

LIVING HOLY

Life Application: Understanding and applying Scriptural guidelines to our relationships with others.

Key Verse for Meditation: Can two walk together, except they be agreed? – Amos 3:3

Focus Scriptures: 1 Samuel 18:1-4; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Romans 1:7-12; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Hebrews 10:24

Just after my friend, Patty, had been told that cancer had spread through her bones, I ran across a book titled "Special Friends." When I started scanning its pages, I was instantly oblivious to my surroundings, for I realized someone had captured in words the way I felt about Patty. I would like to share the poem with you.

The most special friendships are formed when you are thinking of something else. With no walls up and your guard down, You are charmed by someone's unprotected presence. One pleasant moment builds on another Until you feel so connected that you seem to be speaking With one heart and one mind.

Remembering Patty



You find yourself smiling when they smile, Hurting when they hurt. You dream and scheme together Hope and cope together. Sharing the story of how and why you became friends warms your heart And one day you realize your life is brighter now. You have a deeper understanding of the words gratitude and growth, And pleasure and peace.

It becomes clear how precious this one life has become to you And you know you have been graced with the gift of a very special friend.¹

It is a real privilege to share some thoughts about my very special friend. I say "my" but I know that Patty had a special place in countless hearts. Numerous



Lesson Key: Biblical guidelines concerning the relationships of Christians fall into two main categories. First is the principle of separation—refraining from choosing close connections with the ungodly. Second, we find positive instructions about building pure, selfless, and godly connections with fellow believers. Detailed instructions are given for relationships that are simply part of our assigned environment (such as family members, classmates, business associates, or neighbors) and for relationships that we choose (such as our spouses and close friends).

people told me so during the months Patty walked down the difficult road of terminal cancer. She made an impression on many lives.

In all my years of knowing and loving Patty, I repeatedly came face to face with the fact that she had no idea what a treasure she was. That was part of her charm. Patty was an unaffected, genuine, caring friend and she proved that over and over again in many ways. I guess you could say that we were truly kindred spirits. We shared a love for a lot of things—reading, cooking, gardening, sewing—and Patty was good at all of them. And we both liked rich and fattening desserts!

But far beyond our shared enjoyment of all those things was the deep fellowship we shared regarding the things of God. She loved to discuss the things He had been teaching her and doing in her life. I miss our talks. Even in her last weeks, when speaking was difficult, sometimes her eyes would light up when I would come into the room and

she would say, “I want to have a real talk.” And I knew what she meant.

Watching Patty’s faith during those last months was one of the greatest privileges of my life. As I saw her go through situation after situation that she initially feared, I realized in a deeper way than ever before that true faith does not shine brightest when prayers are being answered and we are on the mountaintop. It blazes forth when life doesn’t make sense, when pain continues, when the valley is long and dark. Patty proved that.

A close Christian friend like my Patty is a blessing I wish everyone could experience. She set an example of selflessness, living faith, and courage. She showed me—and all of us—the way to walk Home with victory.

For that, and for many other reasons, we won’t forget Patty. – *From a memory shared by Karen Barrett at the funeral of Patty Barker*

¹Kelley, Roxie. *Special Friends*. Delafield, WI: Lang Graphics, 2001



“The seeker after holiness should associate with those whose intelligence will instruct him; whose example will guide him; whose conversation will inspire him; whose cautions will warn him.” – *John Angell James, Christian writer and preacher of the nineteenth century*

When we become like the world, we lose our power to influence the world. The story is told of a boy who had a cage full of sparrows. Thinking it would be nice to teach the sparrows to sing like canaries, he bought a canary and put it in the cage with the sparrows. After a couple of weeks, he came running to his mother and said, “Mother! The sparrows are not singing like the canary. The canary is chirping like the sparrows!” That is the inevitable outcome of becoming like the world in order to reach the world.

Lonnie Carlson testifies about the childhood object lesson his father frequently gave to him and his siblings. His father would say, “Christianity and the world do not mix. Trying to combine the two is like mixing oil and water. They will separate.” He would demonstrate this fact by putting oil and water into a jar, and shaking it vigorously. Always, in a short time, the two liquids would separate. As a child, Lonnie thought he could shake that jar hard enough so the oil and water would combine. After his father left, he would take the jar and shake it vigorously. Then he would set it down, but sure enough, the two liquids always separated.

Paul knew that believers and unbelievers should be in stark contrast to each other. He challenged the believers at Corinth to a radical ethical separation from their pagan environment, telling them, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Corinthians 6:17). Even though a coalition with an unbeliever may seem good at the outset, it can be detrimental because the goals of believers and unbelievers are fundamentally different.

As we avoid situations that would force us to divide our loyalties, we will find that the blessing of refusing to “mix” with the world is a close relationship with God. What a benefit that is as we journey through life!



For Personal Study

1. What principle regarding a Christian's relationships is developed in Amos 3:3 and 2 Corinthians 6:14-17?

2. What characteristics or patterns of behavior would we expect to see in the relationships of an individual with a pure and holy heart? 1 Samuel 18:1-4; Ecclesiastes 4:12; Ephesians 4:32; Philippians 2:3; Hebrews 10:24

3. What are the factors that build Christian relationships? What are the factors that could hinder?

A Selfless Friend



Nitin, a young man in India, was involved in an organization called the National Cadet Corps. Shiv, another young man from the same town, was also a member of the Corps. Though they did not share the same social class, educational level, or financial status, their stay in an NCC camp brought them together, and they became friends.

One day news arrived that a special camp would be held for cadets, and a contingent was to be chosen to go. Interested cadets were to report for interviews the following Sunday. Quite a few aspirants gathered, though only four cadets were to be sent from their squadron. After the initial screening, the first three cadets were finalized. Shiv and Nitin were tied for the fourth position.

Shiv was interviewed first. He came out smiling, patted Nitin's back, and said warmly, "Best of luck! You must give it your best try."

Nitin went in. He recounts, "The next few moments probably saw the worst side of me. Acting as the most selfish person I have ever known, I pleaded my case for inclusion in the team, obviously at the cost of my friend's place. To one question I responded, 'I should be selected because I am more skilled than Shiv. Besides, Shiv has attended the camp twice in two years, but I have done it only once.' I cannot forget the Commandant's words. He said, 'Boy, you should consider yourself blessed to have a friend like Shiv. He has given up his candidature in your favor, using the same arguments.'

"The walk from the interview room to the waiting hall," Nitin says, "was the longest I had ever experienced in my life. I had a heavy load of guilt on my shoulders, and I did not know how to face Shiv. But Shiv made it very simple, as always. He embraced me the moment I came out of the interview room, and congratulated me with a childlike excitement that was so pure and pious."

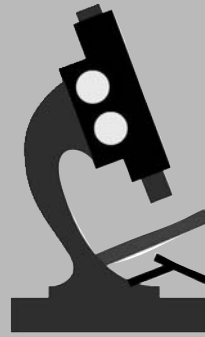
What a lesson in the selfless nature of true friendship! It was one Nitin has never forgotten.

Guidelines for Choosing Relationships

Many of the relationships in our lives are automatically established; they are not something we make a choice to enter into. We do not select our parents or siblings out of a line-up of potential prospects, nor do we generally have options about who will sit next to us in class or share an office with us at work. However, we do have a choice about our friends and whom we marry.

Since we persuade and influence those we draw close to, it is vital that we choose close relationships that align to Biblical guidelines. If we are to grow in Christ, we want to surround ourselves with godly people who love Jesus and will inspire us to become more effective disciples of Him. Following are some questions that can help us determine whether a relationship should be established.

- Is the relationship according to the Bible?
2 Corinthians 6:14-17
- Is this person growing in his/her likeness to Jesus Christ?
2 Corinthians 3:18
- Will this relationship edify the other person spiritually?
Hebrews 10:24
- Will this relationship edify me spiritually?
Jude 1:20-21
- Will this relationship promote peace and unity?
Hebrews 12:14
- Will this relationship increase brotherly love?
1 Thessalonians 3:12-13
- Is this relationship without ill will, a desire for personal advantage, pretense, jealousy, or injurious words?
1 Peter 2:1
- Am I honoring the other person in this relationship?
1 Peter 2:17



Word Search

In Hebrews 10:24, we find a directive that applies to godly relationships. We are told, “Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” The word that is translated *consider* comes from the root word *katanoeo*, which means “to observe fully, to behold, to perceive.” Our relationships with others should help us “see” them—to come to an understanding of who they really are. Why? So that we can “provoke” them to love and good works. *Provoke* is a strong word—an action word! If we know each other as we should, we will understand how to inspire, challenge, and strengthen one another in the Lord.

4. How should we go about establishing friendships that will be helpful to us spiritually? Proverbs 18:24

5. Think of three or four people who have had the most positive influence on your life. Why were they so helpful? What was it about them that impacted you?

6. Solomon captured one of the key ingredients in a godly relationship in the second part of Proverbs 20:6. What is it? Why do you think this is such a crucial ingredient?
