

About Your Friends.

by J.R. Miller

Choosing good friends is crucial to our happiness and character development, and requires us to be selective, sympathetic, and willing to give as well as receive.

Scripture: Proverbs 12:26, Proverbs 13:20, Proverbs 22:24-25, Proverbs 27:17, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, John 15:13, 1 Corinthians 15:33, 2 Corinthians 6:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, James 4:4

Topics: "Friendship", "Influence of Companions"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound impact of friendships on our lives, particularly in youth, where the choice of friends can shape one's future. He warns against indiscriminate friendships, urging young people to select companions who inspire and uplift rather than those who may lead them astray. Miller highlights the importance of mutual support in friendships and the value of having older friends for guidance. He also notes that friendships can evolve and change over time, and encourages openness to new relationships while maintaining a balance in intimacy. Ultimately, he stresses the significance of choosing friends who share a love for Christ, as such bonds are strengthened by faith.

Transcript

Friendships begin very early. Little children form tender associations which mean much to their happiness, and which sometimes last through their life. We all need friendships. In solitary confinement, men have been known to make friends of insects and little animals, the only living creatures they could have for companions. Aloneness is one of the most pathetic experiences of human life.

Nothing is more important to young people, than the choosing of their friends. Really, it is almost the settling of their whole future. The kind of friends one begins with is apt to stay with always. If you accept and choose as your friends in early youth those who are good, refined, and aspiring -- you are setting your life in the direction of whatever things are true, just, honorable, pure, and lovely. Almost certainly, your whole future will be on the same wholesome lines.

But if you attach yourself in friendship to those who are unworthy, whose life is earthly and sinful, who are not true and noble -- you, in effect, fix your place and your character in a drift which will be toward things that are not good, and that do not tend to honor and beauty of soul.

There is a sense in which our friends are chosen for us before we are old enough to distinguish between the worthy and the unworthy: those who will help us upward -- and those who will drag us downward.

Happy is the child who is under the influence and guidance of wise and godly parents, who see to it that the first friendships formed are what they should be! The indifference of parents in this matter often has been responsible for the wrecking of their children's lives. They paid no heed to the character of the playmates and companions of their earliest years; exercised no restraining influence, no discrimination, in choosing between the fit and the unfit, in those whom they admitted as their children's first friends. While they slept, the enemy sowed tares.

But after the years of infancy and earliest youth, young people have a great deal to do with the choosing of their own friends. I am not speaking of love between young men and young women, of love which may ripen into marriage; I am speaking of friendship, which is a different matter altogether. Love presents a "problem" of its own; but we all need common friendships, and it is very important that they be formed wisely and carefully.

There is a tendency among young people to be altogether too indiscriminate in forming their friendships. All who come are admitted to a kind of general intimacy. Youth is hospitable to friendships, and is disposed to confide without question, and to make room for every new companionship that offers. There is need, however, for reserve at this point. No doubt the law of Christian love requires us to be courteous to all, even to strangers, to show the kindness to everyone we meet, even most casually. But we are not required to take every chance acquaintance, into the place of friendship. Here we must learn to exercise the greatest caution and reserve.

Character should be made a test. Young people should shut out of their life everything that would defile or tarnish, and whatever would make it harder for them to be true and worthy. Life's battle is hard enough at best, and instead of admitting influences which would make the struggle for them more severe -- they should always seek the contacts and inspirations which will make it easier for them to live nobly and worthy.

To take into the life a friendship which is not godly and pure, which will become a temptation toward a lower moral standard, toward a less beautiful and helpful life, toward frivolousness, indolence, irreverence, or selfishness -- is, at the best, to make it harder to live beautifully. Young people should have the courage to shut out of their life, all friendships whose influence could work in them only moral deterioration, and hinder their growth into the best possible character.

Among other qualities, sympathy is required in those who would make us good friends. There must be fellowship, and fellowship is impossible between unsympathetic spirits. This does not necessarily mean that there shall be agreement in all their opinions -- differences of view oftentimes adds interest and zest to fellowship; but the natures must have a congeniality that will make it easy for them to blend. There are natures which never can blend -- they are to each other like fire and dry tinder. Instead of calling out the best -- each brings out the worst in the other.

In deciding upon who their friends shall be, young people should choose only those with whom they can live in cordial sympathy.

It is well also that between friends the relations, shall be such that neither shall be too greatly dependent on the other. One quality of all true friendship is the desire "not to be ministered unto -- but to minister." A friendship whose chief object is to receive, to be helped, to be served -- is only selfish. On the other hand, one must be willing to receive as well as to give. All giving and helping, with no receiving or being helped -- is not a practical basis of good friendship. It is better therefore that there is, as nearly as possible, an

equality of condition, so that the help given may be mutual and reciprocal.

It is not necessary that your friends should be about your own age. Every young person ought to have friends older than himself. The older are better for counsel; and the young people are fortunate indeed who have one or two wise, true, and sympathetic friends of more years than their own, to whom they can go with the serious questions and problems which continually arise in every earnest mind. Young people often advise rashly and impetuously; an older friend, who has learned wisdom in the experiences of years, will give wiser and safer counsel.

We need to be ever seeking new friends, or at least holding our heart's doors open to receive the new friends whom God may send to us. We need new friends to take the place of those we lose as we go on our way. Death is ever busy, and no friendship is strong enough to resist his cruel hand. Friends are lost, too, in other ways, sometimes by reason of changes in life's conditions.

Then friendships seem sometimes to be outgrown. We deplore their dying out, when perhaps the truth is that these friendships were sent to us on a definite errand, to minister to us in a particular way and but for a time. Then, when their ministry is completed, they fall off. But we have not really lost them, nor should we ever forget them, or the part they have had in the making of our life. God sends us new friends for new needs, not to displace the old -- but to carry on the good which the old began.

One friend is not enough. Some young people are inclined to make one very intimate friendship, and to allow that to exclude all other companionships. Sometimes they are so exacting to demand that the one favored friend shall scarcely even treat any other person kindly. Such an exacting spirit is very narrow, showing utter selfishness and lack of confidence in the friend who is held in such bondage.

Young people will do well, also, to guard against too great and too unreserved intimacy, even with their best friends. There is sure to be an estrangement sooner or later, if the association is too close or free. For example, when two girls are seen always together, almost giving up every other friendship and companionship for each other, it is usually safe to predict a short-lived intimacy. By and by they grow tired of each other. It is better always, even in the closest friendship, to maintain a measure of reserve, never to give all, not to see too much of each other. A friendship which exercises wise self-restraint, which is not too emotional, too free and unreserved -- will prove the surest and the most lasting, and in all ways the most wholesome.

It need not even be said that young people would better chose for their friends those who love and follow Christ. There is a wondrous secret of safety in Christian companionship. The fellowship which deepens into true Christian fellowship, is very sacred. The friendship which is hallowed by the love of Christ, is woven of a threefold cord which cannot be broken. God reveals his love to us, in the love of our true Christian friends. It is he who gives us our friends, and we must recognize the gift with reverence and love.

It is well for us to remember that friendship requires also something on our part. It cannot be all on one side. Love may be -- but friendship must give as well as receive. It costs to be a friend. Then we must be worthy if we would take another life into the place of confidence and affection. Charles Lamb warned a young man who was disposed to confide in him -- that he was not good enough to be his friend. We need to make sure that our heart is pure and that our hands are clean, before we accept the confidence and trust of a human heart. Then we must be loyal and faithful to our friend, once chosen, whatever the cost may be.

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