

## FRIENDS

### What does the Bible say about friends?

#### Question: "What does the Bible say about friends?"

**Answer:** Human beings were created to be social creatures, meaning that we are most comfortable when we have family, friends and acquaintances. Friendship is an important element in a fulfilled, contented life, and those who have close friends, whether one or two or a multitude, will usually be happy and well-adjusted. At the same time, those who call themselves our friends may cause us grief and hardship, constantly disappointing us. So what exactly is a friend, and what does the Bible have to say about friends?

On the positive side, friends can console and help us when we are in trouble, as when [Barzillai the Gileadite](#) consoled David when he was being hunted by Absalom ([2 Samuel 17:27-29](#)) or when Jephthah's daughter's friends consoled her before her death ([Judges 11:37-38](#)). A friend may also rebuke in love, proving more faithful than a hypocritical flatterer ([Proverbs 27:6](#)). One of the greatest biblical examples of friendship is David and Jonathan, son of King Saul. Jonathan's loyalty to his friend, David, exceeded that to his own father and his own ambitions ([1 Samuel 18:1-4](#); [20:14-17](#)). So attached was David to his loyal friend that, after Jonathan's death, David wrote a song to him, a tribute filled with heart-wrenching pathos ([2 Samuel 1:19-27](#)). Theirs was a friendship closer than brotherhood. In the New Testament, many of Paul's letters begin and end with tributes to his friends, those who ministered to him, supported him, prayed for him, and loved him.

Friendship can have its negative aspects as well. Supposed friends can lead us into sin, as when Jonadab persuades Amnon to rape his half-sister, Tamar ([2 Samuel 13:1-6](#)). A friend can lead us astray in regard to our faith, as they sometimes did in Israel, leading others to worship false gods ([Deuteronomy 13:6-11](#)). In those days,

such an act was punishable by death. Even if our friends do not lead us astray, they can provide false comfort and bad advice, as Job's friends did, making his suffering worse and displeasing the Lord ([Job 2:11-13](#), [6:14-27](#), [42:7-9](#)). Friends can also prove false, pretending affection for their own motives and deserting us when our friendship no longer benefits them ([Psalm 55:12-14](#); [Proverbs 19:4, 6-7](#)). Friendship can be broken down through gossip ([Proverbs 16:28](#)) or grudges ([Proverbs 17:9](#)). Friends should be chosen carefully because, as Paul told the Corinthians, "Bad company corrupts good character" ([1 Corinthians 15:33](#)).

[Proverbs 1:10-19](#) and [4:14-19](#) contain warnings about friends and how we should choose them. We are not to associate with those who entice us to do wrong, no matter how appealing their "friendship" seems to be. Those whose "feet rush to sin" should be avoided. The path they choose is no place for a Christian whose choice should be to follow the "path of the righteous." Only that path leads to friendship with God, which is the ultimate goal of a Christian.

