

## What's So Important About Relationships? (Making it Personal in Relationships - Devo #1)

(**Youth Ministers:** Consider teaching the series, "*Friendships, How to Make Them and Keep Them*," (Legacy Lessons) and either making copies of these devos to hand out after the message or pasting them into an e-mail to send to your students during the week. If you use it as a handout, change the font to something more fun, like "Andy." The devos go hand in hand with the lessons - a great way to reinforce your message and help students get it into their lives! **The first three devotions correspond to Lesson 1 of the series.**) All these devotions are Copyright February 2002, by Steve Miller.

### What Makes Us Happy?

If you think about it, the quality of our relationships determines much of our happiness. Have you ever taken a vacation to a great place, like a beach or the mountains, only to find that everything erupted into World War III because somebody made everyone else miserable? No place is fun if the relationships fall apart. And neither can any amount of money make you happy if your relationships stink.

*A good example is a girl named Christina Onassis. Her dad was Aristotle Onassis, the richest man on earth at the time. She grew up on the largest yacht in the world, which was named after her: the "Christina." They would see the great sites of the world from this luxury ship, which had a large heated pool and a crew of 60 to cater to their every whim. She wintered in Paris and later lived luxuriously on an island they owned in Greece. When she got out on her own, she had a tax-free income of a million dollars a week!*

*If she wanted it, she could get it. For example, she loved Diet Coke, but it wasn't available locally. She couldn't pick up a year's supply, because she felt it lost its freshness if stored too long. Her solution? She paid a private jet to fly ten cases of Diet Coke from America to her European home every month, to the tune of \$3,000.00 per case! Sounds like a fun life. Right? Think again.*

*In the middle of all this luxury, her relationships made her life miserable. While she was growing up, her mom had an open affair on the yacht. Her dad retaliated by having his own open affair and divorcing his wife. She'd never get over these strained relationships. She'd get so mad that she'd throw her dad's clothes out of portals into the ocean. She couldn't get along with her parents or the new stepparents, often getting even by bringing them trouble. Neither could she get along with her own string of husbands. Eventually a miserable Christina attempted suicide. Her sister Tina succeeded. Those who knew Christina weren't surprised to hear that she died at the age of 37. She relied on drugs to get her through each day and probably died of an overdose. (Written by Steve Miller. Source: article by Jeff Woloson at The Divas Site.)*

### To Think About

What did Christina have going for her? \_\_\_\_\_

What made her early life difficult? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think she was doomed to a miserable life? \_\_\_\_\_

What decisions could she have made that might have brought joy into her life? \_\_\_\_\_

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## From the Power Source

Once Jesus was asked, “*Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?*” The second half of His answer was “*love your neighbor as yourself.*” What does that say about the importance that God puts on our relationships? \_\_\_\_\_

It's easy to love our neighbor if our neighbor loves us. But what about when people don't deserve our love, or do things that hurt us? According to God's Word, our relationships, even with those who hate us, are so important that we need to forgive them and not hold grudges against them. The Bible puts it this way:

*“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4:31,32)*

How do you think Christina's life might have been different had she been willing to forgive her parents and work on cultivating healthy relationships? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Who are some people who've wronged you that you can't seem to forgive? \_\_\_\_\_ How could developing a lifestyle of unforgiveness hurt your life? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Connecting With God

Even if you think it's impossible for you to forgive, are you willing to pray that God will give you the power to forgive them? Could you pray a prayer of forgiveness right now? Here's a way that you might want to pray:

*God, I can't hide my heart from you. You know that I hate \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ for what they did to me. But I really want to forgive them, just like You forgive me when I let you down. Give me the power to forgive them God. Yes, I forgive them for what they did. And if the anger keeps rising up in me, remind me to ask again for the power to love them. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

## Me? Forgive Him? It's Just Too Hard! (Making it Personal in Relationships - Devo #2)

(Youth Ministers: This devotion corresponds to Lesson 1 of the Relationships series.)

A friend says to you, "I know God wants me to forgive John, my former best friend, for making up those lies about me and stealing my girlfriend, but my heart's just not in it. I'd just be saying words to God that I didn't mean. How can I genuinely forgive John from my heart?"

What would you say to your friend? Let's look for clues in someone else's personal story:

*Stephen Covey boarded a New York subway one Sunday Morning to find a peaceful setting, everyone quietly reading or resting. But mayhem broke loose when a man and his rambunctious children entered. The children yelled, grabbed newspapers from people, and threw things. And the man sat there with his eyes closed, doing absolutely nothing about it. Stephen said, "I could not believe that he could be so insensitive as to let his children run wild like that and do nothing about it, taking no responsibility at all." So he turned to the man and challenged him to control his kids.*

OK, let's be honest. If you were on that tranquil subway trying to read a newspaper, and these rug rats start poking your backpack and CD player, creating chaos, wouldn't you be ready to strangle the unconcerned father? But what happened next cured Stephen's irritation.

*"The man lifted his gaze as if to come to a consciousness of the situation for the first time and said softly, "Oh, you're right. I guess I should do something about it. We just came from the hospital where their mother died about an hour ago. I don't know what to think, and I guess they don't know how to handle it either." (Summarized by Steve Miller from Stephen R. Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Simon and Schuster, 1990, pp. 30,31.)*

How would your attitude change once you heard that response? \_\_\_\_\_  
Would it be easier to forgive him for not controlling his kids? \_\_\_\_\_ What made the difference? \_\_\_\_\_ You see, we never know what hurts or experiences lurk beneath the surface that result in someone's obnoxious behavior or hurtful comments.

### From the Power Source

The wisest man in the world wrote these words:

*"Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy." (Proverbs 14:10)*

How was the truth of this verse demonstrated to Stephen Covey? \_\_\_\_\_ How do you think this experience helped Stephen deal with other people who would irritate him, even if he didn't

know the cause? \_\_\_\_\_ How  
would this insight help the friend at the beginning of this devotion, who found himself unable  
to forgive John from his heart? \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus didn't just see people's outward condition. Look at his response:

*“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and  
helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36)*

What prompted Jesus' compassion? \_\_\_\_\_ Aren't all people  
somehow "harrassed and helpless?" If John's character is so flawed that he'll lie about and  
steal from his best friend, what does the future hold for him? \_\_\_\_\_

## Getting Personal

How does all this apply to those people you have difficulty forgiving? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Can you see that their attitudes and actions hurt  
their relationship with God and may destroy their relationships with others throughout their  
lives? \_\_\_\_\_ Does this help you move from hate to compassion for those people? \_\_\_\_\_

## Connecting With God

Here's a suggested prayer to get you started in your talk with God:

*Lord, you know how I struggle with hating \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. But I don't want to end up  
being one of those bitter people who never smile and that nobody likes. Help me to look  
beyond their happy disguise and see their hurts the way You see them. Give me the  
compassion that only You can give as I forgive them from the heart.*

Personal Devotions Series

## **Me? Forgive Him? It's *Still* Too Hard! (Making it Personal in Relationships - Devo #3)**

(Youth Ministers: This devotion corresponds to Lesson 1 of the Relationships series.)

We've seen that our relationships can make or break our *happiness*. They can also make or break our *success*.

*Many of you have seen Ben Stein on the MTV game show "Win Ben Stein's Money" where people try to beat him by answering difficult questions. As well as being an actor, this brilliant, successful man also teaches Law. He wrote an article for Reader's Digest entitled "Mistakes Winners Don't Make." One of his biggest points was this: "The inability to make and keep friends is involved in every single failure I have ever seen."*

We all know that our relationships are important. Yet, as Samuel Butler said,

*"Friendship is like money – easier made than kept."*

Relationships fall apart so easily. But we've got to learn to hang onto them, especially if we ever want to have good marriages and jobs that last over one year. Often, relationships fail because someone does us wrong and we refuse to forgive. So we just move from one relationship to another.

Check out the following illustration of someone who refused to let unforgiveness ruin her life.

*Corrie ten Boom miraculously survived Ravensbruck, one of Hitler's death camps. After the war, she started a home in Holland to help people recover from the trauma inflicted upon them by the Nazis. What she found was that those who were willing to forgive their tormentors could go on to rebuild their lives. But those who refused to forgive, hanging onto their bitterness, remained emotionally crippled.*

*At a speaking engagement in Munich, Corrie was challenged to apply her own teaching on a new level. After the service, her blood ran cold as she recognized a man walking toward her. He was one of her former guards from Ravensbrook – and not just any guard, but one of the cruelest guards. Suddenly, the horrid memories flooded her mind. "You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk," he said, "I was a guard there." Corrie realized that he didn't remember her, only one of the thousands of prisoners. "But since that time I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear from your lips as well. "Fraulein," and he put out his hand, "will you forgive me?"*

*Corrie just stood there, as she put it, with a "coldness clutching my heart." But she knew that forgiveness was an act of the will, not just of the heart. So she silently called out for Jesus' help, and prayed, "I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling."*

*"And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bring tears to my eyes."*

*"I forgive you, brother," I cried. "With all my heart."*

*"For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely, as I did then. But even so, I realized it was not my love. I had tried, and did not have the power. It was the power of the Holy Spirit as recorded in Romans 5:5, '...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.'" (Corrie ten Boom, Tramp for the Lord (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1976), pp. 53-55.*

## From the Power Source

In our first devotion, we read the following verses. This time home in on the last phrase to find something that should motivate us to forgive others.

*"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:31,32)*

How much has Jesus forgiven us of? \_\_\_\_\_ Our sin put Him on the Cross. What kind of torture did He have to go through for us, even before we were nice to Him? \_\_\_\_\_  
How should this motivate us to forgive others? \_\_\_\_\_ Since  
Corrie was a Christian, how do you think this motivated her? \_\_\_\_\_

## Getting Personal

Corrie knew that as a Christian she needed to forgive, but the power just wasn't there. She realized that the power had to come from outside of herself, as she allowed Jesus to love through her. As the Apostle Paul wrote,

*"I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Phil. 4:13)*

## Connecting With God

If this prayer expresses what you're thinking, why not use it to jump-start your prayer time?

*Jesus, thanks so much for forgiving me of my sins. You know that I'm still struggling with hate and bitterness. I've just got to trust you to work your incredible love through me. Help me to love \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. My only hope is You.*

## **Forgiveness: The Flip Side (Making it Personal in Relationships - Devo #4)**

(Youth Ministers: This devotion corresponds to Lesson 2 of the Relationships series.)

Remember the quote last week from Samuel Butler? He said,

*“Friendship is like money – easier made than kept.”*

Why are friendships so hard to keep? In past devos we saw that friends break up when they refuse to forgive. Another friendship buster is the flip side: someone won't *ask forgiveness*.

### **From the Power Source**

Jesus put it this way:

*“If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”  
(Matthew 5:21-24)*

Presenting offerings was very important to the worship of Jesus' time. Why do you think Jesus said to be reconciled with your brother *before* presenting your offering?

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Did He say that we ask forgiveness only if we hurt someone *intentionally*? \_\_\_\_\_ What if someone's mad at us, but we didn't mean to hurt him? Should we still try to reconcile?

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### **From Real Life**

*“Jim” knew that almost every couple is “in love” when they get married. But many of those happy newlyweds later experience bitter divorces. So he wanted to make sure that he found a girl who had more than a fuzzy feeling for him. He wanted someone with the character to hang in there for the long haul. So when it looked like his friendship with “Julie” could go deeper, he looked closely for how she handled a friend who began to shut her out. When he saw “Julie” pursuing the relationship, willing to ask forgiveness, he knew that she had the right stuff to stay in love for the long haul.*

### **Getting Personal**

What if a potential mate checked out your character? Would this person see you as the kind of person who goes to others to try to reconcile misunderstandings and to ask forgiveness? Before you have your next devotional (before you “present your offering at the altar”) is there someone you need to ask forgiveness of for something that he or she has against you? Why not get it right today?

## Connecting With God

*"Lord, help me to do my best to restore those relationships where people have something against me. You've got to give me the strength. I can't do it on my own."*



## **The Big Key to Making Friends (Making it Personal in Relationships - Devo #5)**

(Youth Ministers: This devotion corresponds to Lesson 3 of the Relationships series.)

*Dale Carnegie wrote a perennial best-selling book on relationships entitled, How to Win Friends and Influence People. It sold over 15 million copies! His book is based on his massive research into the relational traits of successful people. His research led him to one principle that was so important that he called it "The Big Key." Here it is:*

*“You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.”*

As a youth minister, I've watched lots of students flunk out over and over with their relationships because they don't get "The Big Key." They try so hard to impress others that they turn people off. Instead, if they tried to be more *interested* than *interesting* they'd do more *listening* than *talking*, more *complimenting* than *bragging*.

### **From the Power Source**

Jesus put it this way:

*“And just as you want men to treat you, treat them in the same way.”(Luke 6:31)*

### **Getting Personal**

Make a list of things that people do in relationships that really irk you.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

According to Jesus, these are the things we shouldn't do to others. They ruin friendships. Now list the things you really look for in a friend.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

According to Jesus, we should concentrate on treating others this way. Do you want to have more friends? Then be a friend; act like a friend. It's really that simple.

### **Connecting With God**

*"Lord, I know what I like in a friend. Help me to be that to the family members and classmates I see each day. Especially help me in those areas where I know I'm not a very good friend, such as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."*

## Others First (Making it Personal in Relationships - Devo #6)

(Youth Ministers: This devotion corresponds to Lesson 3 of the Relationships series.)

*Al Capone was one of the most dangerous men in Chicago. He led a notorious gang that took people's money illegally and cost many their lives. Yet, he didn't see himself in this light. Capone once complained, "I have spent the best years of my life giving people the lighter pleasures, helping them have a good time, and all I get is abuse, the existence of a hunted man."*

Just like Capone, it's hard to be honest about our own faults. Let's be ruthlessly honest with ourselves as we look at our relationships in the light of God's Word.

### From the Power Source

*"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:3,4)*

To me, these verses could be summed up in two words which express one of the most important principles for any relationships: Others First.

Think of people you know who are conceited, hung up on themselves. How does that characteristic hurt their relationships? \_\_\_\_\_

Now think of some people who are selfless, always interested in other people. How does this characteristic help their relationships? \_\_\_\_\_

### Getting Personal

Unlike Al Capone, let's take a good, hard look at our relationships in the light of this passage. When you walk into your church group, are these the thoughts that dominate your mind?

*"Don't trip."*

*"Don't say something stupid."*

*"Hang around the people who are the coolest."*

*"What can I say that will make people think I'm cool."*

Nothing wrong with some of those thoughts. But all of them are about me, me, me. What would be the difference if we went into youth group with these thoughts?

*"Is there someone sitting alone who I can sit with and make feel welcome?"*

*"Is someone hurting that I could encourage?"*

*"I wonder how her soccer game (or band contest or Math test) went?"*

The difference between the first set of thoughts and the second set is the difference between a person who's self centered and one who's other centered.

## Connecting With God

*"Lord, it's pretty radical to go from thinking of myself to thinking of others. Yet, my own hurts help me to realize how others hurt. Help me to make a difference in their lives. And if looking out for others would help me to have better friendships, that would be great! Help me to be the friend that you want me to be."*

## The Power of Encouragement (Making it Personal in Relationships - Devo #7)

(Youth Ministers: This devotion corresponds to Lesson 4 of the Relationships series.)

What does the following study tell you about how you can radically change your friends' lives?

*A study was conducted of 12 to 14 year olds. One group of children were told to run around a track and that they would be timed. No matter how well they did, the instructor told them, "I don't know what the problem is, but you are not as fast as the other groups. Let's try again." A second group also ran the track. But the instructors encouraged this group, telling them that they were very fast.*

*Then the groups were asked to run around the track again. How do you think each group performed the second time around? The first group (that was given a bad report) ran slower and slower with each succeeding run. The second group (that was told they were fast) ran faster with each run.*

What does this study teach us about the power of encouragement?

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### From the Power Source

*"...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24,25)*

Can you think of some times when a teacher or friend or parent motivated you to do your best through something they said? \_\_\_\_\_ What motivates you more, when people condemn you, or when they encourage you? \_\_\_\_\_

The word "stimulate" in the Hebrews passage is a strong one, which could be translated "provoke," "incite," "arouse," or "stir up."

It reminds me of my weightlifting days in high school when I'd go for a maximum weight on the bench press. Since we used free weights (not a machine), I'd always have a "spotter" to stand over me in case I couldn't complete the lift and needed someone to pull the weight off of me. But my spotters always did more than stand there. I loved the ones who'd yell at me as I struggled with a heavy lift: "Go for it Steve! You can do it! One more repetition!"

I see that kind of intense motivation among athletes as they applaud a teammate who made a good play or slap someone's helmet in celebration. No wonder they keep motivated! Does it strike you as strange that we so seldom use this life-changing encouragement to motivate our parents, youth ministers, and friends?

### Getting Personal

Who is someone that you could encourage this week? \_\_\_\_\_ Parents often get discouraged. When is the last time you complimented mom or dad for the daily stuff they do, like preparing a meal or giving you a ride? What are some ways you can "stimulate" your friends to move in the right direction in their lives? \_\_\_\_\_

Going to church or a campus ministry isn't just about learning. According to this verse, we're supposed to "encourage one another" and "stimulate" fellow believers. Who is someone you could encourage at your next meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

## Connecting With God

*"Lord, help me to realize the awesome power I have to change my friend's lives through encouraging them. Remind me this week to encourage people at home, at school, and at church."*

## **How to Become a People Blossomer (Making it Personal in Relationships - Devo #8)**

(Youth Ministers: This devotion corresponds to Lesson 4 of the Relationships series.)

This story shows us the power of encouraging words.

*I heard a story of an unruly boy who was sent to the principal's office for his bad behavior in school. Apparently this was not the first time, and the principal looked at the boy, pondering what to do. This time, instead of scolding him, he looked down at the boy's hands. He told the boy, "Look at your hands. Thin fingers. Those are surgeon's hands. Go, fulfill your potential." All the boy could do that day was to look at his hands. Years later the principal heard from the boy, who had now completed medical school to be a surgeon. The turning point in the boy's life? The day he was encouraged by the principal.*

Have we really figured out the power of encouraging words to change lives? Why is encouragement so powerful?

*Educator John Dewey once stated that the deepest urge in human nature is "the desire to be important." Psychologist William James said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated."*

So we've got people all around us who are craving to feel important and appreciated. How will it make a little brother or sister, or a younger person in your youth group or campus ministry feel if you notice a good quality in their lives and compliment them about it? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **From the Power Source**

If we really love the people we hang around, we want to bring out the best in them and see them blossom. The Apostle Paul put his purpose this way,

*"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone complete in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." (Colossians 1:28,29)*

Paul was all out to help others become all that they could be. The result? He had the incredible satisfaction of knowing that he had blossomed people's lives all over his part of the world. Wouldn't it be totally awesome to come to the end of your middle school years or high school years and realize that some of your fellow students and neighbors and family members were changed forever because you encouraged them?

### **Getting Personal**

*Some guys in a youth group wrote a note and signed a card to encourage a girl who got sick with sun poisoning at a beach retreat. Years later she showed me that card. She carried it in her pocket book all those years!*

Who is someone you could encourage this week? \_\_\_\_\_ Rather than majoring on catching your little brothers or sisters doing something wrong so that you can yell at them, why not try to catch them doing something right and complimenting them for it? Write down some people that you will either encourage verbally or through a note this week.

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## Connecting With God

*"Lord, I confess that I'm often more of a discourager than an encourager. Ignite in me the passion to be a people blossomer. This week help me to catch people doing something right so that I can compliment them. Show me people who are discouraged so that I can encourage them."*



## The Importance of Your Closest Friends (Making it Personal in Relationships - Devo #9)

(Youth Ministers: This devotion corresponds to Lesson 5 of the Relationships series.)

*Bill Gates is the richest man in America. A billionaire in his thirties, he made it by developing computer software that you find on almost every computer. His company? Microsoft, as in Microsoft Windows or Microsoft Word. When he started his business, he quickly became recognized as the person who knew more about the computer industry than anyone else. How did he become so knowledgeable? During his middle school and high school years, he loved computers, spent tons of time programming, and hung around with a small group of students at his school who shared his love for programming. They pretty much taught themselves. Had he hung out with the party crowd, he would have never made it.*

*Steven Spielberg, the most successful movie producer of our time, filmed movies as a middle schooler with two other neighborhood kids who loved filming.*

*Arnold Schwarzenegger decided at the age of 15 that he wanted to become the greatest body builder in the world. Guess who he hung out with? The home economics team? No! He hung out with adult body builders in his Austrian town who encouraged each other in body building. Schwarzenegger went on to repeatedly win the Mr. Universe Contest.*

So what's the point? If you want to be a great body builder, hang out with body builders. If you want to be a great programmer, hang out with programmers. And if you want to be live for God and make a difference for Him, hang out with the sharpest Christians you can find.

This doesn't mean that you can't have friends and acquaintances who don't believe. Remember, Jesus was known as a friend of sinners. But His *closest* friends, those He shared His dreams and burdens with, were those who shared his spiritual values, His disciples.

### From the Power Source

*"He who walks with the wise grows wise but a companion of fools suffers harm."  
(Proverbs 13:20)*

*"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" (I Corinthians 15:33)*

According to these verses, what good comes of having good friends and what problems come with having bad friends? \_\_\_\_\_

What characteristics would you look for in a person for a close friend? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ How would this apply to any person you would consider dating?

### Getting Personal

Who are your closest friends? \_\_\_\_\_ Are they living for God? \_\_\_\_\_

Are they a positive influence or a negative influence? \_\_\_\_\_ Are there some strong Christians that you should consider developing a relationship with? \_\_\_\_\_

## Connecting With God

*"Lord, thank you so much for loving me so incredibly! But sometimes it's hard to put my friendships totally into Your hands. Help me to be willing to let go of any friends who are pulling me down in order to make new friends of those who will pull me up."*

## Choosing Close Friends: A Radical Approach (Making it Personal in Relationships - Devo #10)

*An adult shared with me this sobering story. "When I was young, I hung-out with a very wild guy. Later, this friend began to date my sister. I warned my sister not to date him. 'I know him,' I objected. 'I know what kind of guy he is.' My sister replied, 'If he's so bad, then why are you such good friends?' Well, she married my friend and they always had a rocky relationship. He died an early death with his blood alcohol level extremely high. Now I have to live with the part I had in my sister's poor choice." You aren't the only person who will pay the price for your choosing the wrong friends.*

In light of this story, why is it important to choose the right friends? \_\_\_\_\_  
Now use your imagination. How do you think he came to have a friend who was so wild? \_\_\_\_\_

My guess is that they either lived close to each other or just drifted together in school because they had similar interests or personalities. In other words, most people don't *choose* their friends, they just drift into friendships because they have similar interests or compatible personalities. Or, they get with a certain group because that's the only group that accepts them. But what's the danger of making friendships this way? \_\_\_\_\_

If the friendship is build on similar spiritual interests, that's one thing. But too often, we get our closest friends because we both love the same sport, share a passion for art, or like the same bands. That means that we could end up being best friends with a person whose morals stink.

### From the Power Source

With this story in mind, let's take one more look at those verses from last week.

*"He who walks with the wise grows wise but a companion of fools suffers harm."  
(Proverbs 13:20)*

*"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" (I Corinthians 15:33)*

If we really believe these verses, can we allow ourselves to just drift into relationships because of common interests? \_\_\_\_\_ Imagine that you're older and married and have a teenage daughter. You just moved to a new town. Your daughter will go to her new school tomorrow. You know that her friendships may make her or break her. What will you advise her concerning choosing the right friends? \_\_\_\_\_

What would I say? *"Find the students who share your passion for God, your morals and your direction in life. Then, find something you have in common with them and try to make friends."*

Sure, it's a radical way to make friends. But according to the Scriptures, it could be one of the wisest choices you ever make.

## Getting Personal

Now take the advice you'd give to your daughter and apply it to yourself. Pray the following prayer and reflect on any changes you need to make in your friendships.

## Connecting With God

*"Lord, I tremble when I realize that choosing a wrong friend could destroy my life. Give me wisdom in my choices. And help me to realize that having no close friend is better than a best friend who leads me away from You."*