was the worst earthquake in that area's recorded history. Thousands were killed, and hundreds of thousands more were forced to evacuate and move in with friends or into temporary shelters.

When we felt the first tremors, my sister, Yuriko, and I thought nothing of them. Small earthquakes are frequent, sometimes daily, occurrences in Japan. Everyone learns to take them in stride. However, when the shaking escalated instead of subsiding, we rushed outside and held onto each other just to stay on our feet. The ground undulated. Our house, which was built to withstand earthquakes, swayed like the trees outside but didn't fall. We later learned that in the area where

we live, 205 km (128 mi) from the epicenter, the tremor measured 6.5 in magnitude.

My first concern after the quake was how my friends and family had fared. The electricity, gas, and water had all been cut, the phone lines were jammed, and it was very cold. Transportation had ground to a halt, so Yuriko and I could not even get to where our parents were. Realizing that the best thing we could do in such a situation was pray, we prayed for everyone we could think of. Eventually we were able to get through to our parents. I have never been so relieved as when they told us they were safe.

When our electricity was restored, I got online to find out how my other family members and friends across Japan were doing. It had only been a few hours since the

earthquake struck, but my Facebook wall was already plastered with notes. "How are you doing?" "I'm praying for you!" "You and your family are in my prayers!"

One by one, our friends reported that they were unharmed. Some people told of having been near factories that had caught fire, or near the seashore where they could have been swept away by the ensuing tsunami, but all had been protected from harm.

The earthquake made me appreciate my friends and their support more than ever. Like the sturdy construction of our house, made to withstand violent shaking, friendship is best proven in times of trouble.

YOKO MATSUOKA IS AN ILLUSTRATOR AND A MEMBER OF TFI IN JAPAN. ■



I THINK

BY JESSIE RICHARDS

I BOARDED THE PLANE THAT WOULD TAKE ME HOME FROM A VISIT TO TORONTO, CANADA. A gentleman came and sat in the seat beside me, talking on his iPhone. I recognized his South African accent, having attended a conference there the previous year.

Soon enough, Andrew Harrison and I were engaged in a lively conversation that lasted for the rest of the flight. He had a lot of stories to tell, and I mostly listened. I discovered he had experience in outdoor adventure team-building. For several years his job had involved taking teams of coworkers, often executives, on adventurous outings into the South African bush—an experience that would, quite literally, stress them to their limits.

Andrew grinned as he told me in detail about the various dilemmas, puzzles, and challenges he would set

up for these office dwellers in the great outdoors. As they encountered situations where they were physically challenged, emotionally tested, and downright scared, they would start to become different people—people who had gained new perspectives and understood things about themselves and their coworkers that they hadn't seen or understood before. When they returned home, most of them would get back to work with significant issues resolved.

That sounded to me like a fascinating prospect—to learn new things about myself and my coworkers by testing my limits. I also thought about how engaging it must have been to be in his position—not just for the sheer adventure of being in interesting and exciting places, but for the opportunity to see others experience epiphanies and transformations.

It's not every day that I get to talk to someone like Andrew, and I figured I could get some excellent tips and advice based on his years of experience in working with people from such an interesting angle.

"In all your years of team-building," I asked, "what would you say has been the most common issue or problem that needed to be resolved among these groups of people?"

"Communication. The issue has nearly always been communication."

"Because people who work together don't talk to each other enough?"

"They *talk* plenty! What hardly anyone does enough of is *listen*."

That was an *Aha!* moment for me ... or more like a *Dub!* moment. It sounded familiar enough, although I know I'm not nearly as good at listening as I should be. I said earlier that I mostly listened during our



I GET IT

conversation, but that was because I really wanted to hear Andrew's stories. In other circumstances, though, I don't think I can say as much for myself.

Andrew went on to share how communication isn't communication unless people understand one another. More often than not, people think they have communicated because they have said what they felt needed to be said, or have written what they felt needed to be written, but in reality they don't have a clue whether or not the other person understood them. Very often, the other person will have gotten a completely different idea than what the communicator intended.

To find out if you have communicated effectively or have understood what someone else was communicating, ask questions and—you guessed it—listen!

Not long ago I listened to a talk by Peter Kreeft, "One Thing Needed," that built on my newfound listening lesson. He wisely stated, "Not many people can be great speakers. We can *all* be great listeners." I think that sometimes I try too hard to be a good speaker, and forget that the majority of the time that's simply not what people want or need.

Kreeft also said, "When we listen to each other, that's rare, that's special. Something always happens when we listen." I do have a few recollections of times when I discovered something amazing by the simple act of shutting up and listening. Unfortunately, they are relatively few. I could have had so many more.

I don't know that a lifelong resolution to listen more is realistic, but I am now trying to focus on finding people to listen to. Why would I want to limit myself to what's in my own mind when

I can gain insights from many minds—including, notably, God's mind.

Something else just came to me about the beauty of listening: There are times in our lives—and now is one such time in mine—when we don't feel we have a whole lot to give. We're struggling, maybe even a little lost, ourselves. We want to help others, but what can we say that's sure to help? Well, maybe there are situations when there isn't anything we can say that would help. But everyone wants to be listened to and understood. If I can listen, I'll always have something valuable to give. Most likely, that will be more appreciated than whatever I could say anyway.

JESSIE RICHARDS IS SUPERVISOR OF TFI'S MISSION SERVICES DEPARTMENT, WHICH PRODUCES *ACTIVATED*. SHE LIVES IN THE WASHINGTON DC AREA. ■



LOVE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

WE COULD ALL STAND TO IMPROVE IN OUR RELATIONS WITH OTHERS, and the Bible has lots of helpful counsel for us on that subject—how to work with others, how to treat them, and so on. It talks about patience, longsuffering, unselfishness, and giving. But it goes on to say that *love* is the most important thing. “The greatest of these is love.”¹ Love is the most important ingredient in our relations with others.

The hallmark of Jesus’ ministry was love, and He tells us to love likewise. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”² How can we say we love God whom

BY MARIA FONTAINE

we can’t see, if we can’t love the people we live and work with all the time? How can we say we love people whom we haven’t seen, if we don’t love those we see every day?³

God puts certain people in our lives—relatives, coworkers, overseers, clients, or neighbors—whether we like it or not. Whether we like to be with these people or not, He has put us with them and it’s our responsibility to love them. If we have a hard time getting along with them, He evidently knows we need to learn to, or He wouldn’t have put us together.

And it must be possible, or He wouldn’t have put us in that situation.

We only grow and learn when we have a challenge, so look at this as a new challenge. “What can I do to grow in my relationships with other people?” Part of the answer to that is growing in our relationship with Jesus, because when we do, we’re more loving toward other people. If we love God, we’ll love others, too, because loving others is one way we show Him love. And that’s what it’s all about. That’s the main purpose for living—to love God and others. Love is the most important thing! ■

Paul mentions three Christian virtues—faith, hope, love—at the end of 1 Corinthians 13, his great chapter on love, and each one enfolds a paradox.

Love involves caring about people most of us would prefer not to care about.

Hope gives us the power to look beyond circumstances that otherwise appear hopeless.

As for faith, it will always mean believing in what cannot be proven, committing to that of which we can never be sure.

—Philip Yancey

-
1. 1 Corinthians 13:13
 2. John 13:34 NIV
 3. See 1 John 4:20.





keys to communication

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

GOOD COMMUNICATION DEPENDS ON A FEW BASIC PRINCIPLES. Learn these, and you will be well on the way to happy, productive relationships.

- **Honesty.** If you want to get off on the right foot with others, be honest and straightforward from the start.
- **Tact.** It's important to be honest, but it's also important to be loving and considerate in your presentation, especially with people who are naturally sensitive or when the subject could be sensitive.
- **Wisdom.** Wisdom is what helps you be tactful. You'll find a lot of useful wisdom within the pages of the Bible, but you can also get wisdom that is tailor made for each situation by asking God for it. That is promised in the Bible,¹ but you need to ask.
- **Love.** You may not do or say everything right, but if others see that you are motivated by love and concern, little problems or

misunderstandings are less likely to become big ones.

- **Prayer.** Sometimes praying together about a shared situation can help things click between two people like nothing else.
- **Positiveness.** Being upbeat usually elicits a like response.
- **Timing.** Knowing when to say something is often as important as knowing what to say. So is knowing when *not* to say anything.
- **Approachability.** Dictionary definitions of approachable include accessible; easy to meet, know, talk with, etc.; friendly. When someone knows you will take time for him or her, you've won a friend.
- **Attentiveness.** Listen to what others have to say without interrupting, trying to hurry them along, or finishing their sentences for them. Nothing opens a channel for constructive dialogue better than being a good listener.
- **Open-mindedness.** People's opinions and the way they approach problems are as different as people themselves. Letting

others express their thoughts and feelings conveys respect and fosters positive, fruitful exchanges. People will be much more at ease with you and more likely to turn to you for advice if they know you will be open to what they have to say, even if you don't agree.

- **Empathy.** Be sensitive to others' likes and dislikes, needs, and moods. Put yourself in their shoes. Practice the Golden Rule.²
- **A sense of humor.** A little laughter can be just the thing to keep potentially difficult exchanges from getting too intense. Lighten up!
- **Clarity.** There would be a lot fewer misunderstandings between people if they didn't beat around the bush or rely so much on hints. Don't leave others guessing; say what you mean. If you're not sure they understand your point, ask them.
- **Effort.** Sometimes communicating is plain hard work.
- **Consistency.** People who communicate regularly understand each other better and are more likely to be able to work through problems when they come up. ■

1. See James 1:5.

2. Matthew 7:12



FEEDING READING

FRIENDS WHO

BY SAMUEL KEATING

GOOD FRIENDS ARE HONEST EVEN WHEN THEY KNOW IT MAY HURT INITIALLY.

Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.—*Proverbs 27:6 NLT*

FRIENDS CELEBRATE EACH OTHER'S VICTORIES.

What woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!"—*Luke 15:8–9*

It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the best man is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success.—*John 3:29 NLT*

TRUE FRIENDS ARE THERE FOR EACH OTHER IN HARD TIMES.

To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend.—*Job 6:14*

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.—*Proverbs 17:17 NIV*

FRIENDS HELP MAKE YOU A BETTER PERSON.

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.—*Proverbs 27:17 NLT*

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help.—*Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 NLT*

FRIENDS GIVE GOOD ADVICE.

The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.—*Proverbs 27:9 NLT*

FRIENDS ARE FORGIVING.

Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.—*Proverbs 17:9 NLT*

FRIENDS DON'T GOSSIP.

A whisperer separates the best of friends.—*Proverbs 16:28*

CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS WISELY.

The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.—*Proverbs 12:26 NIV*

Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.—*Proverbs 13:20 NLT*

There are "friends" who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother.—*Proverbs 18:24 NLT*

JESUS SET THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE OF A FRIEND, AND HE SHARED HIS SECRET WITH US.

Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.—*John 15:12–13 NLT*

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Jesus wants to be your closest, truest friend. If you don't yet know Him personally, you can meet Him right now. Simply pray:

Jesus, I want to know You. Come into my life and help me experience Your loving presence.



POINTS TO PONDER

be a friend

A friend is someone who understands your past, believes in your future, and accepts you just the way you are.
—*Author unknown*

Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born.
—*Anais Nin (1903–1977)*

Do not save your loving speeches
For your friends till they are dead;
Do not write them on their
tombstones,
Speak them rather now instead.
—*Anna Cummin*

Are you upset little friend? Have you been lying awake worrying? Well, don't worry ... I'm here. The flood waters will recede, the famine will end, the sun will shine tomorrow, and I will always be here to take care of you.
—*Charlie Brown to Snoopy in Peanuts, by Charles Schulz*

The only way to have a friend is to be one.
—*Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)*

A good friend is a connection to life—a tie to the past, a road to the future, the key to sanity in a totally insane world.
—*Lois Wyse (1926–2007)*

The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing ... not healing, not curing ... that is a friend who cares.
—*Henri Nouwen (1932–1996)*

Sometimes being a friend means mastering the art of timing. There is a time for silence. A time to let go and allow people to hurl themselves into their own destiny. And a time to prepare to pick up the pieces when it's all over.
—*Gloria Naylor (b. 1950)*

There are only two people who can tell you the truth about yourself—an enemy who has lost his temper and a friend who loves you dearly.
—*Antisthenes (445–365 BC)*

A cheerful friend is like a sunny day spreading brightness all around.
—*John Lubcock (1834–1913)*

A friend is one to whom one may pour out all the contents of one's heart, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keep what is worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away.
—*Arabian proverb*

I will speak ill of no man, and speak all the good I know of everybody.
—*Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790)*

The greatest good you can do for another is not just share your riches, but to reveal to him his own.
—*Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881)* ■

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Live the Golden Rule

I once told My followers, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”¹ So many problems would be solved if people would live by that simple rule. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it is the smart thing to do. When you do it—even when it’s to your own hurt at first—it eventually comes back to you in the form of more love and other good things in your own life. When you build your life and character on treating people the way you want to be treated, it’s inevitable that they will return the favor by treating you with respect and kindness. But it starts with you.

You have opportunities every day to spread goodwill. You face choices every day in which you can either do what is best for yourself or best for someone else. Sometimes it can be difficult to do the right thing, especially when the person you’re dealing with hasn’t done right to you. You may not feel others deserve to be treated with love and kindness or that they are worth the sacrifice, but I didn’t say, “Do to others as they do to you.” My code for living is far above that normal perception of fairness. I want you to live on a higher plane. Anyone can be nice to those who are nice, but the person who can be nice to those who *aren’t* is the bigger person and more blessed by Me.

1. Matthew 7:12, paraphrased