

## ***FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM... AND KEEP THEM***

**BIG IDEA FOR ENTIRE SERIES:** "Our relationships with people are very important to God and to us. By following God's principles of relationships, we can enjoy greater success in our personal and spiritual lives."

**PURPOSE OF THE SERIES:** "Youth should come away from this study with an understanding of how to relate to others, and a commitment to live it out in their lives."

**Note for Teachers:** Even though this series is long (you may want to space the lessons out through the year), most youth are fascinated with relationships and will be eager to follow the series. It is their relationships that often make a day good or bad. They are familiar with the tragedy of divorce and the pain caused by fractured family relationships.

Try to study through this material well ahead of your teaching, so that you can use personal illustrations of how you have either failed or succeeded in applying these principles. Also, as you meditate through the week, you will find illustrations in the lives of friends, family, church, and from the news.

Come humbly before God to ask if your life is consistent with what you are teaching. Give yourself enough time to be able to apply the principles yourselves before you pass them on. Our goal is not to get to the end of the series and have all the youth quote the list of principles from memory. Our goal is to begin relating to people God's way. Whatever games, assignments, illustrations, or group interaction can move you toward that goal, use them!

Just how important is this series? 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." That involves relationships.

### ***"MAKING FRIENDSHIPS LAST: TWO ESSENTIAL KEYS" (Lesson 1)***

**BIG IDEA: GOD WANTS US TO FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER FROM THE HEART.**

**PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS STUDY UNDERSTANDING FORGIVENESS AND MOTIVATED TO PRACTICE IT.**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

**BRAINSTORM:** We are beginning a series of messages on relationships. In small groups, discuss why it is important to learn relational skills (in friendships, family, work, school). (Have group leaders report their ideas to the entire group.) You may keep them seated in small groups for the next discussion (under IB.)

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If you think about it, the quality of our relationships in life determines much of our happiness. A vacation to a plush resort can turn into World War III if the relationships fall apart. Some of you know exactly what I mean!

In fact, your relational skills may be your most important qualifications for that job you're dying to land. Think seriously about the following two quotes I picked up:

*ILLUSTRATION: "Even in technical lines such as engineering, about 15% of one's financial success is due to one's technical knowledge, and about 85% is due to skill in human engineering - to personality and the ability to lead people."*

*ILLUSTRATION: "The ability to deal with people is as purchasable a commodity as sugar or coffee. And I will pay more for that ability than for any other under the sun." (John D. Rockefeller, famous American businessman and philanthropist)*

I'm not just talking about becoming a person who is super friendly and can make friends as quickly as Bill Gates makes money. Some of these social butterflies are all surface, not able to carry a relationship very deep, or for very long. As Samuel Butler said,

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

You've got to learn to hang on to your relationships, especially if you ever want to have a family of your own, or work in the same place over a year. But often we destroy even our most precious relationships by blowing two crucial biblical principles. We'll cover one this week, and another next week. Let's pray that God will etch them into our lives.

**PRAY**

**IDEA!** Use a clip from the "Indiana Jones" series (the one with Sean Connery playing Indy's father), where Indy finally gets his hands on the Holy Grail and the cave begins to fall apart. Tell them a little background and give a little lead time on the movie before the crucial scene. In this scene, Indiana has dropped the cup onto a ledge that he can almost stretch to grasp. He wants with everything to grasp it, but his father urges him with a phrase like, "Let it go, Indy." He lets it go. End with this, "There are some things that you want to keep in your hand as much as Indiana Jones wanted to keep the cup. But if you try to keep it, it will destroy you. Today we will discuss letting loose of those grudges and lists of wrongs that you won't or can't seem to let go. (I stole this idea from a church service at Andy Stanley's church.)"

## **I. BE TOUGH ENOUGH TO FORGIVE**

**A. What Does God Say? (Have a youth read the Scripture.)**

*“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.” (Eph. 4:31,32)*

According to this verse, how should God's forgiveness of us impact our ability to forgive others?

## B. What Does it Mean to Forgive?

**DISCUSSION:** Again in small groups, evaluate the following statements. Do they represent true forgiveness, or distorted?

- \* "I will forgive her. But I will never forget!"
- \* "Though he has repeatedly slandered me, I will still recommend him as pastor since it would be wrong for me not to forgive him."
- \* "I don't get mad. I just get even!"
- \* "I don't get even. I just hold grudges inside."
- \* "Although he has stolen from me in the past, I will forgive him and let him house-sit for me while I'm on vacation."

[Leader: After defining forgiveness below, go back to the statements. Then, show why each one is a distortion. All are distortions. The second and fifth statements are distortions because God gives us qualifications for leadership in his Word (See I Tim. 3 and Titus 1). If a man has a bad reputation in an area, he may be disqualified from a responsible position for a period of time. In my heart and by my actions, I can forgive a child molester. But that doesn't mean that I must hire him as a baby sitter!]

A definition of forgiveness: "NOT GETTING EVEN ON THE OUTSIDE  
OR HOLDING GRUDGES ON THE INSIDE."

Key thought: If a relationship must change because of a person's actions, it should not be out of hate or resentment on your part.

## C. Why is it Important to Forgive? (Perhaps ask the group as a whole.)

- 1 - Physical health can be damaged when we bottle up our anger inside.
- 2 - We are robbed of our joy.
- 3 - We can't keep relationships long-term.
- 4 - We can't minister to people spiritually over a long period of time.

Some of you are probably holding grudges right now. You have lists in your mind of things people have done to you: promises your parents have not kept, that person who cut you down with her words, that girl who stole your best friend. And the lists keep getting longer. Listen, if you don't do something about those grudges, they will rob you of your joy and eat you alive.

And let's get past all the smoke screens we put up:  
 "We're just not talking."  
 "It was his fault."  
 "But you don't know how bad he hurt me!"

You may think an unforgiving spirit is no big deal. But someone read Matthew 18:21-35 to see what God thinks of our unforgiving spirits. (Get a good reader to read it slowly. A good cross reference is Matthew 6: 14,15.)

Now let me throw a little more light on this passage. The difference in amounts owed was tremendous. Millions of dollars versus from \$50.00 to \$100.00. One commentator put it this way: "Suppose they were paid in sixpences. The 100 denarii debt could be carried in one pocket. The ten thousand talent debt would take to carry it an army of about 8,600 carriers, each carrying a sack of sixpences 60 lbs. in weight; and they would form, at a distance of a yard apart, a line five miles long!" (Barclay quoting A.R.S. Kennedy)

*ILLUSTRATION: Imagine that something like this happened to you. You've been saving for six years for college, working every summer doing hard, sweaty landscape work, spending only on bare necessities. And you were quite successful, hiring others to work for you as your business grew. You faithfully saved the money in good investments, only spending it on bare necessities. But you don't want to do landscaping forever. Your dream? To get an architectural degree and design large city buildings.*

*It's graduation day. Your six years of hard labor and sacrificial living paid off with an incredible \$30,000.00 stashed in your account. But then you get a distressing call from the university. The \$30,000.00 check you wrote to them was never received. A scam artist made off with the check and spent the money before being apprehended by police. What scum! Your heart sinks as you reflect on all your years of preparation for a moment that might never come.*

*You visit the criminal, now out on bond, demanding the money back. But he falls on his knees, pleading with you, "I spent it all on doctor bills for my wife and children. Please have mercy on me. If I go to prison, my family will have no income and will suffer." Your heart breaks as you look at his pitiful wife and grungy children. "I forgive you," you say. I won't press charges.*

*But the next day you make a surprise visit to this man, to see if his change of heart is real. You find him choking and slapping a group of children who failed to give him the full ninety cents for each dollar of begging money they received today. "You'll regret that you kept dollar and bought those crackers," he threatens.*

*At this point, how do you feel? You forgave him your precious \$30,000.00. He wouldn't forgive the children for keeping a dollar. I'd take the guy to court and push for a full sentence.*

**Do we see the point? How great is our sin against God as compared to that person's sin against you? Our sin was so bad that it took the death of His Son to forgive it. Our sin was so great that we deserved to spend eternity in hell to pay the price. Now, think about that person that you are unwilling to forgive. How do you think your attitude looks to God, after He has forgiven you so much?**

#### Study Notes on Matthew 18:

Verse 21: Peter was being rather generous in his suggestion. The Rabbinical teaching was three times.

Verse 32: "Wicked slave" could also be translated "evil-hearted wretch," "contemptible slave", "scoundrel." Pretty harsh words.

Verse 35: "from your heart" could be translated, "with all your heart," or "heartily forgive."

Each of you take a sheet of paper go sit in a place where no one can see what you are writing. Now, write out the names of people you need to forgive. Although you can't always change the attitudes of others about you, you can deal with your own attitudes toward others. Are you willing to ask God to help you forgive those on your list? If so, commit the matter to God and tear up the list. This can be a tremendously freeing experience. When the grudges try to come back, tell God again that you forgive them. It's over. But we must ask God's help each time the feelings of bitterness and anger come over us. Only then can we be free inside.

(Teacher, I designed the lesson to end here. Yet, I felt that point D needed to be addressed as well. If time is running short, don't try to squeeze it in. Close with the above activity and leave "D" for next week.)

## D. What If My Heart Refuses To Forgive?

Still in your small groups, imagine that your best friend comes to you and asks, "Remember how Nick spread that vicious rumor about me, with the result that now everyone at school thinks I'm homosexual? I'll never be able to clear myself and my social life is ruined. But I'm trying to follow Jesus by forgiving this creep, I mean, Nick. I want to forgive him, but every time I see him my blood pressure skyrockets and my stomach churns. Oh, I could say the words, 'I forgive you,' but my emotions keep saying 'No way.' How can I forgive Nick from my heart?"

As a group, come up with some good advice for your friend. (Then, share with the entire group.)

### 1. Leave the judging to God.

*"Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.'"*  
(Rom. 12:19,20)

Part of our pain is that this person got away with it, while we suffered. But according to God's Word, he didn't get away with it. Either in this life or in eternity, this wrong will be righted.

### 2. Look below the surface.

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

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

When Jesus saw the multitudes, He had compassion on them. All you can see is that she stole your best friend. But have you ever considered how her despicable character will pay off in the long run? She’s probably headed for a miserable life. And have you ever considered what kind of home life may have led to her actions? Perhaps she is desperately seeking the attention she never got at home. If you had grown up like her, perhaps I’d be living the same way she is. We don’t know what all a person may struggle with. Beneath the surface, you might find a scared, lost sheep, looking desperately for meaning in life.

*ILLUSTRATION: Stephen Covey changed his attitude when he peeked below the surface. He boarded a New York subway one Sunday Morning to find a peaceful setting, everyone quietly reading or resting. But mahem 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. Says Stephen, “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 paper and creating chaos, wouldn’t you be ready to strangle this unconcerned man?**

*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.” (Stephen R. Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Simon and Schuster, 1990, pp. 30,31.)*

What would that have done to your irritation? You see, you don’t know what lurks beneath the surface that resulted in someone’s obnoxious behavior or hurtful comments. This is another reason we need to leave the judging to God. We only see a small part of the big picture.

### **3. Reflect on the extent of Jesus’ forgiveness. (Eph. 4:31,32)**

Our sin against God put Jesus on the cross. Yet, He forgave us. Shouldn’t that motivate to me deal with much lesser wrongs?

### **4. Ask God to do a supernatural work in your heart.**

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

*ILLUSTRATION: Corrie Ten Boom suffered under the merciless treatment of Nazi prison guards during World War II. The loss of time, painful memories, confinement, lice, and the resulting death of her sister could have left her with a bitter heart. But one day, long after the war, she found herself face to face with one of the former guards. In that moment, God gave her the power to forgive him for all he had done.*

**ILLUSTRATION:** *Ted, a tenth grader, hated Larry. Larry was a bully who enjoyed humiliating the smaller Ted, sometimes even kicking him. But after Ted received Christ, he confessed to God that he hated Larry, and asked for His help. Things were fine, until he saw Larry in class. Ted imagined himself hanging Larry by a noose. But then God reminded him, “forgive Larry.” Ted confessed his thoughts and asked God again for help. After going through this cycle of hating and confessing a couple of times, Ted no longer struggled with hate.*

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## CONCLUSION

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Lead in prayer, allowing time for students to ask God for help in forgiving those who have wronged them.

### Sharpening Your Ax Understanding Bible Words (Part 1)

I hear someone whining, “Do I have to read this stuff?” “Give me a snazzy activity or illustration, but please don’t make me think!” But we must think. All our fancy communication devices are useless (or harmful) if we have no truth to communicate. “Sharpening Your Ax” hones your truth-finding skills. Don’t skip these discussions!

I often run across words that are either unclear to me, or deserve further study because of their importance to the passage or topic. Like the word “forgiveness” in this lesson. Here are some strategies for getting at the meaning of words, and some pitfalls (next lesson) to avoid. (Note: I don’t use all of these strategies for every word. Often one will suffice. Nor do I always apply them in this order.) **Skip the shaded portion if you don’t know Greek or Hebrew.**

1. **Look it up in a standard English dictionary.** If the translators of your modern, accurate translation (such as the NASB or NIV) painstakingly chose that English word as the best translation of the Greek or Hebrew, it sometimes pays to know clearly what the English word means.
2. **See how other versions translate it.** When translations disagree, I realize that the original word may have more than one meaning, and translators must make a judgment call based on the context and other considerations. My New Testament in 26 Translations comes to my rescue here.
3. **Look it up in your Strong’s Concordance.** There are several Greek words that can be translated “forgiveness”. Strong’s lets you know which Greek word is used in your text. Then, if you turn to a resource like Vine’s (see below) you will know which Greek word to focus on. It also gives a brief definition and other ways the word has been translated. If you want to trace the word’s usage in the Bible further, Strong’s will give you every verse where the English word “forgiveness” is used. (What a handy tool! Another plus: other word study tools are keyed to Strong’s.)
4. **Consult a Bible Dictionary.** My New Bible Dictionary gave me an overview of “forgiveness” in the Old and New Testaments. Bible Encyclopedias will give you even more help. I’ve also used Vine’s Expository Dictionary. The three volume Dictionary of New Testament Theology is great, but gets pretty heavy for those without theological training. Those with a knowledge of the original language will consult such Greek tools as the Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek Lexicon, for

basic definitions. I have Kittel's massive 9 volume set, but only drag out a volume as a last resort. If you want to track a Greek word through the New Testament, you'll need The Englishman's Greek Concordance. For those who know Hebrew, there is Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, and the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.

5. Go to your commentaries. Sometimes, I take this step before I consult my Strong's or dictionaries. If my commentaries and translations all concur on the meaning of a word, I may see no need to go further. If, however, a commentary convinces me that the meaning could easily go two or more ways, or that the word probably doesn't mean what I first thought it did, I may simply chunk that verse for a clearer, non-controversial passage. If, however, I'm stuck with the passage, I grab my pick and go mining in my dictionaries.
6. Use your mind. Just as one English word can mean different things in different contexts ("*I'm running to town.*" "*He ran out of gas.*" "*Drat, a run in my hose!*") so it is with Greek and Hebrew words. Once you know the possible definitions (from your bible dictionary or suggestions from commentators), decide which one you think fits best in the context of the verse you are considering. If your commentary disagrees, wonder why it would disagree. After all, the commentator had to go through the same process you're going through right now. When it comes to deciding which definition fits best, the context rules. But also weigh in such factors as which definitions occur most frequently in the Bible, or in the writing of that biblical author. Brilliant Greek and Hebrew scholars are capable of blundering on such judgments. If the commentary doesn't make sense to you, perhaps it doesn't make sense!

NOTE: Save lots of money (sometimes half price or more) by purchasing these expensive tools through "Christian Book Distributors" (P.O. Box 7000, Peabody, MA 01961-7000).



***FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM***  
***"MAKING FRIENDSHIPS LAST: TWO ESSENTIAL KEYS"***  
***(PART II)***  
***(Lesson 2)***

**BIG IDEA: GOD WANTS US TO ASK FORGIVENESS WHEN OTHERS HAVE SOMETHING AGAINST US.**

**PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS STUDY UNDERSTANDING BOTH WHEN AND HOW THEY SHOULD ASK FORGIVENESS OF PEOPLE. ALSO, THEY SHOULD BE MOTIVATED TO PUT IT INTO PRACTICE.**

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## INTRODUCTION

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*ILLUSTRATION: Have you ever noticed that you can go on vacation to the same place on two different occasions, with one time being the time of your life and the other a total waste? Often the difference has nothing to do with where you were going, and everything to do with the people you were with. Delightful people can make an otherwise boring trip into a delight. Irritating people can ruin the grandest of occasions. If you think of it, much of our happiness depends on the people we are with and our ability to relate to them.*

**Quality relationships are central to our happiness.**

*ILLUSTRATION: But many people seem to have difficulty keeping relationships over the long haul. In America, about half of the people who get married will end up divorced. And of those who stay together, how many continue to enjoy their relationship?*

**Given enough time, friends will eventually do things that hurt each other, whether they mean to or not. For friendships to last, you must master two biblical principles that help us deal with hurt. Last week we covered the first: "Learn to Forgive." (You may wish to get some input on how they have either applied, or had difficulty applying last week's lesson.) But sometimes the problem isn't with others who have hurt you. Sometimes you have hurt others. Today we will talk about how to clear this roadblock to keeping long-term friendships.**

### PRAYER

## GET GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

*21 "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'*

*22 "But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the hell of fire.*

*23 "If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,*

24 *"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)*

**Group Discussion:** Imagine that a girl comes to you and says that she has said something that hurt her best friend. "I cut her with my words, but she deserved it" she tells you. "Now she won't talk to me." What would you advise the person to do?

Now open your Bibles to Matthew 5:21-24 to find what Jesus taught concerning situations such as this. (Focus on verses 23 and 24). Discuss, "Why did Jesus compare this to presenting your offering at the altar?"

(Teacher, you may want to have them divide into groups of 4 to read the passage together and discuss the previous question. This gets them into thinking about the Bible for themselves. My thought concerning the offering is that it shows the importance and priority of reconciling yourself to your brother. For a Jew at the time of Christ, presenting offerings was a central part of their worship. But God seems more interested in being reconciled to your brother. Bottom line: Don't imagine that God is thrilled with your church attendance and service if have made no effort to mend that broken relationship.

## THINK BEFORE YOU ACT

**DISCUSSION:** Have your youth evaluate the following statements. Are they proper applications of the teaching of Jesus we just read? (Teacher, try to evaluate whether or not the discussion is working better in small groups or with the group as a whole. If just one or two have the boldness to speak in a large group, it may be better to divide into small groups. If some are terrified to speak out loud before the group, assure them that you will not require it of them.)

**Statement #1** - *"I've been secretly jealous of Jan, so I'd better ask her to forgive me."* (**Bad idea**, unless the jealousy was obvious to the person. Jesus says "that your brother has something against you." If the person does not know you have been jealous, then she has nothing against you. Your sin is only against God, so confess it to Him. Guys, confess your lustful thoughts to God, not to that girl you can't get off your mind!)

**Statement #2** – *"I don't need to seek reconciliation because I didn't really do anything wrong. He just understood me the wrong way."* (**Bad approach**. Jesus didn't say only if "your brother has reason to be against you." He said simply "that your brother had something against you.")

**ILLUSTRATION:** Steve played trumpet for a high school marching band. As section leader, he was in charge of a small group of trumpet players.. Early one summer morning they were marching on a practice field and Steve noticed what he thought was a piece a grass or dirt on a girl's leg. "Get that ugly thing off your leg!"he teased. But it wasn't a piece of dirt. It was a wart. She wore a bandaid the rest of the year. Steve didn't purposely hurt her, but she was hurt. And as a Christian, he asked forgiveness.

**Statement #3** - "O.K., I'm sorry. I was wrong. I got mad. But if you hadn't called me an idiot, I wouldn't have done it." (**Bad approach.** Rather than simply admitting the point in which he was wrong, he pointed out the other person's fault and put the blame on him. Sometimes we react this same way to our parent's criticisms. Mom: "Why did you come home late tonight?"

Son: "If you didn't make me work so long in the garden, I wouldn't have stayed so long."

**Statement #4** - "I would tell Pete that I am sorry, but it wouldn't do any good. I know he wouldn't forgive me." (**Wrong again.** Jesus didn't say to seek reconciliation only if we think the other person will forgive.)

(If discussion is going well, you may ask another question: "What hinders us from asking forgiveness?" This may help them find the root problem that keeps them from applying this truth.)

### **III. TAKE THESE HELPFUL HINTS**

*Ask youth to write on a sheet of paper the initials of one or more people they think have something against him or her. (Author's note: As I write this, I realize that I have some people who have something against me. I will make plans to clear this up as soon as possible. We need to be open with youth that we are not perfect and are applying this at the same time that they are.)*

"Now, if you want to follow Jesus' teaching concerning these people, here are a few hints as to how to go about it. If you have other ideas, please let us know."

#### **A. Try to find a time and place that are appropriate.**

Usually, one on one is best.

#### **B. Word your apology so that it reflects true sorrow.**

Bad: "I blew it. But so did you!"  
"I'm sorry that you took me wrong."

Better: "When I got mad at you this weekend, I said some horrible things to you. I was wrong. I'm sorry. Can you find it in your heart to forgive me? Our relationship is important to me." (Of course, if the problem is only a misunderstanding, you may have nothing to confess. But it is still important that you seek to clear up the misunderstanding.)

#### **C. Avoid writing a letter if possible.**

Letters can document things to be later used against you. Letters can be misunderstood easier than a conversation. Letters do not allow the other person to immediately

respond, should they want to.

## D. Make it a way of life.

Learn to clear up problems as they happen. In this way, you don't have to worry with problems for days, or even years. A clear conscience is a wonderful thing!

*ILLUSTRATION: A university student felt that the ability to forgive others and to ask forgiveness was so important to a long-term relationship that he looked for this quality in a girl that he was attracted to. You see, he knew that in a long term relationship such as marriage would inevitably produce many misunderstandings and hurts. He wanted someone who, as a habit of life, try to clear up these hurts as they happened, rather than building lists of wrongs in her mind. When he saw that she worked on reconciliation with those who had done her wrong, he was impressed. Eventually, he married her!*

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## CONCLUSION

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(If you have one or more illustrations of how you have pursued reconciliation, use them here. A failure may also be appropriate. Youth need examples of a real person seeking to follow Jesus. Your examples may do more to motivate them than any other illustration you could come up with.)

With heads bowed and eyes closed, I want you to think of your relationships. Some of you can't seem to keep a friend because of either refusing to forgive, or hurting people and failing to clear things up. Others of you do pretty well with your friends, but you can't handle your family. Could you ask God for the power to become a relationship healer rather than a relationship killer?

(Give them a chance to pray, and to ask God for the power to approach the people with whom they need to seek reconciliation.)

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## Sharpening Your Ax Understanding Bible Words (Part 2)

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Watch out for these common pitfalls in word studies:

1. **The "This is the definition I like best" syndrome.** The purpose of a word study is to determine what the author meant in the context he wrote. Don't fall for the temptation to take the definition that best fits your purpose, or that you personally like, and read it into the context.
2. **The "Look where this word came from" obsession.** Some preachers love to tell about the history of a word, and derive their definition from that history. The bible dictionaries will often tell the development of the word from the classical period through Bible times. Don't use an earlier meaning to define a later! Words can change meaning drastically over time. For example, our

word nice came from the Latin word *nescius*, which meant “ignorant!” Please don’t confuse that older meaning with my comment that “you are nice.” D.A. Carson uncovers lots of similar fallacies in Exegetical Fallacies. Heavy reading for a lay person, but great for serious students.

Think of it this way. Imagine you’re an archeologist (okay, imagine you’re Indiana Jones) living in the 25<sup>th</sup> century. You uncover a late 20<sup>th</sup> century newspaper and run across the unfamiliar words “nice” and “refrigerate.” Recalling that “nice” comes from the Latin word *nescius*, you conclude that they are calling people idiots. Dividing “refrigerate” into its component parts (“re”-to do again; “frigerate” – related to “frigid”) you conclude that this device cools only things that have already been cooled once. Both conclusions are erroneous. Yet both conclusions are frequently made by preachers studying biblical words. [Exception: when a Greek word is used only once in the New Testament (Called ‘hapax legomena’. You may run across the term in commentaries), and we can’t find it in the extra-biblical literature of the time, looking to its history might be our only option.]

3. The “I’m pretty smart” head trip. A pet peeve of mine: preachers who wax eloquent on the history of a word, the component parts of a word, and the tense of a word, only to conclude that it means precisely what an ordinary reading of my English translation indicated it meant in the first place. If you do this, the .001% of your youth who aspire to be linguists will doubtless squeel with delight and rush the stage after the lesson. But for the rest, it only confirms that the Bible is boring and that they should have never brought their friend.

My study of forgiveness took me through several reference tools. Out of all that study, my youth heard, "Forgiveness means not getting even on the outside, or holding grudges on the inside." I never see a biblical author using precious teaching time to pursue academic interests that have no profit for the hearer. Use such material only when it helps clarify the meaning of the text.

**FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM**  
**(LESSON 3)**  
**"THE BIG KEY TO MAKING FRIENDS"**

(Note: The "Big Idea" and "Purpose" are only to help you as you prepare the lesson. Don't say these to the students!)

**BIG IDEA: GOD WANTS US TO BECOME "OTHER CENTERED" RATHER THAN "SELF CENTERED" IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS.**

**PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY WITH THIS STUDY MOTIVATED TO SHOW INTEREST IN AND CONCERN FOR OTHERS.**

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**INTRODUCTION**

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**Large Group Discussion:** Not considering your salvation, what do you think will be your two most important decisions in life? (The ideas given will almost certainly include 1) The choice of husband or wife and 2) The choice of a job.) "In order to be successful and happy in marriage and work, what skills will be most important?"

*ILLUSTRATION: In marriage, of course, relational skills will be primary. But many fail to realize that the ability to master a trade is not the only skill people need to be successful in their work. According to one book, "Of 5 people who lose their jobs, 2 will have failed because of the lack of skills. Three will have failed because of the inability to work with people."*

Yet, isn't it strange that almost all of our training in school is for the mastery of academics and vocational skills, with little or nothing on the mastery of relationships? Yet it is these relational skills that will, to a large part, determine your success and happiness in the main areas of life.

In our last two meetings, we discussed two keys to maintaining long term relationships -- forgiving others and seeking reconciliation. In this lesson we will discuss what may be the most important principle for making friends. So let's pray for wisdom as we begin.

**PRAYER** Let some youth lead out in prayer for the session. Suggest that they especially pray that God will help them to honestly confront their own weaknesses.

Although at the end we will sum up the lesson in one big key, it may be best to look at two biblical principles separately, which will later be entwined.

**I. TREAT PEOPLE THE WAY YOU WANT TO BE TREATED.**

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

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION:** Let's reflect on this profound truth for a moment. How do you want others to treat you? Divide into small groups with a leader who can take notes with pen and paper. Have your leader make two lists:

List #1) What do you look for in a friend? (How do you want others to treat you?)

List #2) What attitudes and actions do you not like in people who try to relate to you. This will again help you see how to positively treat others.

(After sufficient time have the recorder of each group read their lists.) This is how you want others to treat you and not to treat you. This is how Jesus says you should treat others. Do you want more and better friendships? Treat others the way you like to be treated.

Now think about *your* relationships. Are there areas where you are not treating others the way you wish to be treated? (You may want to give youth a few moments to write down these areas in their action points.)

## **II. LOVE PEOPLE, TAKING AN INTEREST IN THEIR INTERESTS AND CONCERNS. [Have someone slowly read "The Love Chapter" (I Cor. 13)]**

Note from the passage how love is other centered, not self centered. Love "does not seek its own," is not in a relationship to get, but to give. "Love is kind," sensitive to the needs of others. It is not a feeling that comes and goes, but attitudes and actions we are to apply to our relationships.

But many people approach relationships from the opposite viewpoint. Rather than taking an interest in others, they try to get others interested in themselves. They try to impress others, and desperately try to let people know how great they really are. But instead of attracting friends, they turn others away by their attitude.

*ILLUSTRATION:* Owen D. Young, a noted lawyer and business leader, put it this way, "People who can put themselves in the place of other people, who can understand the workings of their minds, need never worry about what the future has in store for them."

**Do you spend time reflecting on the interests and needs of your family, your schoolmates? If not, you should be concerned about your future.**

*ILLUSTRATION:* Theodore Roosevelt, the very popular 26th president of the United States, was an expert at applying this principle. He could have impressed other people with his great knowledge and experiences. But instead, he took a sincere interest in others, as is consistent with I Corinthians 13. Whenever he was expecting a guest the next day, he would read the night before on a topic in which the guest would be particularly interested. In this way, he could talk about what interested the other person. His personal servant, James E. Amos, wrote a book about him entitled, "Theodore Roosevelt, Hero to His Valet." In the book, Mr. Amos tells of his wife asking the President about a certain bird, a Bobwhite, that she had never seen. Later, the wife received a call from the President himself. He said that a Bobwhite was outside her window and she could look out and see it. It's little actions like this that show we care, that we are concerned with the interests of others, not absorbed with our own interests.

**This principle can not only revolutionize personal relationships. It can also revolutionize**

**your impact on others.**

**ILLUSTRATION:** A youth minister in California was failing to reach a certain group of youth. One day, he ate a meal with them. He began to talk to them about things he thought all youth were interested in: sports and music. But they seemed disinterested. Finally, he asked, "What do you guys do?" One of them, with a sparkle in his eye, said, "We like to fish." So he began to talk to them about fishing. When they had extra time, they liked to fish. They probably read fishing magazines and talked about fishing lures and the best places to fish. The wise youth minister organized a fishing trip for his group. He knew that if he took an interest in their world, they might take an interest in his spiritual world.

**ILLUSTRATION:** In fact, one of the best personal evangelists I know, Joseph Aldrich, wrote a book called *Lifestyle Evangelism*. In this book, he says that a big key to personal evangelism is taking a sincere interest in other people. He took an interest in an engineer, asking him about his work and letting the man show him around his workplace. "I became an engineer," says Aldrich. "He became a Christian." Take an interest in your non-Christian friends, and they may take an interest in Christ.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Dale Carnegie wrote a tremendous book on relationships entitled, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Although not a specifically Christian book, Carnegie did massive research into the relational traits of successful people. Some of my illustrations from this series come from Carnegie. But after all his research into people's lives, past and present, he found one particular principle that he called "The Big Key." Are you ready for the Big Key to relationships that Carnegie found in all his research. Here is how he stated it: "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."

**Hint: Say the underlined statement slowly, perhaps repeating it. This is the heart of the message.**

**Haven't you seen that? Those who are most absorbed in themselves, desperately seeking to impress others, end up turning people off.**

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## CONCLUSION

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As we near the close of this lesson, I want to challenge you to not just be hearers, but to be doers of the Word. Many of us can quote Jesus' statement, "And just as you want men to treat you, treat them in the same way." And most of you may be thinking, "Yea, yea, I know all that thinking of others stuff. I do it all the time. But guys, most of us are blind to our own problems. We justify our own behavior and refuse to see our own flaws. "I don't know why no one seems to like me," some of you might whine. But if you could take an honest look at yourself in the light of the principle we just covered, you would probably realize where the problem lies.

**Illustration:** Al Capone was one of the most dangerous men in Chicago. He led a notorious gang that took money illegally, and also took many people's lives. Yet, he did not see himself in this light. Capone once said, "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." Poor, poor Al. But can't you see that we justify our faults the very same way?

**We easily see problems with others, but we have a terribly hard time dealing with our own problems.**



**ACTIVITY:** In the light of this, write down on a sheet of paper some ways that you could begin applying these principles. First, do you take an interest in your family? Do you treat them as you would have them treat you? Do you regularly ask about their interests and concerns? When is the last time when you asked your parents or brothers how their day went? If you do ask, will they pass out? (Give them a moment to write.)

Second, how are you treating your friends? Do you talk to them about things they are interested in? (Give them a moment for reflection.)

## CLOSING PRAYER

Have a youth lead in prayer.

(Notes to teacher. These were powerful principles shared today, but principles that are not easily incorporated into life. In future weeks, help the youth dream of how your youth group would be if people truly applied these truths. Perhaps as you see youth during the week, ask if they have been able to apply this material. If a particular youth is always absorbed with himself or herself, only talking and never listening, you may wish to lovingly confront this person, challenging him or her to a better way of friendship.)

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## *SHARPENING YOUR AX FINDING ILLUSTRATIONS (PART I)*

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As I listen to a powerful speaker, I often ask myself, “Why is everyone hanging on his every word?” Many qualities and techniques set apart top speakers, but one stands out to me – *their consistent use of quality illustrations*. Top notch illustrations can clarify a difficult point, convince of truth, and motivate to action. As H. Grady Davis put it, “Illustrations are the glitter and sparkle that make people want to listen to our message.” (*Design For Preaching*, p. 53)

Just think of all the vivid illustrations Jesus used. The absurd: a camel squeezing through the eye of a needle. The vivid: Pharisees compared to whitewashed tombs. The emotional: a gracious, loving father throws a party for his wretched son who had foolishly spent his inheritance. Jesus could have simply stated the bottom line of each truth: “It’s hard for the wealthy to enter the kingdom.” “Don’t be a hypocrite.” “God loves sinners.” Instead, he made wild comparisons and told unforgettable stories that delighted (or enraged!) His listeners and drove truth into their hearts. We would be wise to follow in His steps.

*So where can we find good illustrations? In general, don’t just look for illustrations for next week’s message. Consistently gather illustrations for a lifetime of messages. Become a scavenger for wisdom, seeking God for insight on finances, personal spiritual growth, health, relationships, professional growth, etc. As He grows you in these areas, record the illustrations you find and the way God is changing your life. For the rest of your life, you can draw from this wealth to teach others. “Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer;...” (Prov. 30:24,25) Are you storing up illustrations for the future?*

1. **Your spiritual life.** Students want to know how you struggle with the truths you teach. Your failures encourage them to keep going in spite of theirs. Your victories show them the Christian life is livable. I remember very little of my Sunday School classes growing up. But I vividly remember one of my teachers telling us how he attempted to live out his faith in the workplace. Before teaching a lesson, ask God to reveal to you how you are growing in that area. Let your students into your life! (To be continued...next lesson)

***FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM  
THE POWER OF ENCOURAGEMENT  
(Lesson 4)***

**BIG IDEA: GOD WANTS US TO DEVELOP A LIFESTYLE OF ENCOURAGING OTHERS.**

**PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS STUDY WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF BIBLICAL ENCOURAGEMENT AND THE MOTIVATION TO BEGIN ENCOURAGING OTHERS.**

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**INTRODUCTION**

**The Importance of Relationships**

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*ILLUSTRATION: You would think that Mike Tyson, at one time the heavy weight boxing champion of the world, would have been happy with life at the time his career was peaking. Yet, the loss of his mother and trainer affected him deeply. Tyson stated at that time:*

"I'm doing well, but when it comes down to it, who really cares? I like doing my job, but I'm not happy being victorious. I fight my heart out and give it my best, but when it's over, there's no Cus (his trainer) to tell me how I did, no mother to show my clippings to."

*ILLUSTRATION: And Tyson is not alone in his heartbreak with relationships. Some studies have shown that among American High School students, 50% of the entire student body has no meaningful social life either inside or outside of school. (James Dobson, Hide or Seek, p. 90)*

Why are people so defeated in their relationships? Sometimes people hate us because of our stand for Christ (John 15:18-20). But often our relationships suffer, not because of our Christian life, but because of our failure to apply God's principles of relationships. So far, we have covered 3 principles. Today we cover a fourth, one so important that if it is applied, it could revolutionize our personal lives and the life of our group. Today we will discuss how to "Encourage people with honest and sincere praise."

PRAY

**I. THE CHALLENGE TO ENCOURAGEMENT**

“Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 10:24,25.” (Have a youth read the passage.)

**24** *“...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,*

**25** *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.”*

*ILLUSTRATION: Are any of you into weightlifting? When working out on the bench press with free weights (not a machine), weightlifters usually call over a "spotter", a person who can pull the weight off if they can't complete the lift. But spotters are often "stimulators" as well as protectors. I loved the ones who would yell at me as I struggled with a heavy lift: "Go for it Steve! You can do it Steve! Come on, one more repetition!" But isn't it strange that the challenging, motivating words so common in sports (cheering your team, or pushing your teammates to their limits) are sometimes absent in our church and youth group, where our successes can impact eternity?*

This passage challenges us to stimulate our fellow believers to love and good deeds. Beyond getting our own spiritual act together, God urges us to find ways to encourage our fellow believers to hang in there with Jesus. In other words, when you go to church or your youth group meeting, don't just go to receive something. Go to give something to others.

But to begin actively encouraging others is a change for most of us. And it's never easy to start a new habit. Why is it so important?

**Study Note #1:** The Greek word for "stimulate" in vs. 24 is a strong word, which can also mean to provoke, incite, arouse, or stir up. It's more than just a casual "hang in there." You are doing something more to stir them up to love and good deeds.

**Study Note #2:** The Greek word for "encouraging" in vs. 25 can also mean to "appeal to, urge, exhort, encourage" (Cross reference Acts 16:40, II Corinthians 10:1, I Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 3:13, where the same Greek word is used.)

**LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION:** Let youth respond to this question. Perhaps they know of times in their lives when people encouraged them, and it made a difference. Or perhaps they have examples of how they have been able to encourage others.

## **II. THE REWARDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

Why is it so important to become an encourager?

### **A. Do you want friends?**

*ILLUSTRATION: As Dale Carnegie put it, "Here is a gnawing and unflinching human hunger, and the rare individual who honestly satisfies this heart hunger will hold people in the palm of his or her hand and 'even the undertaker will be sorry when he dies.'"*

*But how can this hunger be satisfied? According to Carnegie, "Give honest and sincere appreciation." We would never think of starving people physically, but we starve them psychologically every day. How many hard workers in the church are never appreciated or praised for their work? How*

many times do your friends, brothers, sisters or parents do something right, but no one compliments them. Some may be on the brink of discouragement, ready to throw in the towel and walk out on their unappreciative family or friends. And no wonder so many Christians don't know their gifts. How will they know they are good at something unless people give honest praise for good work?

**Are you low on friends? If people are walking around with this gnawing hunger inside, this craving to be appreciated, what do you think they will look for in a friend? Obviously, someone who appreciates them, an encourager.**

## **B. Do you want a happy spouse?**

*A study was done on wives who had left their husbands. Their number one reason for leaving? "Lack of appreciation."*

## **C. Do you want to make it in business?**

*Charles Schwab was paid one million dollars per year at his job. Not a bad salary. Why was he deemed so valuable to the company? In Schwab's own words,*

*"I consider my ability to arouse enthusiasm among my people the greatest asset I possess; and the way to develop the best that is in a person is by appreciation and encouragement. I believe in giving a person incentive to work. So I am anxious to praise but loath to find fault. If I like anything, I am hearty in my approbation and lavish in my praise."*

## **D. Do you want to bring out the best in others?**

**ILLUSTRATION:** *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."*

**If Dewey and James are on target, then the person who can meet this need has great power to influence others. Let me tell you about a study of some youth that put this to the test.**

**ILLUSTRATION:** *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 this group was encouraged about their performance, told that they were very fast.*

**How did the response of the instructor affect the children's speed? The first group ran slower and slower with each succeeding run. Yet the second group ran faster with each run. Apparently, the encouragement was a powerful motivator to better performance. If only the principle of Hebrews 10:24,25 were applied more in the church!**

*Here's how a principal applied it.*

**ILLUSTRATION:** *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.

One of the greatest feelings in the world is that you have positively impacted someone else's life. When she almost quit running track, you encouraged her to hang in there, and now she's one of the best. A friend had quit going to church, but you put in a call to encourage him that things just weren't the same without him. Now he inspires others. There's nothing like that feeling! Start encouraging others, and you will watch people blossom before your eyes.

### **III. THE WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

"O.K.," you say. "I wouldn't mind having more friends, getting set for a better marriage, making more money like Schwab, and knowing that my words have blossomed others. But where do I begin?"

**BRAINSTORM:** (You may wish to divide into groups to gather ideas on "how to encouraged others" and appoint a leader to report back to the entire group.)

#### **A. Say it!**

*Do you remember my earlier example of verbal encouragement in weightlifting. Begin to look for people doing something right, so that you can encourage them. Don't flatter. Flattery is telling people they are good at something when they're really not. Instead, look for opportunities to give people honest and sincere praise.*

*ILLUSTRATION: A book called The One Minute Manager has been very popular in America. In it, a successful manager tells an inquirer about his secrets of management. Here's one of his secrets: : when a person begins a new job in his company, he watches him closely for a period of time. Why? "To catch him doing something wrong" we assume. No. This manager watches closely to catch him doing something right, so that he has the opportunity to praise him. He found that reinforcing good behavior and skills with praise was one of the most powerful ways to bring out the best in his workers.*

*Do you work at a job where you could try this with new workers? What about a little brother or sister when they learn a new household responsibility? Try applying it with your friends and in the church. Have your radar on constantly, trying to catch people doing something right, so that you can say a word of praise.*

*ILLUSTRATION: A forty year old man still vividly remembers a remark from over 25 year ago, when his older brother commented, "When you wash the motorcycle, I don't see how you get it looking so good. I can't seem to do it that well." Maybe he said it in hopes that his brother would*

*clean the cycle every week! Whatever his motivation, something as simple as that left a big impression. Do you have a younger brother or sister? You may have no idea how you can mold their lives by simple compliments like these.*

**ACTIVITY:** Put your chairs in a circle, with one chair in the middle. The middle chair is “The Chair of Encouragement.” I’d like for Suzie (choose someone that people know well, so that students will have something good to say) to start us off. Come on, have a seat! None of us know what kind of week Suzie may have had. She might be on the brink of a nervous breakdown as far as we know. What are some things you could say about Suzie that would remind her of why she is special? Or perhaps there is something Suzie said or did for you that meant a lot, and you’d like to complement her for it. (Give several people time to share. This is not a time to be goofy, but to give honest and sincere praise. It can be a very meaningful experience. If you have time, ask a few others to come to the chair. This could continue for several future sessions. Don’t put someone up that no one knows, or that everyone hates!)

## **B. Write a Note!**

*ILLUSTRATION:* One pastor said that his secretary puts blank thank you cards on his desk. During the week, he tries to get rid of them.

*ILLUSTRATION:* Notes can be powerful. At a youth retreat, one of the girls got sick. The youth minister and a few youth wrote her a note to encourage her. The writers probably soon forgot all about the note, but years later she showed the youth minister a note that she still kept in her pocketbook. It was the same note!

## **C. Remember people's interests, names, and important events.**

If a people share a special prayer concern or an upcoming event in their lives, make a note to pray for them during the week and ask about the event after it happens. Remembering people's interests and special events is a way of telling them that their interests are important and they matter.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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We’ve gone a long way with one verse! (Repeat Hebrews 10:24,25.) Have you encouraged anyone today? This week? Write down a few names of people that you need to encourage about something, people you have caught doing something right. It could be your parents, a brother or sister, a church member or schoolmate. If they are in this room, don't let them leave without encouraging them. Who knows. Today you might begin to change their lives. And you may begin your new life as a people blossomer.

**Recommended Reading:** Bringing Out the Best in People, Alan Loy McGinnis, (Augsburg, 1985).

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## SHARPENING YOUR AX FINDING ILLUSTRATIONS (PART II)

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2. Those interesting circumstances you encounter. Where does Ken Davis get his illustrations? "...the resource of everyday life. As communicators dedicated to excellence, we must train ourselves to see and absorb these experiences rather than letting them pass us by." (How To Speak To Youth, p. 52) Sometimes using borrowed illustrations is like serving warmed over food. But you encounter interesting circumstances every week. Pray for eyes to see how these can become illustrations! Here's one from my life. What do you think it could illustrate?

*My color blindness sometimes gets me into trouble. One day I drank colored violet fertilizer, thinking it was clear water. Now I could easily call Poison Control for my small children. But this time, I meekly called for myself. "How old are you?" they asked. "Thirty five", I mumbled, thoroughly embarrassed.*

*No one else could use this illustration. But it delights my own youth, since they know me and my family. I could use this to illustrate "spiritual blindness." Just as I am color blind and can look at a color and not see it, so many can hear a wonderful presentation of the gospel and see no relevance to themselves whatsoever. A better explanation or more persuasive words won't help. Just as my color blindness gets me into trouble, so people's spiritual blindness gets them into trouble. And the only way to cure spiritual blindness is through prayer.*

*Always carry 4x6 cards in your scheduler or in your pocket. I can whip them out when reading the news, watching TV, or any time an illustration pops into my head. A few days ago, a couple of illustrations came to me as I prepared breakfast for my three-year-old twins. I spotted my scheduler within range, whipped out my cards, and captured both illustrations between second helpings of cereal. (Unfortunately, one twin promptly threw up on one of my cards. I never said it wasn't a battle!)*

*FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM*  
**"CHOOSE YOUR CLOSE FRIENDS CAREFULLY"**  
*(Lesson 5)*

**BIG IDEA: GOD WANTS US TO CHOOSE STRONG CHRISTIANS AS OUR CLOSEST FRIENDS.**

**PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS STUDY UNDERSTANDING THE NEED TO CHOOSE CLOSE FRIENDS CAREFULLY.**

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## INTRODUCTION

### “The Importance of Relationships”

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*ILLUSTRATION: Actress Kate Jackson played many parts, including sharing the lead role on the program Scarecrow and Mrs. King. You would think that her success would bring her great happiness. But one day she began to reevaluate success. Her conclusion? "It's not how much money I have.... Money doesn't make you happy-- I know that. ... The bottom line is how well you handle the relationships with people you know - your mother, father, sister, brother, husband, wife, kids - not how you handle the relationships with the millions of people who know you."*

**Do you believe that? People who sacrifice relationships to the god of success will probably achieve misery. Healthy relationships are extremely important. But people's relationships are hurting.**

*A survey of 34,000 people, age 7 to 16, asked the question, "What do you least look forward to at school in the coming year?" The number 1 response? "Loneliness."*

**Yet, most kids hope that one day they will have a successful marriage that will last a lifetime.**

*In a survey of over 3000 young people, 90% of the girls and 85% of the boys believe that when they marry, it will be for life. Yet, the sad reality is that about half of these marriages will end in divorce. And even those who stay together aren't immune to relational problems. One writer claims that less than six out of one hundred couples married over ten years have a fulfilling marriage.*

**We are hurting in our relationships. But there is hope! God in His Word gives us principles by which we can improve our relationships.**

**We have already covered 4 key principles. Today we cover one that has proven to have a major impact on people's lives. Good relationships begin with choosing the right friends from the start.**

**Let's pray as we get confront this crucial issue: (Let someone lead in prayer.)**

## **I. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHOOSING THE RIGHT CLOSE FRIENDS**

**I realize that the challenge to limit your friendships to certain kinds of people would get two thumbs down from some of you, if you were honest. “Hey, it’s hard enough to find anybody that I**



can hit it off with,” some of you might object. “Now you’re telling me I can’t hang around whoever I want to?” I know it’s a heavy principle, but please be open to some reasons God wants us to be choosy about our friends.

## A. Do you want to be wise?

Proverbs 13:20a says that *"He who walks with the wise grows wise..."*

**ILLUSTRATION:** 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? (Ask youth.) Microsoft. That’s the M.S. of MS Dos, Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Word. You get the picture. I don’t know all he did, legitimately or illegitimately, to reach the top, but one thing I do know, his middle school and high school friends and mentors were into computers. His interests were in computers, and he hung around people who were going somewhere in that field. There were no computer classes back then. So he and his friends took it upon themselves to teach themselves. By the eighth grade, he was writing programs and was able to break into a sophisticated computer system to get free computer time. Had he hung out with the party crowd, he would have never made it.

Where do you want to go in life? Are your friends going that direction? Do your closest friends challenge you to grow in wisdom and to make wise choices? If not, start looking around for some new friends.

## B. Do you want to avoid harm?

Proverbs 13:20b says *"...but a companion of fools suffers harm."*

Basketball star Kareem Abdul Jabaar once said, "Don't let them influence your opinions." Do your close friends have any direction in the way they are going?

(Note: This verse can either be translated "become evil" or "shall suffer harm.")

## C. Do you want to keep your morals?

I Corinthians 15:33 says *"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'"* Many will protest, "My friends have bad morals, but I don't let them influence me." But they do influence you, whether you realize it or not. Some studies have shown that as American children begin high school, their peers become a greater influence than their parents. Peer influence is one of, if not the most powerful influences on your life!

**ILLUSTRATION:** And your choice of friends can influence more than just you. An adult shared 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 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're not the only person who will pay the price for your choosing the wrong friends.

**CAUTION!** The Bible does not say that all of our acquaintances must be strong Christians. Jesus was called "a friend of sinners". One of the big problems with the Pharisees was that they totally

cut themselves off from sinners, thus keeping them from being able to help and influence a lost world. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Jesus had acquaintances who were not Christians. But his close friends, the ones He shared his heart with, the ones with whom He regularly spent quality time, were intensely spiritual.

## **II. A NEW APPROACH TO MAKING FRIENDS**

*Brainstorm: How do people end up with the wrong friends? (Probably they don't decide on day, "I think I'll make a move down the moral ladder. Hey, here's a group of people that can help me out!" Rather, we just happen to get to know each other through a sport or club or our neighborhood and a friendship spontaneously develops. If the group goes into drinking and drugs, then it's easy for me to follow as well.)*

*So, developing relationships in this way can lead to the wrong crowd. Rather than spontaneously developing close relationships with those that come our way, what is another way we could approach relationships?*

You can't help being influenced by people, but you can choose which people will influence you. Most people just drift into relationships with no purpose or direction. If they go off to college, they may join a club and discover that someone has common interests such as computers, soccer, or music. Or, they run across a person who has a compatible personality. From this, a friendship grows.

But the problem with this approach to friendships is that you initially know nothing of the person's general direction in life, spiritual interest, or morals.

A better approach would be to go to Christian meetings and church events and watch for the strongest Christians -- those with the strongest morals, those with qualities you wish to see in your own life. Get to know them and then find areas of interest and personality traits you have in common. In this way, you begin to choose friends rather than drift into relationships haphazardly. Don't just drift in and out of relationships. Decide who you want to be and where you want to go in life. Find people with those characteristics, heading the same direction, and take charge!

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## **CONCLUSION**

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Who are your friends? Are they the kind of people that you want to be? Do their lives challenge you to follow Christ more fully? If not, what will be your strategy for finding the right kind of friends? (You may wish to have youth individually write down their strategy -- what they will do with what they have learned.)

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### ***SHARPENING YOUR AX FINDING ILLUSTRATIONS (PART III)***

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3. Books, magazines, and newspapers. Newspapers contain new statistics, tragic stories, heroic stories. Just tear out the article, write down its source, designate a topic, and place it in your note card file. As I read my own books, I underline illustrations, flip to a blank page in the back and write, for example "Forgiveness, p. 38," "Missions, p. 52"). Some books end up with scores of illustrations noted in the back. I keep them stacked in one place until I can write up the illustration and put it in my file.

*Hint: Don't think of this recording time as drudgery. I'm so eager to get to the next book that I often hate taking the time to record the illustrations. But we remember so little of what we read. I've come to see my time recording illustrations as time reviewing what God has taught me through the book.*

*When I had a secretary, I just give her the books and newspaper scraps, letting her do the typing and filing. But alas, now I'm on my own.*

4. *Sermons.* *I often come home from church with a couple of illustrations scribbled on my bulletin. If your church has a good tape lending library, listen to tapes when you are doing other things. If you have a 20 minute commute to work, bring a tape and a little recorder (I use the small dictaphone recorder) so that you can save the illustration without having to write. Keep a recorder in the kitchen while you prepare and clean up from meals. You can catch top speakers on Christian radio and find some great material. (The dictaphone also helps me record random thoughts on messages when I travel alone.) I can type pretty well, so I use a dictaphone to type the illustrations whenever a convenient time comes around.*
5. *Youth ministry journals, magazines, and newsletters.* *Billy Beacham gets a youth newsletter that gives useful illustrations. He and his wife read material at night and circle illustrations that his secretary later records into his database.*
6. *Illustration and Quote Books.* *I don't regularly consult these books. But some are great on certain topics.*
7. *The Internet.* *I access a database called the "Electric Library" (Go electriclibrary from Compuserve, <http://www2.elibrary.com> if browsing the Web. Five dollars per month if you pay yearly) to give me access to hundreds of magazines, newspapers, etc. I can look up Tom Cruise, Forgiveness, or thousands of other topics. Then I can download and cut and paste to my document, or put the information in my illustration database.*

## ***FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM "TAME YOUR TONGUE" (Lesson 6)***

**BIG IDEA: CONTROLLING OUR WORDS IS ESSENTIAL TO MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS**

**PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS STUDY KNOWING SPECIFIC WAYS TO CONTROL THEIR TONGUES, AND MOTIVATED TO LIVE IT OUT.**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

### **THE INCREDIBLE POWER OF THE TONGUE**

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Years ago, children were often taught to reply to insults like this: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Regrettably, this saying is far from the truth. Words are incredibly powerful. Look at the following verses and behold the awesome power of the tongue (Ask for volunteers to read these verses when they are called upon to read.):

## 1 – Our words can bring death or life.

*“The tongue has the power of life and death...”*

Someone read Proverbs 18:21. How does the teaching of this verse compare with the above saying about sticks and stones? Far from simply breathing hot air when we speak, we are actually bringing death or life. “But they’re just words,” you might object. Let me give you some examples.

**Tip:** Before teaching this lesson, try to think of stories that illustrate words bringing either death or life.

Illustrations from your personal life are best, because they will have special interest to your youth and will help build relationships with your youth, since they will come to know you better through your personal illustrations.

*“Death” – One youth had attended church all his life, until he finally told his parents that enough was enough. The problem? The other youth in his Sunday School class cut him down because he went to a different school. He felt left out because they only talked about their own school events. Now in his 30’s, He seldom darkens the door of a church. The insensitive youth’s words pierced this sensitive guy like a sword, killing any spiritual interest he might have had. Their words killed him spiritually.*

*In the same way, Hitler’s motivating speeches brought physical death to thousands. But not only death results from the power of the tongue. It can also bring life.*

*“Life” - One day a schoolteacher asked the assistance of Stevie Morris, a blind student, to find a mouse in her classroom. For the first time, someone had appreciated Stevie’s unusual ability to hear. This event changed his life. He began to concentrate on his assets rather than his handicap, and became one of the great pop singers and songwriters of the 70’s. His stage name is Stevie Wonder. His teacher’s words brought him life.*

## 2) The tongue can destroy relationships (Proverbs 18:19).

*“An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.”*

If your personal testimony illustrates how someone’s words brought you spiritual life, share it. Then, divide the youth into small groups and let them share illustrations of how they have seen words either help or destroy people. They may remember how someone’s words changed their lives, for good or ill. They may remember times when their own words helped or hurt others. If your group is open to share with the entire group, don’t divide up. Just open up the discussion.

3) God compares the tongue to an untamed fire, set ablaze by hell, full of deadly poison (James 3:1-12).

*“The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.” (Jms. 3:6)*

So, there can be no doubt as to the power of our spoken words. How, then, can we tame the

negative and harness the positive power of the tongue to improve our relationships?

It's usually easy to spot communication errors when others make them. It's more difficult to see our own. So, let's look at some of the things we hate in others, then try look at ourselves to see if we are doing the same thing. I'll guarantee you that if you honestly look at your life, several of these truths will grab you. Star the most relevant ones and put them in your Action Points at the end of the message.

### Don't you hate it when...

#### I. ...people say the wrong thing at the wrong time? (Proverbs 15:23)

*"A man finds joy in giving an apt reply--*

*And how good is a timely word!"*

**Large group discussion:** Do any of you have humorous examples of verbal blunders you have either made or heard? How do you think we can avoid this problem?

#### A. Think before you speak.

Ask yourself, how will this person respond to what I am about to say?

*ILLUSTRATION:* A high school band member was practicing marching with his squad early one morning. Seeing a small speck on a girl's leg, he quickly quipped, "Get that ugly piece of grass off your leg." But it wasn't a piece of grass. It was a mole! She kept a bandaid over it from then on. And no matter how much he apologized and said he was just kidding, the damage had been done.

*ILLUSTRATION:* On the positive side, Winston Churchill often labored hard to word, not just his speeches, but his apparently casual remarks. Someone said that Churchill spent the best years of his life preparing impromptu speeches! But his words were powerful, and influenced his world.

**Timely, well-crafted sentences can touch lives.**

*ILLUSTRATION:* Jim Elliot, missionary to a primitive tribe, once said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." He was later martyred for his faith. But his powerful words live on, and motivate others to radical service for Christ.

*ILLUSTRATION:* One youth minister, when someone asks him a favor, replies, "For you brother, anything." It really makes you feel special.

**So, give thought to your words. Plan them. They are powerful.**

#### B. Be sensitive to the people you are speaking with.

**Try to put yourself in their shoes and predict their response to your words.**

*One lady was intrigued with children's traits based on birth orders. In a conversation with my wife and I, she said that first born children tend to be smarter and middle children less intelligent. She didn't realize that both my wife and I are middle children!*

### **C. Notice people's response.**

**Isn't it amazing how many times you can tell that someone is obviously either bored or offended by what someone else is saying, yet the obnoxious offender keeps speaking on the same subject, oblivious to the listener's reaction?**

**...people will never admit it when they are wrong (Proverbs 29:9)?**

*“If a wise man goes to court with a fool, the fool rages and scoffs, and there is no peace.”*

*ILLUSTRATION: Thinking back on his life, one Christian leader considers one of his worst moments as a time when he tried to cover up a mistake rather than admit it. People would have respected him more had he said, "You are right. I was wrong. How do you think I could best correct this mistake?"*

**But sometimes we will have disagreements that can't be easily solved. What are some hints to help us make our disagreements produce more light than heat? Ideas:**

#### **1. Search for an element of truth you can both agree on.**

**Example:** Sometimes people say that they are not Christians because there are so many hypocrites. The next time somebody brings up this objection, rather than start a heated argument, join them in their disgust. “Yeah man, people who say one thing and do another really burn me up. In fact, Jesus reserved some of His harshest words for religious hypocrites.” (You see, now I'm identifying with the guy. We agree on something!) But don't wait for all people who claim to be Christians to be consistent. One of Jesus' own disciples was a hypocrite. They'll always be around. But Jesus was no hypocrite. He died for what He believed. I suppose the real issue here is what we will do with Jesus.

#### **2. Seldom say "never" or "always".**

**Teaching Hint:** For some of the following points, give the youth the bad and good statements before you give away the principle. Ask them which statement is better and why. Thinking it through themselves should help them to understand and retain the principles.

If my wife tells me, “You never work around the house!” what do I think of? The one time I did do something around the house lately! Don’t you get mad when your parents say you are “always” ungrateful, or you “never” clean up your room? If you don’t like others saying it to you, avoid it in your own conversation. Better wording - "It seems to me that you’ve not been doing your share of the house cleaning lately.”

### **3. Confront with "I feel like" rather than accusing of bad motives.**

Since we don't know another person's motives, it's better to say, "When you talk about me to other people, I get the feeling that you don't respect me," rather than, "You have no respect for me. I can see it every time you talk to others about me."

### **4. Deal with issues.**

Don't blast the person when it's not necessary.

*ILLUSTRATION:* We mentioned Winston Churchill earlier. Although he could greatly inspire people with his speeches, he apparently could hurt people as well. It is said that one day a lady scorned him, saying, “Sir, you are drunk.” He replied, “Yes, lady, and you are ugly, but tomorrow I will be sober.” If you thought up a clever comeback like that, would you use it, or have the restraint to keep it to yourself?

Bad - "You must be idiots to believe a lie like that." Better - "I believe there is another side to that issue that no one has discussed."

Master those hints and you can disagree more agreeably. Now back to “Don’t you hate it when...”

### **...people respond from emotion rather than reason (Proverbs 16:32)?**

*“Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.”*

*Help me out here. What are some ideas on controlling our outbursts. (example: count to 10 before replying...)*

### **...people talk about others behind their backs (II Corinthians 12:20)?**

*“For I am afraid that when I come...there may be...slander, gossip....”*

Ask, “Why do you think people gossip and slander?” (Possible answer: either because they do not like the person or they try to get others to like them by sharing juicy bits of information.) “Yet, what eventually happens to people who slander and gossip? (They end up in trouble and often drive people away. No one wants to share their deepest thoughts for fear that they will one day be made public. If I hear someone constantly running other people down, I know that he will someday do the same to me. I keep my distance. They can end up lonely and isolated.)

## People lie (Colossians 3:9)?

*“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices....”*

(Share your own insight or illustration here.)

## People talk too much (Proverbs 17:28, 10:19)?

*“Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.*

**Rx for the Blabber Mouth:**

- a. Become truly interested in other people, not just getting other people interested in you.
- b. Practice the "2/3 rule". Try to get others talking 2/3 of the time by asking open-ended (cannot be answered by a "yes" or "no") questions.
- c. Other ideas?

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## CONCLUSION

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How we control our tongues will determine much of the course of our lives. We ought to be willing to pay a high price to improve. Yet, most of us either ignore our faults or don't want to put forth the effort to change.

***ILLUSTRATION:** If you play the guitar, (or any instrument, or a sport like golf) you will remember how awkward it felt when you first tried to play it. Only with great effort and time were you able to reach the point where you could play with comfort and ease. Similarly, it's awkward to try to change lifelong habits of speech. It seems unnatural to try to get other people talking if your habit is to dominate the conversation. But with God's help, you can change habits that will bring a lifetime of rewards.*

**Which items stood out to you? Take a moment to transfer the starred items to your Action Points, so you can narrow down what God wants you to work on this week. If you see some good examples of these principles this week in your conversations (you will if you look for them), make sure to report back next week.**

**PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK:** Assign a group of youth to prepare a skit which illustrates all the wrong ways to communicate. (Don't you hate it when....") A lot of humor could be included, so have fun! Following the skit, you can ask the spectators to describe the types of poor



communication they saw. (Unless you have a strong skit team, your youth may not do this assignment with excellence on their own. They will do what's inspected, not what's expected. So call them in a couple of days to check on their progress, or set a time to watch them perform it before the next meeting.)

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## SHARPENING YOUR AX CHOOSING ILLUSTRATIONS THAT WORK

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*The difference between a decent illustration and just the right illustration is the difference between "lightning and a lightning bug." What are the qualities of great illustrations?*

1. *Accomplishes your purpose. If you are trying to clarify a truth, will your youth mentally respond to this illustration: "OK, now I see!" If my purpose is to motivate, does this illustration produce. If not, fire it.*
2. *Interesting. What makes an illustration interesting? "Temptation works on us much in the same way that a Venus Fly Trap lures an insect." Sure, it demonstrates how temptation works, but it flunks the interest value test. Every 5<sup>th</sup> grader knows about the plant. Interest value can come through:*
  - a) *Humor.*
  - b) *New information.* "Girls swoon over Tom Cruise, but who would have thought he struggled with dyslexia as a child."
  - c) *Relevant.* "According to this authoritative report, here's three steps to closer family relationships:..." *Touch on youth's greatest felt needs, and you've got a winner.*
  - d) *Surprising.* "Five of the worlds greatest financiers met that day. Within twenty years they had all committed suicide."
  - e) *Shocking.* "Who would have ever thought that this model citizen would have become a notorious gangster?"
  - f) *Concrete. Get as specific as possible. Choose real events over hypothetical. Use names and places.* "Riches don't buy happiness." *Kids believe it for exactly one hour a week, so that they can nod in approval during your Bible Study. But paint a vivid verbal picture of that wealthy actress who took her own life, that Fortune 500 CEO who suffers from depression, or the famous rock star who voices her disillusionment with life, and you're onto something.*
  - g) *Oriented to Youth. Do some research into the main interests, heroes, needs of youth. Illustrations of great interest to you may have no interest to your youth.*
  - h) *Oriented to your youth. Your above research into youth interests and heroes may only partially apply to your youth. Spend time getting to know their interests. Do surveys asking, "What are your favorite music groups?" "Your favorite athletes?" "Your areas of interest" (sports, fishing, cars, clothes, stock care racing, etc.) "Favorite TV shows," "Most Coveted Careers." Jesus pulled illustrations from the world of the people He ministered to. The more you understand the world of your students, the better you can illustrate truth from that world. Frankly ask your youth occasionally, "what types of illustrations do I use that you like best, like least?"*

## FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM "TAME YOUR TONGUE" (PART II) (Lesson 7 of "Relationships" series)

**BIG IDEA: CONTROLLING OUR WORDS IS ESSENTIAL TO MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS**

**PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS STUDY KNOWING SPECIFIC WAYS TO CONTROL THEIR TONGUES, AND MOTIVATED TO LIVE IT OUT.**

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**INTRODUCTION**  
**“Relational Skills Can Be Learned”**

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Last week we talked about the importance of our words. "Death and life," we found, "are in the power of the tongue." But in order to harness this great power for the good and guard it from causing destruction, we must recognize our faults, pray for God's help, and put forth effort. We can change.

*Illustration: Abraham Lincoln remains one of the most respected past presidents of the United States. Yet, he considered himself a miserable failure in relationships in his early years. He asked Mary Owens to marry him in 1837, but added, "My opinion is that you had better not do it." He was turned down and decided to never again think of marriage. Why? In his words, "I can never be satisfied with anyone who would be blockhead enough to have me." Yet, Lincoln grew and changed, mastering the art of relationships, enabling him to become one of the truly great men of all time.*

*Illustration: One day Benjamin Franklin's friend sharply rebuked him. "Ben," he said, "you are impossible. Your opinions have a slap in them for everyone who differs with you. They have become so expensive nobody cares for them. Your friends find they enjoy themselves better when you are not around." Franklin took the rebuke seriously and began to work on his relational abilities. The effort paid off in later years as he became one of the most sought out, respected men of his time.*

**SKIT: But a first step to work on relational skills is to recognize where we fall short. Last week we thought about the need to tame our tongues. As you watch the skit (the one assigned last week), look for faults in their conversation. Be prepared to discuss your observations following the skit.**

**(Perform the skit and follow with discussion.)**

Today we will cover three final mistakes people make in their conversations. As we look at the following principles, star the areas that you will personally work on this week. Let's pray that God will give us insight and open hearts:

(Lead in prayer, or let others pray.)

**Don't you hate it when...**

**VII. ...PEOPLE TALK INCESSANTLY ABOUT THEMSELVES**

## **(Proverbs 27:2).**

*“Let another praise you, and not your own mouth;  
someone else, and not your own lips.”*

**Without giving names, how many of you know someone who always talks about himself? And don't you hate it when somebody constantly tops every experience you share with a bigger and better experience? Do people flock to his presence?**

*Remember Carnegie's key to friendships: "You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than in 2 years of trying to get other people interested in you."*

## **VIII. ...PEOPLE DWELL ON THE NEGATIVE (Proverbs 15:30)**

*“A cheerful look brings joy to the heart,  
and good news gives health to the bones.”*

*Two men walked near a building where one had been imprisoned during the Communist years. Unexpectedly, he ran to the building and embraced it, thanking Jesus aloud for the great times of communion with God he had experienced there.*

**How strange. Most people would have shirked back from the building, thinking only of their lost years and unfair treatment. But this guy had the ability to remember and dwell on the best. Often, we dwell on what we hate about school, our family, our church, seldom looking for the positive side.**

***ILLUSTRATION:** A young lady had been preparing for 9 months for the baby to which she would shortly give birth. But tragically, when the hour came, the baby was still born. She would never see her baby alive. A nurse suggested, "Do you want to be taken to another room, where you don't have to be near the other new mothers?" She replied, "No, I want to stay here and rejoice with the other mothers and their babies." Wow! what an attitude!*

***ILLUSTRATION:** Have you ever read the book of Philippians? The apostle Paul's delightful joy shines through each chapter. If you didn't know better, you'd think he was writing from Disney World. Does anyone know where he wrote the book from? (From prison.) But he had so much to be thankful for, that he saw his trials as small in comparison.*

**Begin to look at the bright side of things, and watch you family and friends desire to spend more time with you.**

## **IX. ...PEOPLE DON'T LISTEN (Proverbs 18:13).**

*“He who answers before listening--  
that is his folly and his shame.”*

### **A. The Importance of Listening**

For some people, listening is simply waiting for their turn to speak. They are more concerned with what they want to say next rather than what the other person is saying. Few of us seem to realize the importance of listening.

## B. How to Listen

**DISCUSSION:** Ask youth to share how they know when a person is not listening to him or her. Draw out keys to effective listening from these comments.

### 1. Give your undivided attention.

*Former Harvard professor Charles W. Eliot once said, "There is no mystery about successful business intercourse ... exclusive attention to the person who is speaking to you is very important. Nothing else is so flattering as that." Do you look at your parents and friends when they speak to you?*

### 2. Ask questions to clarify or expand on what the person is saying.

*Dale Carnegie writes, "So if you aspire to be a good conversationist, be an attentive listener. To be interesting, be interested. Ask questions that other persons will enjoy answering. Encourage them to talk about themselves and their accomplishments."*

**Let's practice this important skill. I'll say something, and someone follow with a question to clarify or expand on what I'm saying. (You may wish to do this with several statements, or let them practice in small groups. Odds are they won't pick up this valuable skill by simply hearing it.)**

*"Hey, you won't believe what happened yesterday at work! My boss called me to his office and gave me a raise!"*

*(Possible responses: 1- "Great news! What are you gonna do with all that money?" 2- "Did you have any idea that this was coming?")*

### 3. Periodically restate what the other person is saying in your own words.

**Counseling classes sometimes teach this skill. By putting people's thoughts in our own words -- "Are you saying that...?" -- we either demonstrate we understand the person or realize that we have missed the point.**

***ILLUSTRATION:** Although listening appears to be easy, it is actually an art that must be learned. Ted Koppel has for years hosted the popular t.v. program "Nightline." He is paid over*

*\$1,000,000.00 per year to interview important people and lead interesting conversations. Yet, he never writes out his questions beforehand. What then is the key to successful interviews? "I listen." Koppel says. "Most people don't. Something interesting comes along and whoosh! - it goes right past them."*

*But Koppel does not consider his ability to be purely natural. He says that he sharpened his ability to listen while travelling with Henry Kissinger as a reporter for ABC news.*

**I'm convinced that for many of you here, developing your listening skills could radically change your relationships. Sure, love is the most important thing, but one of the ways we show love in conversation is by attentive listening. Block out everything else and pay attention to that person who is trying to tell you something. For some of you, changing your conversational skills will pay off more than all the Algebra or History you will ever learn. While you are still in your small groups, try one more exercise.**

**One person reads the statement. The other restates it in her own words. Then reverse and let the other person try it.**

**Q – “That jock is so conceited. I’ve had it up to here with him!”**

**Restate –**

**Q – “I’m getting more interested in computers. Yesterday I spent three hours surfing the net.”**

**Restate –**

**Who knows, if you sharpen your listening skills, it may pay off one day like it did for Ted Koppel. Or, even more important, it will drastically improve your relationships with your friends and future mate.**

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## CONCLUSION

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**Lincoln, Franklin, and Koppel all learned the importance of conversational skills, and reaped tremendous benefits. In the introduction I suggested that you write down a couple of things during this message that you can work on applying this week. Look back over your outline and see if there’s anything else you need to note. Transfer your main applications to your Action Points section. As you talk to your family and friends this week, and as you overhear conversations, think about these principles. Bring us back your observations next week.**

**Pray now individually that you can begin working on your action points this week.**

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## *SHARPENING YOUR AX ILLUSTRATING WITH BIOGRAPHY*

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*I love people illustrations. And when I glance at the magazines in the grocery store check out line, I realize I’m not alone. Think: People Magazine. People are fascinated with how movie stars live, how Schwarzenegger works out, how models diet. Put this fascination to work for you as you teach.*

*Contemporary – Josh McDowell read a biography of Basketball superstar “Magic” Johnson with his own teenage children, to show them the result of a life with no sexual standards. Mention certain movie stars, sports heroes, and musicians, and you’ve grabbed their attention. If you have time to*

*familiarize yourself with all the trendy teen idols, fine. But I try to stick with figures that have proven themselves over the years and are known equally by youth and adults. This way, I can get more mileage out of my illustrations. Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Tom Cruise, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bill Gates, Michael Jordan, Pat Riley. All are respected for success in some field. Their lives have much to say to us. Youth love to hear how Spielberg didn't fit in as a Middle Schooler, and finally found the photography club as his "leper colony" in high school. You can find examples of wisdom, foolishness, reaping what you sow, relationships (good and bad) and a multitude of others. The less familiar the person, the more introducing the illustration will require. Occasionally ask your youth who their heroes are. Find some whose names will probably last, and read up on them.*

*Historic – Although most youth don't snatch up magazines with pictures of Lincoln or Churchill, they are interested in what character qualities made these guys leave their mark on the world. Most youth would like to be successful. Guys like Benjamin Franklin, Edison, and others can illustrate many biblical principles at work, whether or not they were Christians.*

*Great Christians – "Hudson Taylor? Wasn't that one of Elizabeth Taylor's husbands?" While not having the name recognition of Michael Jordan, our youth desperately need to be introduced to Corrie Ten Boom, Jim Elliott, and a host of other great Christians who gave their lives for God and people. The less familiar the name, the more introduction will be needed.*

## ***FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM "THREE DIFFICULT SKILLS TO MASTER" (Lesson 8)***

**BIG IDEAS: GOD WANTS US TO BE NONPOSSESSIVE, WILLING TO REBUKE, AND OPEN FOR INPUT CONCERNING OUR RELATIONSHIPS.**

**PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS STUDY BOTH UNDERSTANDING AND MOTIVATED TO APPLY THE ABOVE CONCEPTS.**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS**

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*ILLUSTRATION: A Christian mother, Mrs. Kimmel, lay dying in a Pennsylvania hospital. She had been a good mother. You could tell by the concern her family showed her. Her children who lived nearby stopped by regularly, almost daily, to see her. Two sons who lived far away traveled to see her several times during her illness, calling each morning and evening that they could not be present.*

*In the same hospital another person lay ill, a man of power, influence and wealth. But no one had visited him since his arrival. His plight, though not as serious as the dying mother, was faced alone, except for hospital staff. He had a wife and children, but they never came.*

*The man asked a nurse about Mrs. Kimmel, wanting to know all about her family. She told him about the extraordinary concern of the brothers who lived far away. Then he asked about Mrs. Kimmel's condition. The nurse replied that she could die any day, almost assuredly within a week.*

*With tear-filled eyes, this influential man looked up at the nurse and responded, "You know, I*

would gladly trade places with Mrs. Kimmel and die a week from now, if for that week I could have a spouse and children who care enough about me not to make me die alone." (From Little House on the Freeway, by Tim Kimmel)

**Power, influence, and wealth. But he would trade it all for a decent relationship. What kind of relationships are you building? Today we will cover three final principles of relationships. Pray that God will give you insight as you continue to look to God for His wisdom.**

#### **PRAYER TIME**

Before we begin this new material, do you have anything to report from last week's conversations? Did you notice people who failed to listen? Did you try out any of our listening skills?

### **I. DON'T BE POSSESSIVE (Proverbs 25:17)**

**"Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house—  
too much of you, and he will hate you.**

A common problem in girl-guy relationships is that a guy, for example, finds himself more "in love" than the girl. As a result, he tries to spend more time with her than she wants. Almost always, this smothers the girl and drives her away, rather than drawing her closer. This can happen in any relationship.

But smothering a person to satisfy your own needs is not love. It's selfishness. And it shows a lack of faith in a God who is big enough to change another person's feelings if He wishes.

People run for air when they feel smothered. An old saying applies well here -- "Hold a person you love with an open hand. If he flies away and returns, he is yours to stay. If he never returns, he was never yours anyway."

### **II. LOVE THE PERSON MORE THAN THE RELATIONSHIP (Galatians 6:1, Proverbs 25:12, 28:23)**

**“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”**

***“Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man’s rebuke to a listening ear.”***

***“He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor***

***Than he who has a flattering tongue.”***

With this principle we probably part company with most non-Christian teaching on friendships. By following this teaching, you may lose a friendship. But Jesus often made enemies as well as friends. Rather than constantly tell people what they wanted to hear and avoiding any unpopular conversation, Jesus was willing to risk losing a relationship because of His love for people.

In other words, if Jesus found a person whose life was careening down a dangerous path, He would rather confront the person than engage in pleasurable conversation. People don't want to hear about their faults, and rocky relationships can follow a confrontation. But sometimes, if we want the best for a friend, we must care enough to confront. (Now have someone read Galatians 6:1 the above verses).

Study Notes: Galatians 6:1 -- This passage is probably speaking of someone who has been caught in a serious offense. The Greek word for "restore" means to restore to its former condition, put to rights. It was used in New Testament times as a surgical term, for setting a bone or joint. Also, it was used in the New Testament for mending nets. For further study, see the following passages on rebuking and restoring: II Corinthians 3:14,15, II Tim-othy 4:2, II Thessalonians 3:14,15, James 5:19,20, Matthew 18:15-17.

**DISCUSSION #1:** Divide into small groups and discuss the following questions: “Is it our responsibility to confront everyone that we see doing anything wrong?” (See Proverbs 9:7-9, I Tim. 5:1 Do you think we have a greater responsibility to confront those who are under our authority (children, employees)? Do you think Jesus confronted His disciples about every sinful thought and action they did? How do you know when to confront and when not to?

Now, ask the groups to share their conclusions with the entire group.

**DISCUSSION #2:** (Brainstorm. Directed to the entire group.) “If someone confronts you, how do you like it to be done? Or, how do you hate it to be done?” Get ideas, and make sure the following suggestions are included:

A. **By a person who majors on encouragement.** People are more likely to respond positively to your criticism if you have encouraged them in the past for their positive qualities.



- B. One on one. Not in front of others.
- C. Not in a kidding manner. When we joke about something that is serious, either the person will not take us seriously or may get mad.
- D. Not for every detail. If you constantly point out every fault you see, people will stop listening to your instruction and spending time with you.
- E. Not out of anger, but out of concern (Note Gal. 6:1,2: "gently," with the object of "restoration", not to get even.)
- F. By a person with whom you have a relationship.

### III. GET HELP FROM A FRIEND (Proverbs 12:1, 15:22, 19:20)

*“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,  
but he who hates correction is stupid.”*

*“Plans fail for lack of counsel,  
but with many advisers they succeed.”*

*“Listen to advise and accept instruction,  
and in the end you will be wise.”*

We don't tend to see ourselves as others see us. Often, I see glaring faults in others that ruin their relationships. See if faces come to your mind as I slowly read this list: has Moose breath...talks too much...brags constantly...tries unsuccessfully to be funny. It's easy to spot in others, right? But I shudder when I realize that just as they are blind to their faults, I probably have many relational flaws to which I am also blind.

*ILLUSTRATION: This is why one teenage Christian decided to get input from his close Christian friends. Rather than wait for them to confront him, he occasionally asked them for input: "John and Harold, what do you see in my life that hurts my ministry or relationships?" It wasn't easy to listen to their comments, but by giving them permission to honestly express what they saw in his life, he got valuable input.*

And why not ask your parents to tell you what changes they would like to see in your life? They see parts of your life that your friends may never see. Just be prepared for them to flip out when you ask the question!

One person's input won't always be correct. But blind spots can only be remedied when we get input from those who know us best.

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## CONCLUSION

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Consider ending with a relational game to help reinforce our commitment to work together and improve our relationships. Then conclude with the following.

Ask youth to discuss any principles from this lesson that they think could be especially life changing. Ask them to share their action points, what they plan to do to apply these truths. Could some of you enlist an accountability partner from the group to ask you each week about certain

areas you are working on? (Teacher: I have had youth hold me accountable and give me input as well. Perhaps ask one or two to give you suggestions on your teaching style and point out any annoying habits that hinder your communication. Taking this step could be a real example to your youth.)

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## SHARPENING YOUR AX ORGANIZING YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

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*You can gather thousands of great illustrations. But without a storage and retrieval system, you'll never find them when you need them. I store mine in three places:*

### 5x7 Note Card File

The 5x7 cards hold more data than the 3x5 cards. You can start with a couple of shoe boxes and get more professional over time. Use dividers, each labeled with a different topic. Don't limit yourself to youth related topics. In ten years you may teach a young couple's Sunday School class and need illustrations on child rearing. Think of your card file as a repository of wisdom. Start with these divisions:

Angels	Christianity	Liberalism	Responsibility
Anger	Evolution	Marriage	Stress
Assurance of	Failure Family	Mind Pollution	Success
Salvation	Faith	Ministry	Suffering
Authorities	Fear	Missions	Teaching
Balancing Your Life	Fellowship	Miracles	Temptation
Bible Body	Forgiveness	Money Music	Ten Commandments
Call to Ministry	Friends	Obedience	Testimony
Character	Gifts Goals	Parent's Night	Thankfulness
Children	Gospel	Paul (Life of)	Time (Making the
Christmas	Grace	Peace	Most of)
Church	Greatness of the	Peer Pressure	Tongue (How to
College	Christian Life	Prayer	Control)
Preparation	Growth	Prejudice	Tongues
Commitment	Guilt	Pride	(Charismatic Gifts)
Contentment	Habits	Priorities	Training
Consistency	Happiness	Prophecy	Trials Vocations
(Hypocrisy)	Heaven	Questions Teens	War
Creation	Hell	Ask	Will of God
Cults and Religions	Heroes	Rejoicing	Wisdom and
Dating	Home	Relationships	Knowledge
Death	Homosexuality	Roles of Men and	Work Ethic
Depression	Honesty	Women	Worry/Depression
Discipline	Hope	Sacrifice	Worship
Doubt	Humility	Satan/Demons	Youth
Drifting	Honesty	Science and the	Zeal
Easter	Leadership	Bible	
Endurance Envy	Loneliness	Self-Acceptance	
Ethics	Love	Sin	
Evidence For	Love of God	Social	

### **Letter Size File Folders**

This is the filing system I use for my actual messages. These files are also divided topically. If you tend to teach books of the Bible and single texts, you will also want to have a section divided by books of the Bible. If an article is too large for my index card system, I simply drop it in a folder behind my message folder. These folders also contain further research or extensive ideas on a topic.

### **Computer Database**

If you type well, or have a secretary, there are advantages to setting up a database. I use Microsoft Access. One advantage is that I can access illustrations more effectively. “What topic did I put that Billy Graham illustration under?” In my database, I simply go “Find” and “Billy Graham” to find all my illustrations about him. I can also give several titles to illustrations that may illustrate several truths. One illustration may illustrate “God’s Will” as easily as “Dating”. I simply put both topics at the top, and can access the illustration through either topic.

Another advantage is that I can take illustrations that I get via the Internet (magazines, newspapers, the Electric Library, etc.) and copy and paste them into my database (saving recopy or typing time.) Then, if you prepare messages on your computer, you can copy from your database and paste onto your message. It’s better than having to work for a living.

Over time, your wealth of illustrations will become a repository of wisdom that you will constantly draw from, not only for your teaching, but for conversations with your children as you pass on to them what God has taught you through the years. Happy filing!

***FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM...  
AND KEEP THEM***  
**"MAKING FRIENDSHIPS LAST: TWO ESSENTIAL KEYS" (Part 1)**

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**INTRODUCTION**

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***ILLUSTRATION:** "Even in technical lines such as engineering, about 15% of one's financial success is due to one's technical knowledge, and about 85% is due to skill in \_\_\_\_\_ - to personality and the ability to lead people."*

***ILLUSTRATION:** "The ability to \_\_\_\_\_ is as purchasable a commodity as sugar or coffee. And I will pay more for that ability than for any other under the sun." (John D. Rockefeller, famous American businessman and philanthropist)*

**I. BE \_\_\_\_\_ TO FORGIVE**

**A. What Does \_\_\_\_\_ Say? (Eph. 4:31,32)**

**B. What Does It \_\_\_\_\_ To Forgive?**

A definition of forgiveness: "Neither \_\_\_\_\_ on the outside  
Nor \_\_\_\_\_ on the inside."

**C. Why Is It \_\_\_\_\_ To Forgive? (Mt. 18:21-35)**

**D. What If My \_\_\_\_\_ Refuses To Forgive?**

**ACTION POINTS: PEOPLE I NEED TO FORGIVE**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM**  
**"MAKING FRIENDSHIPS LAST: TWO ESSENTIAL KEYS" (PART II)**  
**(Lesson 2)**

**INTRODUCTION:** *"The Difference Between a Good and Bad Vacation"*

**I. GET \_\_\_\_\_ PERSPECTIVE\_ (Mt. 5:21-24)**

**II. \_\_\_\_\_ BEFORE YOU ACT**

**Statement #1** - *"I've been secretly jealous of Jan, so I'd better ask her to forgive me."*

**Statement #2** - *"I don't need to seek reconciliation because I didn't really do anything wrong. He just understood me the wrong way."*

**Statement #3** - *"O.K., I'm sorry. I was wrong. I got mad. But if you hadn't called me an idiot, I wouldn't have done it."*

**Statement #4** - *"I would tell Pete that I am sorry, but it wouldn't do any good. I know he wouldn't forgive me."*

**I. TAKE THESE HELPFUL \_\_\_\_\_**

**A. Try to find a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that are appropriate.**

**B. \_\_\_\_\_ your apology so that it reflects true sorrow.**

**C. Avoid writing a \_\_\_\_\_ if possible.**

**D. Make it a way of \_\_\_\_\_.**

*"What He Looked for in a Girl"*

**ACTION POINTS:**

**FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM**  
**(Lesson 3)**  
**"THE BIG KEY TO MAKING FRIENDS"**

**INTRODUCTION:** *"Of 5 people who lose their jobs, 2 will have failed because of the lack of skills. Three will have failed because of the inability to work with people."*

**I. \_\_\_\_\_ PEOPLE THE WAY YOU WANT TO BE TREATED (Lk. 6:31)**

- 1) *What do you look for in a friend?*
- 2) *What attitudes and actions do you not like in people who try to relate to you.*

**I. LOVE PEOPLE, TAKING AN INTEREST IN THEIR \_\_\_\_\_ AND \_\_\_\_\_ (I Cor. 13)**

*"People who can put themselves in the place of other people, who can understand the workings of their minds, need never worry about what the future has in store for them." (Owen D. Young, noted lawyer and business leader)*

*"Theodore Roosevelt and the Bobwhite"*

*"A Youth Minister Connects"*

*"I Became an Engineer. He Became a Christian."*

*"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". (Dale Carnegie)*

**CONCLUSION:** *"Al Capone Views Himself"*

**ACTION POINTS:**

**Handout**  
**FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM**  
**THE POWER OF ENCOURAGEMENT**  
**(Lesson 4)**

**INTRODUCTION: The Importance of Relationships**

*“Mike Tyson and Success”*

*“Some studies have shown that among American High School students, 50% of the entire student body has no meaningful social life either inside or outside of school.”*

**I. THE \_\_\_\_\_ TO ENCOURAGEMENT (Heb. 10:24,25)**

*“Weightlifters and Spotters”*

**II. THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

*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 \_\_\_\_\_ to be appreciated."*

**A. Do you want a happy \_\_\_\_\_?**

*“Wives Leaving Husbands”*

**C. Do you want to make it in \_\_\_\_\_ ?**

*“Why Did They Pay Charles Schwab One Million \$ Per Year?”*

**D. Do you want to bring out the \_\_\_\_\_ in others?**

*“Motivating Children to Run”*

*“Stevie finds his niche”*

**III. THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

**A. \_\_\_\_\_ it!**

*“The One Minute Manager”*

*“A Discouraged Church Worker”*  
*“A Simple Compliment, 25 Years Later”*

**B. Write a \_\_\_\_\_!**

*“A Pastor and His Cards”*  
*“The Note in Her Pocketbook”*

**B. \_\_\_\_\_ people's interests, names, and important events.**

**ACTION POINTS:**



**FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM**  
**(LESSON 5)**  
**“CHOOSE YOUR CLOSE FRIENDS CAREFULLY”**

**THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF RELATIONSHIPS**

*“Actress Kate Jackson on Relationships.”*

*Survey: Thirty four thousand young people were asked, “What do you least look forward to at school in the coming year?” The #1 response? \_\_\_\_\_*

*Of 3,000 young people, over \_\_\_\_\_ wanted to marry for life.*

**I. THE IMPORTANCE OF \_\_\_\_\_ THE RIGHT CLOSE FRIENDS**

- A.**        *Do you want to be \_\_\_\_\_? (Prov. 13:20a)*
- B.**        *Do you want to avoid \_\_\_\_\_? (Prov. 13:20b)*
- C.**        *Do you want to keep your \_\_\_\_\_? (I Cor. 15:23)*

*“A Friendship Hurts His Sister”*

**CAUTION!**

**I. A NEW \_\_\_\_\_ TO MAKING FRIENDS**

*Take charge of your relationships!*

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**ACTION POINTS**

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## Handout

**0 FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM**  
**“TAME YOUR TONGUE”**  
**(LESSON 6)**

**INTRODUCTION**

**THE INCREDIBLE POWER OF THE TONGUE**

1. **OUR WORDS CAN BRING \_\_\_\_\_ OR \_\_\_\_\_** (Prov. 18:21)

*“Their Words Killed His Spiritual Life”*

*“His Words Killed Physical Lives”*

*“Her Words Brought Life to Stevie”*

2. **THE TONGUE CAN DESTROY \_\_\_\_\_** (Prov. 18:19)

3. **GOD COMPARES THE TONGUE TO AN UNTAMED \_\_\_\_\_, SET ABLAZE BY \_\_\_\_\_, FULL OF DEADLY \_\_\_\_\_** (Jms. 3:1-12)

*Don't you hate it when...*

I. **...PEOPLE SAY THE WRONG THING AT THE WRONG \_\_\_\_\_?** (Prov. 15:23)

A. \_\_\_\_\_ *before you speak.*

*“Get That Ugly Piece of Grass Off Your Leg!”*

*“Churchhill's Speeches”*

B. *Be \_\_\_\_\_ to the people you are speaking with.*

C. *Notice people's \_\_\_\_\_.*

I. **...PEOPLE WILL NEVER ADMIT IT WHEN THEY ARE \_\_\_\_\_** (Prov. 29:9)

*How to disagree...agreeably!*

- *Search for an element of \_\_\_\_\_ you can both agree on.*
- *Seldom say “\_\_\_\_\_” or “always.”*
- *Confront with “I feel like,” rather than accusing of \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *Deal with \_\_\_\_\_. Don't blast people.*

*“Churchhill and Clever Comebacks”*

I. ...PEOPLE RESPOND FROM \_\_\_\_\_ RATHER THAN REASON? (*Prov. 16:32*)

II. ...PEOPLE TALK ABOUT OTHERS BEHIND THEIR \_\_\_\_\_? (*II Cor. 12:20*)

III. ...PEOPLE \_\_\_\_\_?

IV. ...PEOPLE TALK \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_?

*Prescription for Blabber Mouths:*

- *Become truly interested in other people.*
- *Practice the 2/3 rule.*
- *Your own ideas:*

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## CONCLUSION

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*“Learning a Sport and Learning Relationships”*

**ACTION POINTS:**

**FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM**  
**“TAME YOUR TONGUE” (PART II)**  
**(LESSON 7)**

**INTRODUCTION**  
**RELATIONAL SKILLS CAN BE LEARNED!**

*“Abe Lincoln Masters Relationships”*  
*“Benjamin Franklin Gets Rebuked”*

*Don't you hate it when...*

**I. ...PEOPLE TALK INCESSANTLY ABOUT \_\_\_\_\_? (Prov. 27:2)**

*“You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than in two years of \_\_\_\_\_.”*

**II. ...PEOPLE DWELL ON THE \_\_\_\_\_? (Prov. 15:30)**

*“Embracing a Prison”*  
*“A Still-Born Child”*  
*“Paul in Prison”*

**III. ...PEOPLE DON'T \_\_\_\_\_? (Prov. 18:13)**

**A. The \_\_\_\_\_ of listening.**  
**B. How to listen.**

1. Give your \_\_\_\_\_ attention.
2. Ask \_\_\_\_\_ to clarify or expand on what the person is saying.
3. Periodically \_\_\_\_\_ what the other person is saying in your own words.

*“Ted Koppel Learns How to Listen”*

**ACTION POINTS:**

*Handout*

***FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM  
THREE DIFFICULT SKILLS TO MASTER  
(LESSON 8)***

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***INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS***

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*“I Would Gladly Change Places”*

***I. DON'T BE \_\_\_\_\_.*** (Prov. 25:17)

***II. LOVE THE PERSON MORE THAN THE \_\_\_\_\_.*** (Gal. 6:1, Prov. 25:12, 28:23)

*How to successfully correct someone:*

***III. GET HELP FROM A \_\_\_\_\_.*** (Prov. 12:1, 15:22, 19:20)

***ACTION POINTS:***

***FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM...  
AND KEEP THEM***  
***"MAKING FRIENDSHIPS LAST: TWO ESSENTIAL KEYS"***  
***(Lesson 1)***

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**INTRODUCTION**

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***ILLUSTRATION:** "Even in technical lines such as engineering, about 15% of one's financial success is due to one's technical knowledge, and about 85% is due to skill in human engineering - to personality and the ability to lead people."*

***ILLUSTRATION:** "The ability to deal with people is as purchasable a commodity as sugar or coffee. And I will pay more for that ability than for any other under the sun." (John D. Rockefeller, famous American businessman and philanthropist)*

**I. BE TOUGH ENOUGH TO FORGIVE**

**A. What Does God Say? (Eph. 4:31,32)**

**B. What Does It Mean To Forgive?**

A definition of forgiveness: "Neither getting even on the outside  
Nor holding grudges on the inside."

**C. Why Is It Important To Forgive? (Mt. 18:21-35)**

**D. What If My Heart Refuses To Forgive?**

**ACTION POINTS: PEOPLE I NEED TO FORGIVE**

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***FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM***  
***"MAKING FRIENDSHIPS LAST: TWO ESSENTIAL KEYS" (PART II)***  
***(Lesson 2)***

**INTRODUCTION:** *"The Difference Between a Good and Bad Vacation"*

**I. GET GOD'S PERSPECTIVE (Mt. 5:21-24)**

**II. THINK BEFORE YOU ACT**

**Statement #1** - *"I've been secretly jealous of Jan, so I'd better ask her to forgive me."*

**Statement #2** - *"I don't need to seek reconciliation because I didn't really do anything wrong. He just understood me the wrong way."*

**Statement #3** - *"O.K., I'm sorry. I was wrong. I got mad. But if you hadn't called me an idiot, I wouldn't have done it."*

**Statement #4** - *"I would tell Pete that I am sorry, but it wouldn't do any good. I know he wouldn't forgive me."*

**II. TAKE THESE HELPFUL HINTS**

- A. Try to find a time and place that are appropriate.**
- B. Word your apology so that it reflects true sorrow.**
- C. Avoid writing a letter if possible.**
- D. Make it a way of life.**

*"What He Looked for in a Girl"*

**ACTION POINTS:**

**FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM**  
**(Lesson 3)**  
**"THE BIG KEY TO MAKING FRIENDS"**

**INTRODUCTION:** *"Of 5 people who lose their jobs, 2 will have failed because of the lack of skills. Three will have failed because of the inability to work with people."*

**I. TREAT PEOPLE THE WAY YOU WANT TO BE TREATED (Lk. 6:31)**

- 1)           What do you look for in a friend?
  
- 2)           What attitudes and actions do you not like in people who try to relate to you.

**I. LOVE PEOPLE, TAKING AN INTEREST IN THEIR INTERESTS AND CONCERNS (I Cor. 13)**

*"People who can put themselves in the place of other people, who can understand the workings of their minds, need never worry about what the future has in store for them." (Owen D. Young, noted lawyer and business leader)*

*"Theodore Roosevelt and the Bobwhite"*

*"A Youth Minister Connects"*

*"I Became an Engineer. He Became a Christian."*

*"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". (Dale Carnegie)*

**CONCLUSION:** *"Al Capone Views Himself"*

**ACTION POINTS:**



**OVERHEAD**  
**FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM**  
**THE POWER OF ENCOURAGEMENT**  
*(Lesson 4)*

**INTRODUCTION: The Importance of Relationships**

*“Mike Tyson and Success”*

*“Some studies have shown that among American High School students, 50% of the entire student body has no meaningful social life either inside or outside of school.”*

**I. THE CHALLENGE TO ENCOURAGEMENT (Heb. 10:24,25)**

*“Weightlifters and Spotters”*

**II. THE REWARDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

*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."*

**A. Do you want a happy spouse?**

*“Wives Leaving Husbands”*

**C. Do you want to make it in business?**

*“Why Did They Pay Charles Schwab One Million \$ Per Year?”*

**D. Do you want to bring out the best in others?**

*“Motivating Children to Run”*

*“Stevie finds his niche”*

**III. THE WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

**A. Say it!**

*“The One Minute Manager”*

*“A Discouraged Church Worker”*  
*“A Simple Compliment, 25 Years Later”*

**B. Write a Note!**

*“A Pastor and His Cards”*  
*“The Note in Her Pocketbook”*

**B. Remember people's interests, names, and important events.**

**ACTION POINTS:**

## OVERHEAD

**FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM**  
**(LESSON 5)**  
**“CHOOSE YOUR CLOSE FRIENDS CAREFULLY”**

*Introduction*  
**THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS**

*“Actress Kate Jackson on Relationships.”*

*Survey: Thirty four thousand young people were asked, “What do you least look forward to at school in the coming year?” The #1 response? Loneliness.*

*Of 3,000 young people, over 85% wanted to marry for life.*

**I. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHOOSING THE RIGHT CLOSE FRIENDS**

- A. Do you want to be wise? (Prov. 13:20a)
- B. Do you want to avoid harm? (Prov. 13:20b)
- C. Do you want to keep your morals? (I Cor. 15:23)

*“A Friendship Hurts His Sister”*

**CAUTION!**

**I. A NEW APPROACH TO MAKING FRIENDS**

*Take charge of your relationships!*

**ACTION POINTS**

## OVERHEAD

# 1 FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM

## “TAME YOUR TONGUE”

### (LESSON 6)

## INTRODUCTION

### THE INCREDIBLE POWER OF THE TONGUE

#### 1. OUR WORDS CAN BRING LIFE OR DEATH (Prov. 18:21)

*“Their Words Killed His Spiritual Life”*

*“His Words Killed Physical Lives”*

*“Her Words Brought Life to Stevie”*

#### 2. THE TONGUE CAN DESTROY RELATIONSHIPS (Prov. 18:19)

#### 3. GOD COMPARES THE TONGUE TO AN UNTAMED FIRE, SET ABLAZE BY HELL, FULL OF DEADLY POISON (Jms. 3:1-12)

*Don't you hate it when...*

#### I. ...PEOPLE SAY THE WRONG THING AT THE WRONG TIME? (Prov. 15:23)

A. *Think before you speak.*

*“Get That Ugly Piece of Grass Off Your Leg!”*

*“Churchhill's Speeches”*

B. *Be sensitive to the people you are speaking with.*

C. *Notice people's responses.*

#### I. ...PEOPLE WILL NEVER ADMIT IT WHEN THEY ARE WRONG (Prov. 29:9)

*How to disagree...agreeably!*

- *Search for an element of truth you can both agree on.*
- *Seldom say “never” or “always.”*
- *Confront with “I feel like,” rather than accusing of bad motives.*
- *Deal with issues. Don't blast people.*

*“Churchhill and Clever Comebacks”*

I. ...PEOPLE RESPOND FROM EMOTION RATHER THAN REASON? (Prov. 16:32)

II. ...PEOPLE TALK ABOUT OTHERS BEHIND THEIR BACKS? (II Cor. 12:20)

III. ...PEOPLE LIE?

IV. ...PEOPLE TALK TOO MUCH?

*Prescription for Blabber Mouths:*

- *Become truly interested in other people.*
- *Practice the 2/3 rule.*
- *Your own ideas:*

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## CONCLUSION

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*“Learning a Sport and Learning Relationships”*

**ACTION POINTS:**

**FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM**  
**“TAME YOUR TONGUE” (PART II)**  
**(LESSON 7)**

**INTRODUCTION**  
**RELATIONAL SKILLS CAN BE LEARNED!**

*“Abe Lincoln Masters Relationships”*  
*“Benjamin Franklin Gets Rebuked”*

*Don't you hate it when...*

**I. ...PEOPLE TALK INCESSANTLY ABOUT THEMSELVES? (Prov. 27:2)**

*“You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than in two years of \_\_\_\_\_.”*

**II. ...PEOPLE DWELL ON THE NEGATIVE? (Prov. 15:30)**

*“Embracing a Prison”*  
*“A Still-Born Child”*  
*“Paul in Prison”*

**III. ...PEOPLE DON'T LISTEN? (Prov. 18:13)**

**A.        The importance of listening.**  
**B.        How to listen.**

1.                Give your undivided attention.
2.                Ask questions to clarify or expand on what the person is saying.
3.                Periodically restate what the other person is saying in your own words.

*“Ted Koppel Learns How to Listen”*

**ACTION POINTS:**

***FRIENDSHIPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM AND KEEP THEM  
THREE DIFFICULT SKILLS TO MASTER  
(LESSON 8)***

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***INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS***

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*“I Would Gladly Change Places”*

- I. DON'T BE POSSESSIVE. (Prov. 25:17)***
  
- II. LOVE THE PERSON MORE THAN THE RELATIONSHIP. (Gal. 6:1, Prov. 25:12, 28:23)***

*How to successfully correct someone:*

- III. GET HELP FROM A FRIEND. (Prov. 12:1, 15:22, 19:20)***

***ACTION POINTS:***