

Teen Lesson 2: What Makes a Good Friendship?

As you read through this lesson, look up as many of the highlighted scripture references as you can. These support the text and studying these scriptures in your own Bible will increase your understanding and enable you to prove this material for yourself.

In the first lesson in this series, we learned that God extends His calling to you because of the relationship that either one, or both, of your parents have with Him. This means that you can also have a relationship with God - IF you choose to. And this is something that God hopes you will pursue. You young people are very special to Him and He wants to have a friendship with you as well as with your parents.

But how can you build a friendship with God? Before we answer that question we need to find out *what* makes a good friendship. You need to know that God can and will be a good friend to you, otherwise you may not be interested in building a friendship with Him - at least not at this very moment! Don't worry if you feel that way - it's not an uncommon reaction for young people to have! After all, many of you may not be interested in "spiritual" things yet. And even though you may be quite happy to live God's Way of Life as your parents do, having a personal relationship with Him is a different matter. It seems serious and grown-up.....boring perhaps.....and well, you're still a teenager and you just want to have fun with your friends. Right? Hopefully, by the time you've finished this lesson, you will have discovered (if you haven't already) that God can, in fact, be the best friend you'll ever have.

From the things teenagers have told me over the years, your ideas about what makes a good friendship boil down to three things: *trust, common interests* and *respect*. If you think these qualities are vital in any human friendship (and they are), then before you build a relationship with God, you need to know that they also apply to your friendship with Him. But do they?

In this lesson we're going to look at some comments from teens about friendship, and see how - and whether - they apply to a friendship with God.

Trust

The first quality of friendship that many teens identified was trust. Here's one comment:

Friends trust each other, they don't let you down; they stick with you all the time.

When you trust someone you have confidence or faith in them. You know you can rely on them and depend on them because they *tell the truth* and *keep their word*. These two

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qualities are very important aspects of trust - and therefore of friendship. But can we trust God to be this kind of friend? Will He keep His word and always tell us the truth?

Well, of course the answer is yes. We know that we can trust God because the Bible says He cannot lie (**Titus 1:2**) - and it also tells us that He always keeps His promises (**Numbers 23:19**). But will God stick with us all the time and never let us down? **Hebrews 13:5-6** gives us the answer. This verse tells us that God will *never* leave us or forsake us - so we *can* trust Him to look after us and always be there for us. Other verses (and examples) you can read to reinforce this are **Psalm 9:10**; **Psalm 56:8-9**; **Joshua 1:5**; **1 Chronicles 28:20** and **Ezra 9:9**.

Another comment that many teens made about trust was:

Friends are trustworthy. They listen to you and will always be your friend - no matter what.

Will God do that for you? We know part of the answer already because we've just read that He will *never* leave us or forsake us. And that's something **ONLY** God can promise. Our human friends cannot absolutely guarantee that they will always be our friends (as much as they'd like to) - because people and circumstances change. But God doesn't - and never will.

But will He listen to us? Can we tell Him anything - even our worst problems and deepest secrets? Read **Psalms 62:8**, **66:19**, **77:1** and **142:1-3** to find out. (And just think about King David's life and the problems he had!)

These are just a few scriptures that show that God will listen to us - the Bible is filled with many, many more.

Finally, another important quality relating to trust that you mentioned was:

Friends listen to your problems and give helpful advice.

Well, we know from what we've just read that God will listen to our problems, but will He give us helpful advice? I think you already know the answer to that!

The Bible is God's written word and it is full of things we can draw on when we need advice (**2 Timothy 3:16**). All we need to do is open it and read it! Obviously the more familiar we are with the Bible, the easier it will be to find the help we need. But it takes time to learn where everything is and sometimes you need advice right away. So what can you do when you find yourself in this situation? Well, you can look up the

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subject in a concordance and read the scriptures that it lists. If you're not sure how to use one, ask your parents for help. If you don't have a concordance at home, then check in the back of your Bible. Many Bibles have a small concordance or index in them that is useful. Some modern Bibles also contain a section entitled: "Where to find help when..." which can be quite helpful when you're looking for advice about something. And of course you can always ask your mother or father, a minister, or someone else you respect in the Church for help too! They can either give you the advice you need or point you in the right direction so you can find it for yourself.

The best friendships involve "give and take". They're not one-sided - they benefit both parties involved. And God's friendship with us is like that. For example, the Bible says that if we trust God we will be successful (**Proverbs 3:5-6; Proverbs 28:25**). We will be happy (**Proverbs 16:20**). God will take care of us (**Psalms 37:5**) and we will not be afraid (**Psalms 56:11**). You can also read **2 Corinthians 1:8-10** and **2 Kings 18:5-7** if you want to see some examples of how God looked after people who trusted Him.

In our first lesson we learned that you are not too young to have a friendship with God. And you are not too young to start trusting God either. That's easy for me to say, but how can *you* be sure? One way is to look at examples in the Bible of young people who trusted God. Look, for instance, at David in **Psalms 71:5-6**.

Another way you can know that you're not too young to trust God is to look at answered prayer. Have you ever prayed for something and then received what you asked for? Probably you have. And when God answers your prayers it teaches you that you can trust Him.

Common Interests

Another thing that young people feel is important in a friendship is having common interests and being interested in each other. Many of you have mentioned that:

Friends like the same things, enjoy each other's company and have fun with each other.

At first it might be hard to imagine how this can apply to our friendship with God, but it's not really difficult if you think about it. As Christians, our greatest desire is to become like God and eventually be in His Kingdom. And this is perhaps the biggest thing we have in common with God - because that is His greatest desire too. He wants us to live forever as part of His Family.¹

¹ See "The Holy Days and God's Plan" lesson in the Holy Day series for more information about this.

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As well as having things in common, our closest friends are those who are interested in us, who know us inside out and who understand us. Well, God is interested in us too. In fact, He knows ALL about us (Psalms 139:1-4, 13-17; Psalm 40:5). He even knows how many hairs are on our heads! (Matthew 10:30). Hebrews 4:15 explains that Christ sympathises with us because He was tempted in the same way we are. This means that He has experienced exactly the same emotions we have, so He REALLY does understand how we *feel*. Which of our friends knows us this well?

So God knows about us - but how can we get to know Him? By reading His words to us in the Bible! Think of it like this. If your best friend moves away, how do you maintain that friendship? By keeping in touch. Nowadays that's probably through the Internet on Facebook or by email, but many of you still phone, text or write letters to each other. Well, God has written us the most amazing letter - the Bible. And when we read it, it's just like reading a letter from a friend. In some ways it's like having a pen pal. You get to know pen pals through their letters and then eventually one day you meet. It's the same way with God. Right now He talks to us through His Word - and one day we will meet Him face to face.

Respect

Respect is another quality that many of you believe is important in friendship. You said things like:

Friends respect each other and understand each other's feelings. They don't tease or laugh at each other. They are honest with each other and share ideas.

When we respect someone we esteem them highly, we hold them in high regard, we look up to them, we admire them, we honour them, and we may praise them. Sometimes we might even *adore* them - especially if they are someone we feel really close to! (If you feel that way about someone - and many of us do - just remember that adoration in the sense of *worship* is something that should be restricted to God!)

Perhaps it's easy to see how we could have all these feelings toward God, but does He think about us in the same way? Read **Deuteronomy 26:17-19** and **Hebrews 2:7-9** to find out.

We see from these few words that God holds us in high regard. We are His *special* people and because of that He respects us. That's why He wants to help us and look after us! From what we've already read, we also know that He understands how we're feeling and that He'll always be honest with us. And we can be absolutely sure that He

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will never laugh at us or tease us! God is love (1 **John 4:8**) and He wants only our good (**Jeremiah 29:11**).

But respect in a friendship works both ways doesn't it? And we can't build a friendship with God unless we respect and honour Him. So how do we do this? **Deuteronomy 6:2** and **Ecclesiastes 12:13** give us the answer.

We show respect to God by the way we live and by obeying His commands. It's essential to do this if we want to be His friends (see **John 15:14**). And if we show respect to God and fear Him, then it will benefit us as well, just as trusting Him does. For example, **Psalms 34:9** tells us that those who respect God will have everything they need, and **Proverbs 3:7-8** reveals that turning away from evil will positively affect our health.

Conclusion

The three qualities that many of you teens consider important in making good human friendships are also important in our relationship with God. If we want to build a friendship with God, we need to start trusting Him, we need to be interested in Him, and we need to respect Him. But the only way we can do these things is by spending time with Him! In the next lesson we'll discuss some ways that we can do this.