

DEVELOPING FRIENDSHIPS

As you get breakthroughs in your life, that qualifies you to teach others how to get them in their life. Let Jesus teach you how to develop friends that will let you mentor them.



By Mel D Westbrook MBTh

HELP eMagazine Book Series

Version: 25.2.27

"Developing Friendships"
Introduction

Reviewing Your Original Purpose
This introduction is used in all **"HELP eMagazine Book Series"** studies. If you have already read this introduction before, it may seem like it is just repetition. But, it helps you stay aware of where you are going and what you are doing to get there. If you are facing *any* kind of a problem, you need a way to win over it. Jesus' principles in this introduction will be *reminding you how* He is going to be changing and improving your life.

This Works In Real Life
Let's say you have to deal with all kinds of people every day. As a Christian, Jesus wants your relationships to be with unity, truth, compassion, fairness, and love. But, what if it isn't clear how to do it in business, dating, marriage, family, or with an enemy or adversary? How do you take what you learn in the Bible and apply it to the way you live life? How do you do it in such a way it actually empowers you to succeed in life in a better way than ever before?

It seems like, when you first start reading the Bible, that its principles are pushing you into a life that is harder. It seems easier to tell people what they want to hear rather than always telling them the truth. It looks like you will be a lot more successful if you mainly concentrate on your needs, likes, preferences, and interests. To start loving others and concentrating on their needs, looks like it could hurt your goals, plans, and future; but, what if it actually enhances them?

This Works *Better* In Real Life
What makes you win in life? What causes people to want to be around you? Why would someone want to do business with you, marry you, be your friend, or stop being your enemy? What kind of a person would you need to be to win at life and it make you and those around you happy. What is Jesus, the Bible, and Christianity offering that would make your life so much better that you wish you had lived that way all of your life?

There are two approaches to life; one involves dishonesty and the other involves honesty. One involves selfishness and the other involves love. One involves goals that end at death and the other wins now and in eternity. One involves loving things and using people and the other involves loving people and using things. One involves following the teaching of the world and the other involves following the teachings of Jesus. The only way for you to follow Jesus is to learn how. The only way to really win in relationships, finances, emotions, and physical issues is to learn how to follow Jesus.

Learning To Live A Progressive Growth Life With Jesus
What if you are already too busy to add one more thing to your life? What if you already have a full schedule? What if you are already doing as much as possible trying to have a relationship with God? Why would you want to add something like this to your already busy schedule?

You can't just stop your life to learn Jesus' teaching. So, Jesus has helped World Changers TLC (wctlc.com) to provide you special material. He uses it to help you start your day with *progressive* Bible studies. Rather than a simple "thought for the day" or some self-help concept, you grow *progressively* in your relationship with Jesus. He will take His incredible principles and step-by-step teach you how to succeed at *everything* you do.

You simply read material that builds on that information each day. Rather than hearing a sermon or reading a book that may or may not address how to run a business, a marriage, a family, a career, or your life, Jesus will help you progress in your understanding of what you need to learn next. You will be *progressively* moving from the main principles to those that build on them; it becomes a life-walk. And, it becomes a life-walk with Jesus that brings incredible success in *all* areas of your life.

Learning To Succeed With Jesus
You want to be happy, live a life of purpose, and be able to succeed at what you do. You want to be successful in your relationships, have happiness and peace in your emotions, know how to maintain and increase your finances, and be healthy in your physical body. The Bible and a relationship with Jesus hold the answers to a blessed and miraculous life. When you spend time with Jesus each day, He shares His knowledge, foreknowledge of the future, understanding, wisdom, power, and love with you; He makes you a winner!

Learning Jesus' System For Life
Jesus has helped us prepare special studies that address the areas where *He* trains people. If you are having difficulties with your goals, plans, strategies, or life in general, Jesus has foundational principles to address them. If you are struggling in your relationship with a person, a group, a company, a marriage, or a client, Jesus has truths that helps you with it. Relationships, finances, emotions, spiritual growth, and physical health are all interrelated. Jesus helps in all areas of your life; *none* of them can be neglected, if you are going to be successful. If you have financial issues, He solves them while working miracles in your, relationships, emotions, and physical issues. You become a whole and complete person.

Growing In Your Relationship With Jesus
Did you know there are certain areas of your *attitudes* and *character* that are causing you to win or lose at life? Jesus puts the priority on these two things. This is because He knows you need the right ones or everything else will fail. By simply reading theses materials each day, you learn how to open your heart to Jesus and let Him teach you what you need to know.

Your Team
We are praying that Jesus blesses you and gives you a close relationship with Him. He requires us to provide you with Scriptures that help you get your answers from Him. He knows exactly what you need and want; but, like everything else in life, there are steps for getting them from Him. The Bible is great in explaining what it takes to get these things. Jesus is providing you Scriptures that show *how* to have the very best relationship with Him. This gives you powerful answers to your prayers. We and Jesus are committed to helping you with foundational Scriptures that give you positive results through your relationship with Him.

Our Prayer For You
Eph 1:16-17 (NIV) I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of your Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may *give you* the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, *so that* you may know Him better.

Eph 1:18-19a (NIV) I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened *in order that* you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for you who believe.

Eph 1:19b-21 (NIV) That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Developing Friendships

Chapter One
Making New Friends

If you are having a difficult time developing new friendships, so you can have someone to mentor or so you can add new friends to mentor, then you need Jesus to help you go through this study. This is a study on what techniques He used to develop the friendships He had.

If you already have friends to mentor but would like to be developing more friends for your future mentoring, then you should spend as much time in this study as is needed. It will help you go through the natural course of your daily activities, while allowing people to become a closer part of your life and mentoring. It takes very little extra effort to make it a part of what you typically do each day.

Helping Others Make New Friends

Another reason to go through this study is to be able to help those of your friends, who need to know how to develop friendships. You can work with them by taking them through this study and teach them a way of life that assists hurting people find the help they need.

Making Friendship A Lifestyle

This study is literally a lifestyle of making new friends; it takes all your business and casual relationships to another level. It helps you learn how to ask those around you non-threatening questions that invite them to open their heart to you.

Business Relationships

Most of the relationships you are involved in during your day are business relationships. They aren't people you could call friends; they are just people you need, in order to help you get certain needs met. If you were asked to tell some personal information about them, you would probably be at a loss. You don't know what kind of things most of them like, what they are going through, or what they are doing to try to make themselves happy.

You see people get food, clothing, housing, and medical treatment from people who are basically strangers to them. Even in church, you can go in, sit down, and try to get your spiritual needs met by people who don't know you and you don't know much about them. Jesus is trying to help you change that approach in your way of living the Christian life.

How To Help Hurting People

Much of the studies and prayers in WCTLC and HELP eMagazine are dealing with a close and intimate relationship with your heavenly Father, a godly relationship with yourself, and a close and personal relationship with your friends. Friendship is the first step to relational, financial, emotional, physical, and spiritual healing provided by God. Your relationship with God, your relationship with yourself, and your relationship with your friends are the keys to all the benefits from God. This is because God is all about relationships.

Mark 12:30-31 (NIV) Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.

As you give people opportunities to grow in their relationship with you, Jesus helps you be able to know what to do next, when they indicate they are willing to share various information about their life with you. If this is something you would like to know and grow in, then "Developing Friendships" is the study for you.

Friendship Growth

Business And Casual Relationships

There are people you know on a business or casual level that are open to real friendship. You interact with people you do business with; you also have casual friends you have gained through your family and relatives, through your jobs, through school, from your neighborhood, in your church, and through sports. True friendship usually starts out from a business or casual relationship and then grows into a deeper friendship.

A **business relationship** is a relationship where you only talk to the person about their products or services. You don't try to talk to them about anything that doesn't pertain to the business at hand. These relationships can be at work, in stores, on the phone, by mail, or through internet communications. They may be one-time contacts or you may see them on a regular basis. Business relationships that have the potential of becoming casual friendships are those that give you an opportunity for repeated contact.

Casual Friendships

A **casual friendship** is a friendship where you and someone else talk about those things you have in common. They can start out with subjects about the weather, sports, things about the company you work for, fellow workers you work around, familiar places and experiences, people you know, and many other common things.

A casual friendship can become open and honest about their family, business, successes and failures, and all kinds of general personal things that have nothing to do with any of their problems, struggles, or issues of life. You may consider them one of your closest friends; but, they still never open up concerning their difficulties they are *currently* going through.

Personal Friends

As you spend time developing casual friendships with various people, God will open the doors for you to develop a **personal friendship** with some of them. Some of your business relationships and causal friends will finally open up and tell you something about things they are struggling with.

After you have given them a lot of time to share their problems with you, and after you have asked plenty of questions that have helped you clearly understand what they are *going* through, you then use this opportunity to share with them a similar problem you *went* through and have been able to get the answers and help with. You might pray with them about their issue.

There are business relationships and casual friendships where the person is sincerely looking for the answers to their problems; and, they are willing to enter into the provisions that God has given you. These are people who will eventually become some of your best and closest friends. The enjoyment and fellowship that come from these friendships make it worth it for you to learn how to be ready to share those things God has done for you.

Sincere Friends

Like with personal friendships, **sincere friends** are people who are willing to open up and share the difficult areas of their life with you. *and*, they are *also* willing to listen to you as you tell them about areas of your life where you *went* through a similar difficulty and found the solutions. Additionally, **sincere friends** will *also* be willing to listen to you as you tell them what you *did* to get that solution.

Mentor Friends

Like in the friendship you have with a sincere person, **mentor friends** will:

1. Tell you some of the problems they are going through.
2. Will listen to your story about all the things you went through.
3. Will allow you to tell them what you did to get help.
4. *And,* will also be willing to start doing what you did, so they can get what you received from God.

When you finally meet them and are able to establish a **mentoring friendship** with them, that is the time when true friendship begins.

Jesus is using this study, to teach you how to develop a lot of business relationships, casual friendships, personal friendships, sincere friendships, and mentoring friendships. As God helps you receive His character and attitudes into your personality, He helps you become a much more enjoyable person to be around. Your abilities to care about other people will open your eyes to ways of being helpful and personable with all you meet.

People like those who like them.

Chapter Two
How Do I Get More Friends?

Following Jesus' Pattern

You are ready to take a look at Jesus' approach to developing various types of relationships and friendships. He was perfect in the way He approached people and how He tried to offer them help. Let Him take you into a way to help people by allowing them to decide whether or not they want your help through His power.

Defining Relationships

There are **business relationships** that are just about buying and selling products to one another. There are **casual friendships** where you talk about things you have in common like the weather, sports, and other people you both know. There are **personal friendships** where they are willing to start opening up and sharing a few of their problems, struggles, or difficulties. There are **sincere friendships** where the person wants help with their issues and problems and are willing to consider getting help from Jesus. And, there are **mentoring friendships** that are people who are willing to join you in doing studies and prayers together.

Normal, Everyday Questions

The best way to get to know more about a person is to ask them questions about themselves. You aren't trying to *get* them into studies and prayers with you, *get* them to attend your church, or *get* them saved. You are simply trying to *get* to know them better. Don't have *any* hidden agenda or future goal planned for them.

You don't know where a conversation you is going to go; by asking people questions, you are just *trying to see* whether or not God has prepared your business relationships, casual friendships, personal friendships, or sincere friendships to move to the next level.

Asking Sincere Questions

In order to find out whether or not each of these relationships are ready to move to the next level, you simply ask them questions you do not know the answers to. With business relationships, if you don't know where they live, ask that question; if you don't know what hobbies they have or special interests, then find out about that. You just need to help them open up and start talking about themselves.

When you ask a question, listen to their answers and memorize these things about them. If Jesus wants them to, your non-threatening questions will take a **business relationship** to a **casual friendship**; or, they will take a **casual friendship** to a **personal friendship.** As far as you know, it may all stop there and never be able to be taken to the next level; you never know what each person is open to *and you are okay with that!*

The Heart Of Relationships

In building friendships, you must avoid trying to talk people into something.

Friendship building must *always* be times of getting to know more about a person. And, you being *willing* to let them get to know you and to find out about your healings, miracles, blessings, breakthroughs, and transformations that Jesus has done for you.

Building Business Relationships

In establishing a **business relationship,** you are simply trying to find out what a person has to offer as products, so you can decide whether or not they have something you want or need. As often as possible, you would try to do business with them, *so as to see* if Jesus wants a **casual friendship** to be established with them.

Only Jesus knows who will be people *He wants* you working with. You just have to trust Him to open certain people's hearts to the questions you ask. You will also need to trust Him to help you block off or avoid all relationships He doesn't want you developing.

Building Casual Friendships

In **casual friendships** you are trying to find out what your common experiences and interests are. Do you both like sports; do you both have an interest in the weather; do you have mutual friends; have you visited or lived in some of the same places; or, do you both have similar hobbies, interests, or activities? If your heavenly Father has prepared their heart for you getting to know them better, then they will respond positively to your questions.

Building Personal Friendships

A **casual friendship** moves into a **personal friendship** naturally; you just start asking more *personal* questions. If you ask a casual friend a non-threatening, personal question and they avoid it, change the subject, give you a vague answer, or seem to be offended by it, simply stay in the **personal friendship.** If you get hurt, offended, or upset with their unwillingness to go to the next level, then you were trying to *push* them into a **personal friendship.**

But, if you can ask a personal question without trying to make anything happen, then you can go around to all your casual friendships testing to see what God has prepared them for. Simple questions like, "How's it going;" "What's been happening in your life;" "What have you been up to;" and, "How are you doing?" are questions everyone asks. But, the difference between you and most people is, you *really* want to know, but, they won't expect that. They will typically give you the general, nonpersonal answer. You will need to "upgrade" the questions for them to gradually open up.

Checking On Casual Friendships

From time to time, you need to visit a casual friend in the natural flow of your daily activities. While talking about casual friendship things, you would ask them another *non-threatening, personal* question. Your motive would be to simply find out whether or not *God* had prepared their heart for the next level of friendship.

Once again, if they avoid it, change the subject, give you a vague answer, or seem to be offended by it, go back to your regular, casual subjects and move on. You would keep repeating this process every time you get together with them.

Moving From Casual To Personal

Typically, during a **casual friendship** that is about to move into a **personal friendship**, they will mention something that is bothering them. It would be, at that point, you would start listening *with concern* while allowing them to share, as much as they feel comfortable with. Then when they pause or stop sharing the issue with you, you can ask them clarifying and information-gathering questions about it.

A **personal friendship** is a **casual friendship** that has finally becomes ready to move into a deeper relationship. This is *because* the person is starting to want to open up and share *some* of the problems they are going through. Typically, they are not yet ready to receive any advice or help; and, it is very important to not try to do that. But, they are ready to allow you to know some of their personal issues. Most of these friends just want understanding, concern, and an appreciation for how difficult their life is. You just express your concern and compassion.

You aren't trying and shouldn't even be willing to help them at this point; you are just spending time listening to and asking questions about those areas where they are willing to share more personal information.

If you push this friendship too soon and start trying to share some of your story or start giving advice, you may close them back up again and lose their trust. But, as you keep showing a sincere interest and offer heart-felt understanding, sympathy, concern, and compassion, they may start asking for your advice and help. That is your signal that they may be ready to move to the next level. But, make sure your help consists mostly of joining them in prayer, at first.

Telling You A Personal Issue

You will be able to tell when a **casual friend** is ready to join you in a **Personal friendship.** They will start responding positively to your non-threatening, personal questions. Once this happens, you might *slightly* increase the depth of your personal questions by asking them how things are going in their life, how a certain issue turned out, is there anything they would like you to pray for them about, or any other personal question that gives them an *opportunity* to show you how open and honest they are willing to be.

When a friend keeps responding positively to your questions and keeps sharing more personal difficulties, then you know they are ready for establishing a **personal friendship** with you. This will be your indication that they are sincerely interested in establishing a trust relationship.

Holding A Relationship Back

Some people are *very* open to advice and may want your opinion on what you think they should do. If you haven't had a chance to test the friendship by asking deeper personal questions, then you will need to avoid giving that advice. Your story and prayer are by far the better way of addressing people's questions. If you give advice, then it is open for debate; if you tell them what God has done for you, then they can't argue with you about it.

There are people who spend a lot of time simply collecting advice from all kinds of people. They are just looking for those who will agree with them and support them in decisions they have *all ready* made. Once they find out you don't agree with them, they will move on to other people looking for additional support. By just giving them your story, they will have information that has proven to work.

Questions That Bring Hope

If you keep avoiding giving them advice, you will be able to gather enough information to offer something that would give them an interest in better possibilities. Their mind might be made up because they don't see any other way of getting the happiness they are seeking.

If your questions reveal what their deeper motives are, your story can show them a better way.

During the **personal friendship** level, you are asking questions *just to see* if Jesus has prepared their heart for sharing and how much and how deep are they willing to go in that sharing. If they aren't willing to go very deep into their issues, ask Jesus to help me stay on their level.

Meetings

If they are willing, you can start making appointments to get together, so you can listen to more about their concerns and issues. Let them feel your non-threatening attitude about what they are going through. Let them experience your relaxed relationship with them. Demonstrate the fact that you won't push them; this is done by backing off of anything they avoid or resist.

There are people that you can make arrangements to spend more time with. They want to have more time to share their problems. This is an arrangement where you can ask them questions that lead them into sharing deeper information. This may be a place where you can ask questions that help you see if they are ready to move into a **sincere friendship**. The more a person demonstrates that they are ready to move to the next level, the more time you will need to spend with them.

Chapter Three
Your Story Builds Relationships

Building Sincere Friendships

In order to take a **personal friendship**, where they are willing to open up and tell you what their problems are, to a **sincere friendship**, where they show a willingness to let you share your story with them, you would give them a very short version of your story.

A quick presentation, where you just give them a little taste of what God has done for you, in the area of their concerns, could be used as a test to see if they are ready to start listening to you. It is a process where you see if you can gain their interest in hearing more. If they are, you would tell them things that could create a desire to keep hearing and learning more. It would also be an attempt to see if they can gain a certain amount of confidence in your experiences with God.

Tell Your Story

As you keep getting together with a sincere friend, continue to share little bits of your story with them and see if the successes of your story help them feel comfortable with you telling them more. These short versions of your story should include similar problems like the ones they are going through.

The purpose of your story is:

- To let your friends know you have *gone* through similar things like they are *going* through.

- To help them realize that you have found Jesus as the answer, help, and deliverance from such problems. Your excitement about what Jesus did for you, will make the difference.

- To let them start realizing that Bible principles were what Jesus used to bring blessings, work miracles, and provide healing to your life.

- To help you find out whether or not they are ready to move to the next level of friendship.

Waiting For Their Response

After you have shared your story with a person, that you have a **personal friendship** with, you will relax and allow them to respond to that story in any way they wish. You are still just trying to see how far God has taken them and what you should do next. If they don't understand the points of your story, don't show any real interest in it, or don't appear to want the same kind of help, then they must stay in the **personal friendship** level.

If your friend wants to stay in the **personal friendship** level too long, then you and Jesus need to decide whether you should stop seeing them for a while, reduce the time you spend with them, or go back to asking more questions. Jesus will show you whether or not they will ever go on from there. If He shows you that they just need a little more encouragement, then He will give you more things to share, so they can move into a **sincere friendship**.

Testing The Relationship

If they are willing to let you help them with the *kind* of help that helped you, then they are ready to become one of your **sincere friends**. If they aren't willing to discuss solutions, or, if they are willing to discuss solutions, but they aren't willing to discuss solutions that involve Jesus being the answer, then they aren't ready to move to the **sincere friendship** level yet. And, that was *all* you were trying to find out by telling your story.

Let the relationship stay on the **personal friendship** level. But, from time to time, keep telling parts your story to them and reminding them that Jesus was the One Who helped you. So, your friendship will, from that time on, be one where you keep sharing miracles that God has worked in your life, so they can keep seeing how great and wonderful God is.

Don't allow a friend to pull your own personal advice out of you. Keep telling them what the Biblical principles say, while letting them know that your personal experiences are coming directly from the Bible and Jesus.

Defining A Sincere Friendship

A **sincere friendship** is a **personal friendship** that has moved into a deeper relationship *because* the person has a desire *not only* to share their problems, they are ready to grow and get help. You aren't trying to *create* such a desire in them; you are just trying to *find out* whether or not that desire is *already* in them from God. If God hasn't *already* been working with them and creating a desire for change, growth, and a relationship with Him, then they aren't ready for a **sincere friendship**.

A sincere friend is a person who responds with sincere answers to your non-threatening, personal questions and parts of your story. You might ask them why they think a certain problem has gotten so bad? You might ask whether or not they are willing to join you in doing some things that would help them? You might ask if there is anything they would like you to pray for them about? Or, you might ask them any other personal question that gives them an *opportunity* to open up and start receiving help from you and Jesus.

The Benefits

If a person responds to your story positively, then you can start showing them more and more of the wonderful things God has done for you. Once you and God feel they are ready, you would invite them to take a look at the benefits of joining you in study and prayer. This is where you start sharing what Jesus and Biblical principles have done in all the areas of your life. Rather than just sharing those areas that they can identify with, you expand your story.

You will be helping your friends see a way to start getting help with the issues they are going through. As you go over these *benefits*, you would be asking them what they think about the various things presented. Don't just quickly go through the *benefits*; let them give you their reactions to as much of these things being presented as possible.
START HERE
If your friends need to spend a lot of time discussing with you their concerns about the Benefits of HELP eMagazine, then remain in that area. If they have a negative reaction to or appear to be disinterested in HELP eMagazine, then you need to spend time with God finding out what to do from there. Some people will be willing to share their problems with you but not want Jesus' help.

The Study And Prayer Test

Once again, you are not trying to *sell* them on Bible study and prayer. You are just trying to find out whether or not God has gotten them ready for it. Everything you do is simply an exploratory effort to find out what God and they have decided on a matter. They and God must first solve the issue of what they are ready for.

*A **sincere friendship** develops naturally from the questions you ask and from the willingness of the person to answer those questions.*

You can ask questions like, would you like to be helped by God like He has helped me? Would you be willing to take a look at the studies and prayers that have meant so much to me? Would there be a convenient time for us to get together and take a look at these studies and prayers? You can explain to them it is something you and they can do together in the privacy of their or your home. If they say yes, you and Jesus will have developed a **sincere friend**.

It is at the stage of the **sincere friend** that you personally go over the studies and prayers you feel would be good for them; this is done before you meet. Just pray and let Jesus guide you in the direction He feels they would be ready for. Thank Him for helping you develop this wonderful relationship.

Chapter Four
Where Do You Go To From Here?

The Next Step

Once you meet, if your friend responds positively to the studies and prayers that are being offered to them, then that is what they not only need, but, are willing to receive. Follow the same procedure of moving slowly through them by asking questions that give them an opportunity to tell you what they think about each point in the study and prayer. You aren't just looking for confusion, misunderstanding, and disagreements, you are also looking for things that are blessings, clarification, understanding, and breakthroughs as well.

If God has so prepared their heart that they show a readiness and willingness to keep doing these studies and prayers with you, then spend time letting God know how much you appreciate the opportunity. They may need to discuss schedules, time issues, and frequency if the meetings. Spend as much time as is needed to work out the details for them continuing the studies and prayers with you.

Developing A Mentor Friendship

A **mentor friendship** develops *naturally* from the studies and prayers you and Jesus chose for them. As you and your friends go over them together, you will need to give them all the time they need to ask questions. They may need to stop and think about those things Jesus is speaking into them. They may need to make up their mind, as to whether or not they want some of the things the studies and prayers are offering them.

Going through a study and prayer time can take as long as is necessary for your friends to feel comfortable with making decisions. There is no rush; you will just need to walk them through it at a pace that is best for them. Read a paragraph and pray over it. Then allow them to tell you what they think. Answer any questions or objections they may have; but, try to encourage them to get their answers from the studies and prayers. If they are willing to wait, assure them that, that issue will soon be covered. Then see if they are willing to go forward with the information.

Your Story And The Studies And Prayers

All during this time, you will need to keep spending time sharing *your story* with them. In other words, if they run into an issue, question, or objection during the study and prayer time, give them examples of how God used them to help you. You are the living proof that the principles in the Bible work.

The small presentation of *your story* will be customized to only tell about those events that are similar to the issues, questions, and objections they present. Try to keep all your help in the realm of your own personal experiences with the relationship and provisions of God. Arguments and conflicts can develop from your personal opinions and concepts; but, no one can argue with your experiences and the powerful truths of the Bible.

To Mentor Or Not To Mentor

If after they have learned what the studies and prayers are all about and have moved to the level of a **mentor friendship**. If they get to a place where they don't want to do the studies and prayers with you, but are willing to let you give them advice, then you will need to pray and ask Jesus whether or not He wants you to continue to do that.

Some of your sincere friends will not be willing to go beyond you "spoon-feeding" the information to them.

You can have friends that won't be willing to read, study, or put out the effort for getting the information for themselves. They will ask or maybe even demand that you "just tell it" to them. They may have excuses, crises, circumstances, and all kinds of other reasons for not having time or the ability to do studies with you.

If you find yourself having to do all the work in the relationship, even if it is a **mentor relationship,** you and God will have to decide whether or not or for how long you will be willing to do their work for them. For some, it may just be a need for you to help them get started and then they will take off and do the studies and prayers with you. For others, it may be a problem with laziness or a lack of spiritual desire to do what it takes to do the studies and prayers. If they are going to be a true mentor friend, then they must start doing the studies and prayers on their own as you mentor them.

Always Testing The Relationship

All these friendships are those where you are *discovering* whether or not the person is *ready* to receive help from Jesus. Your job in all these relationships and friendships is to always be trying to *find out* where they are at the moment. God is responsible for getting them ready for any progress in levels of relationship and friendship. If He chooses to, He will use those things in the natural flow of your conversations with them to help them move to the next level.

By using the system Jesus used to find out what people were willing to do, *some* will go from a **business relationship** all the way to a **mentor friendship.** Some will stop at a level for a while and then suddenly move to the next level. God will have done something in their heart that helped them get ready for that level. *All* level increases are caused by the person being willing to yield to God as He deals with them personally.

It is vital that you not feel responsible for taking them to the next level, because you are not able. You are just responsible for being a constant friend by checking from time to time to see what they are ready to talk about and do. The questions God gives you will help you check and see if they have allowed God to prepare them for moving to the next level of friendship. <u>That part is all dependent on them and God</u>.

Chapter Five
What Happens When People Stop Responding?

Regressing Friendships

People may move forward into you getting to know them better and then fall back to a place where they don't want to be there anymore. They may have progressed from a **business relationship** to a **casual friendship** and then start refusing to be your casual friend. If you and God decide to drop the relationship all together, then there would be no relationship. If God tells you to just go back to doing business with them, then you would do that.

Personal friendships may progress to the point where the person has shared a lot of things with you. But, there may come a point where they stop sharing personal information and issues and just want to talk about casual subjects. Once again, it is a matter of you and God deciding whether or not to keep pursuing the relationship or allowing it to fall back to a casual one.

Flexibility

Let's say you have a mentor friend that is doing studies with you and all of a sudden they don't want to do it anymore. If God wants you to stay in touch with them, you might go all the way back to a business relationship. Depending on what the person is willing to allow, you will need to maintain contact with them by using the methods discussed in that type of relationship.

Don't assume anything, as to why you think a person is resisting a certain level of friendship. Questions are still the best way of helping and bringing healing to a relationship. Let them tell *you* what kind of issues and problems they are going through that are causing them to back off. If they don't want to talk about it, then find out from God what you should do next.

There can be things that are too embarrassing that they refuse to discuss with you. It can be a lack of spiritual desire; it can be circumstances that they don't think you would understand; it can be influences from other people who are resisting their relationship with you. It can be any of a number of things that they may or may not be willing to talk about.

Nonproductive Relationships

There will be relationships where it is all about being able to live life here on earth. Many of your business relationships will only be about you buying and selling things that make this life possible. They will never be about building those relationships and taking them to the next level. During family times with relatives and times of playing sports, there will be people around you that you will be friendly to because of the wonderful things Jesus has done in your life, just let them develop as God and they allow you to.

Not all relationships will be for the purpose of building them into productive relationships of spiritual growth. You have a responsibility to be loving, caring, and cordial with *all* those around you. Sometimes the way you treat the people around you helps those you will be working with to see what Christianity is all about. You don't treat people a certain way just because they are your friends. Jesus wants you to be loving and caring even with your enemies.

Someone Else's Friend

Some of the people you cross paths with will eventually become involved in spiritual growth with someone else. As the love of Jesus pours out of you on everyone you come in contact with, special spiritual seeds are planted in their hearts. God may not use you to do any more in their life than just being friendly to them as you pass by. By you allowing Jesus to shine through you into everyone's life, many are prepared for being open to other Christians at a later date.

If you allow God to free you from all personal agendas, you won't be going around looking for people to mentor. You will be allowing Jesus to flow through you, so as to do *whatever* He wants done. All kinds of people will be entering and leaving your life. Only God knows and is able to pick which ones should spend more time with you. Just want to do His will and He will empower you to be at the right place, at the right time, doing and saying the right things with the right people. That will bring the right results.

Diagnosing Friendships

There are **business relationships** that never grow any farther.

There are **casual friendships** where all the person wants to do is talk about the weather, sports, business, other people, and unimportant things.

There are **personal friendships** where all the person wants to talk about are their problems. They don't want *anyone* helping them with those problems; they just want to gripe, complain, and gossip about them.

There are **sincere friendships** where the person wants help but they don't want it from Jesus. There are also **sincere friendships** that want help with their issues and problems and are willing to *consider* getting help from Jesus. But, once they give Him a try, they decide against Him.

And, there are **mentoring friendships** that are willing to join you in doing studies and prayers. But they don't want to spend a lot of time with it. They say all the right things and give all the right impressions; but, fall short in performance.

Giving Proper Treatment

Business Relationships

In dealing with **business relationships** that never grow any farther, it is always a matter of staying in touch with God. Your time will always be limited; if you are in the wrong place, talking to the wrong person, then you are neglecting the person that God wants you to be spending time with. You may like a person very much and see great potential in them; but, if God knows they are not yet ready, then you need to follow His leadership.

Casual Friendships

Within **casual friendships** there will probably be people who are family members, close friends from school, sports, work, and other places. These may be people you love very much and want the very best for them. However, you must honor their God-given free will just like you would anyone else. If you push them or give them unusual attention, you are mistreating them and neglecting the people God wants you to spend time with.

Time and effort are always the issue; if God wants you to spend time with them building a **casual friendship,** then it is okay. But, if you are just spending time because they are talking about things you are interested in, then it isn't a relationship that will build God's Kingdom.

Personal Friendships

With those **personal friendships** where all the person wants to talk about is their problems, and, you can tell that they don't want *anyone* helping them with those problems, you will need to keep talking about God and the things of God. If this damages the relationship where they don't want to talk to you anymore, then it is your indication that they aren't ready.

God has to decide whether a friend is always going to fail to progress or you just need to be patient and keep bringing the subject back to them being helped by God.

Sincere Friendships

In those sincere friendships where the person wants help but they don't want it from Jesus. They may want advice, opinions, support, or sympathy; but, when you try to take them into doing studies and prayers with you, they give excuses, resist, or keep delaying the process.

They may *sincerely* want help; they just don't yet see Jesus as being their answer. They may be afraid of spiritual things; or, they may never want to go in that direction; you and God will have to decide what to do with them. Ask Jesus to help you *with questions* that will assist you in finding out where they stand.

There are people who are willing to establish **sincere friendships;** they will want help with their issues and problems and will be willing to *consider* getting help from Jesus. Some of these people may be on the fence and haven't decided how they feel about Jesus. As you try to take them into looking at the studies and prayers, you will better be able to see what their problem is. If they don't want help from Jesus, *don't* be willing to try something else.

Mentor Friendships

With **mentoring friendships** there will be levels of commitment, where some do them on a daily basis and others don't. There will be time issues where some have a life filled with other things. You will need to help them establish priorities and help them clean out distractions. There will be circumstances that attack them, distract them, damage them, and confuse them. These types of situations will all be dealt with in the study and prayer times.