

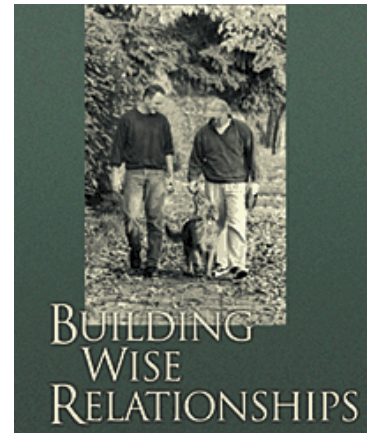
# *Building Wise Relationships*

**Pastor Eddie Idefonso**

How many true, loyal, devoted, and genuine relationships do you have? Do you ever wonder why a friendship does not last? Do you long for an enduring relationship that brings you comfort, acceptance, love, joy, and security?

Everyone has an inner longing for friendship. It is the desire that God planted within you. First and foremost, God designed you to have a personal relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. However, His plan also includes meeting many of your needs through other people, specifically close friends. You should never rely on another person to meet all your needs; only Jesus has this ability. But it is a special blessing from God when you can receive His gifts through the words and actions of someone who knows your innermost feelings and dreams.

Whether you have a best friend right now or you are praying for God to give you one, you can benefit from understanding and applying the principles of a wise and meaningful relationship. There is a saying, "To have a friend, you must be a friend." The ingredients that mix together to form a bond with another person must be growing inside you if you want to experience the fullness of a relationship with somebody special.



## **The Essence of Friendship**

Doctors, psychologists, and counselors tell us that what people want most is to be accepted, and that many will go to any length to gain approval. The result has left us fighting an intense battle with loneliness and fear—fear that no one will love us, and loneliness from the isolation that comes from striving after something we were never created to seek.

When we struggle for the approval of others, we disregard the unconditional acceptance of God. Essentially, we tell Him His love is not good enough and we need the regard of others first. Jesus told His disciples to seek the kingdom of God first and all their needs would be met. ([Matthew 6:33](#))

When the focus of our heart is placed squarely on God, every need, every desire we may have is fulfilled. The result of a right relationship with God is an abiding peace that comes from His presence within us through the power of the Holy Spirit. God loves you regardless of the bumps, bruises, and emotional scars you have collected over the years. He cares when you hurt and when you suffer discouragement. He is your eternal Friend. Only God has the capacity to show such incredible love and acceptance.

Jesus took great care to assure His disciples that His impending death was not the end of God's presence on earth. A Comforter, One who possessed the same characteristics as He did, would come.

Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper . . . that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" ([John 14:16—18](#)).

Wise relationships always require some type of communication. Jesus made an eternal pledge to us when He came to earth. And for us to realize the completeness of God's fellowship, we, too, must make a commitment to Him.

The essence of the Christian life does not consist of a set of rules and regulations. It is sharing a moment-by-moment, intimate relationship with the Savior. It is not a matter of human acceptance. God accepts us—that is all that's needed.

Friendship with the Savior is a continuous unveiling of His love and personal care for each of us. The life that remains focused on Jesus Christ is a life that enjoys unbroken fellowship. It is a life of victory and peace, of hope and security and, most of all, of friendship.

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## **WISE RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVE MUTUAL RESPECT**

**First Samuel 18—20** tells the story of the beginning of one of the most powerful friendships in the Old Testament—that of David and Jonathan. It started just after David killed Goliath and reported back to King Saul. Jonathan had observed the whole fight, and as he listened to David's account of the deed, he was moved to pledge his support for him. [First Samuel 18:1](#) says that "**the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David.**" The Hebrew word for knit literally means "**to chain two things together with a strong link.**"

Why did Jonathan feel this bond? Jonathan recognized in David many of his own attitudes, goals, and life desires. Jonathan was a warrior himself and had just recently delivered a sound blow to the Philistine troops with the help of only one other man. In David, Jonathan discovered a heart of bravery and steadfast love for the Lord and he wanted to identify with David both publicly and privately.

Do you admire patience or gentleness or sensitivity? You will be drawn naturally to someone with those qualities, and somebody will feel the same attraction to you on the basis of your desires and thoughts and habits. Respect also means that you value the other person on the basis of his or her identity in Christ **and not behavior or performance according to your expectations.**

## **WISE RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVE MUTUAL LOVE**

The love that Jonathan and David had for each other went beyond a simple pledge of allegiance and admiration. They had an emotional tie that bound their feelings together as one; when David hurt, Jonathan hurt. It upset Jonathan greatly that his father, King Saul, was out to kill David. **(1 Samuel 19:1—17)** He stood before Saul to plead for David's life, a move that was bold even for the king's son.

Even though David was separated from Jonathan for several years during his flight from Saul in the wilderness, David's brotherly concern for Jonathan remained unchanged. Their ways parted for a time, but their hearts did not. And much later, David's words after he learns of Jonathan's death are stirring: **"How have the mighty fallen in the midst of battle! . . . I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan . . ."** **(2 Samuel 1:25—26)**.

Relationships work best when there is equal self-disclosure—that is, the act of sharing your true thoughts, dreams, problems, and pains through one-on-one conversation.

When you know that your friend knows the real you and loves you anyway, you experience the joy of unconditional love.

## **WISE RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVE MUTUAL COMMITMENT**

It took true courage to make the decision to stay together. The young woman Ruth had no ties to her home anymore; her husband was dead, her sister's husband was dead, and her mother-in-law Naomi's husband was dead. The future must have seemed to her a frightening prospect.

Ruth was a loyal woman of her word. She faced the choice of a lifetime, and this is what she said to Naomi: **"Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me"** **(Ruth 1:16—17)**.

Ruth had no guarantee that she would reap any benefit from this decision to be faithful to Naomi; she simply stood by her friend and mother-in-law in hard times, no matter what the consequences. God blessed Ruth in countless ways as a result of her dedication, and one of the rewards was the enjoyment of Naomi's fellowship for many years.

In your experience as a friend, commitment may not mean taking a life-altering step, but you can show loyalty by being a trustworthy person.

## **WISE RELATIONSHIPS ARE BASED IN JESUS CHRIST**

Oswald Chambers says, "The dearest friend on earth is a mere shadow compared to Jesus Christ." Your temporary friendships here on earth are a reflection of the ultimate friendship that Christ offers through fellowship with Him forever.

David and Jonathan and Ruth and Naomi did not have the privilege of knowing Jesus; they could only look forward to the coming of the Messiah who would bear all their infirmities. You can know Him personally, with the same intimacy the disciples had when they walked with Him through Galilee.

What is your picture of an ideal friend? Jesus is all of that and more. No human companion can match His perfection as a Savior, Lover, Helper, and Comforter. ([Isaiah 9:6](#))

Jesus always has time to listen, never gets tired of supporting you, never gives up on you when you sin or make mistakes, and always does what is best for you. He is the Friend who sticks closer than a brother. ([Proverbs 18:24](#)) Best of all, Jesus is the One who shows you how to be a real friend.

## **EIGHT STEPS TO BUILDING WISE RELATIONSHIPS**

**1. Share concerns and interests.** Mutual desires, along with a common understanding, are the necessary beginning of any relationship. Without these it is difficult to build a foundation of a lasting relationship. Along with shared interests, you must invest time and effort. As a believer you share a bond with other believers based on your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. "[So your] hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself" ([Colossians 2:2](#)).

**2. Focus on meeting another's needs and not yours.** A relationship that is motivated out of a sense of personal need, whether emotional, physical, or financial, will not last. A self-serving relationship drives away the other person. God wants to bring you to a point of complete adequacy, completeness, and contentment in Him. Only then will you be able to build content, fruitful, and lasting friendships. Your relationships will not be based on need but on how you can help this person.

**3. Risk rejection and pain.** Based on past experiences, you may feel that you cannot risk being hurt or misunderstood again. If you are waiting until you find someone who will cause you no pain or suffering, you will never know the joy of a lasting relationship. Ask God to heal your hurts and allow His love to flow through you as you open your heart to experience rewarding and meaningful relationships.

**4. Love sacrificially.** This means to give and expect nothing in return. Sacrificial love is the ability to give up your wants and wishes in order to please the other person and to bring happiness. When you do not have to have your own way and you can put your needs and desires second, you are showing God's love.

**5. Be open and transparent.** Without honesty and a willingness to share your thoughts and feelings, you shut out the opportunity for a mutual, rewarding relationship. Genuine friends will stand by you in good times and through difficulty, accepting you in love and understanding because you have expressed your inner thoughts, what your needs are, and how you feel.

**6. Ask for forgiveness and be willing to accept forgiveness.** Every person makes mistakes. What do you do when you are hurt? Christ has freely forgiven you—how can you refuse to forgive someone? [Ephesians 4:32](#) says, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." When you hurt someone, acknowledge the situation and sincerely seek his forgiveness. A lasting relationship will succeed as long as there is mutual forgiveness and understanding.

**7. Accept criticism and praise.** When you care about someone, you encourage that person with praise and kind words. In the same way, because of love and concern, you may see the need to confront him about something. In turn, whether you are confronted with words of praise or criticism, accept them in the spirit they are given, seeking God as to their validity.

**8. Allow biblical principles to govern your relationship.** God's Word provides wisdom for every aspect of life. When you allow His Word to govern your words, actions, and thoughts, you will be able to build and keep relationships that are loving, loyal, devoted, immeasurable, incomparable, and indescribable.