

Women's Ministries Emphasis Day
June 13, 2020

Christ's Amazing Love Moves Me

Sermon resource packet

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12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904 USA
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Dear Sisters,

Joyful greetings to you.

Women's Ministries Emphasis Day is a special day for Seventh-day Adventist women around the world. It is a day when we thank God for the gifts He has given us to use to build up our sisters and His church, a day when we affirm each other and pour out abundant love on each other for His calling in our lives and the way He touches other lives through us.

This year our WM Emphasis Day packet for June 13 is focused on love. God's love. Not only for you and me but also God's love working **in and through** our lives. Do we love each other unconditionally? Do we accept that God loves us no matter our past or present? Sometimes, we need to stop and ask ourselves some deep questions that forces us to evaluate our true spiritual condition and our relationships with others.

This year, my word for the year is "relationships." I am making relationships in my life – God, husband, children, family, friends and even strangers I meet along the way, a priority. Love is the root of all the relationships. Not my love but God's love working **in and through** me.

My prayer for each of us on this day and each day is, **God in me and through me**, so that many lives will be reached with His saving love.

Joyfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather Dawn Small".

Heather-Dawn Small, director

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About the Author

Heather-Dawn Small is the author of "Christ's Amazing Love Moves Me," the 2020 Women's Ministries Emphasis Day sermon. Heather-Dawn presently holds the position of director for Women's Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. She is the wife of Pastor Joseph Small and the mother of two young adults, a daughter, Dalonne, and a son, Jerard.

Prior coming to the General Conference in 2001, Heather-Dawn held the position of director for Children's and Women's Ministries for five years in the Caribbean Union Conference located on the twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Heather-Dawn holds a B.A. in English from Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA, and a M.A. in Leadership with an emphasis in Pastoral Care to Women from Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon, USA. She is currently a candidate for a Ph.D. in Leadership, also from Western Seminary.

Heather-Dawn loves air travel, reading embroidery, scrapbooking, and stamp collecting, and she enjoys ministry to women. As she travels the world, she has three passions: to see more women involved in evangelism, to encourage women to be involved in ministry to others—especially young women, and to share the joy that God has given her in spite of life's many challenges. Her favorite word is "JOY" and her favorite saying is, "Don't let anyone steal your joy."

Lou Kinzer Blanchfield is the author of "The Art of Forgiveness," the seminar included in this packet. Lou and her husband Roger Lee Blanchfield live on a farm in Northwest-central Iowa where they raise grain crops of corn and soybeans, and where Roger works as a real estate appraiser. They have two adult children, Loralee and Brett.

While the family was young, they all worked and played together on the family farm. After the children were both in school, Lou worked part time as a nurse in a rural hospital. She holds degrees from Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington (B.S.N.) and Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa (M.S.N.). She is a doctoral student in the department of Human Development and Family Studies at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. She has taught nursing students at Iowa Central Community College and Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. Currently, she teaches second year nursing students at Des Moines Area Community College in Boone, Iowa. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau, the national honor society for nursing, and has been listed in Who's Who in American Nursing.

Lou and Roger enjoy Bible study, walking, biking, water and snow sports. Lou dabbles in a variety of art forms, such as drawing, painting and gardening.

Order of Divine Service

Christ's Amazing Love Moves Me

Call to Worship: #713 "Love of God"

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"

And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.
—From 1 John 4 and John 3, NKJV

Opening Hymn: #186, "I've Found a Friend"

Pastoral Prayer

Call for the Offering

Special Music or Hymn of Dedication: #309, "I Surrender All"

Scripture text: 2 Corinthians 5:14, MSG and 1 John 4:7-12, NKJV

Sermon: "Christ's Amazing Love Moves Me"

Closing Hymn: #311, "I Would Be Like Jesus"

Closing Prayer

Sermon

CHRIST'S AMAZING LOVE MOVES ME

By Heather-Dawn Small

"Christ's love has moved me."

2 Corinthians 5:14, MSG

(Note for the speaker: When you pray just before you preach, ask God to send His Holy Spirit to move the hearts and minds of all who are listening. It is the Holy Spirit who brings change and healing to each person. This message is calling for change.)

Scripture passage: 1 John 4:7-12, NKJV

INTRODUCTION

Let me begin this message by asking you a few questions? *(Pause a few seconds after reading each question.)*

- ❖ How has knowing Christ made a difference in your life?
- ❖ Are you any different this year than last year?
- ❖ Has the love of Christ for you changed you?
- ❖ If I were to ask the people closest to you, your family, what would they say?

These are uncomfortable questions, but they are questions we need to answer. So, let me repeat them one more time.

- ❖ How has knowing Christ made a difference in your life?
- ❖ Are you any different this year than last year?
- ❖ Has the love of Christ for you changed you?
- ❖ If I were to ask the people closest to you, your family, what would they say?

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ **constraineth** us..." (KJV)

Let me share a few other versions of this same verse.

"For the love of Christ **compels** us..." (NKJV – New King James Version)

"For the love of Christ **controls** us..." (ESV - English Standard Version)

"For the love of Christ **controls** and **urges** and **impels** us..." (AMP – Amplified Version)

The Message translation says, "Christ's love has **moved** me..." (MSG)

Each of these versions or translations use a number of different words to translate "constraineth" — words such as "compels," "controls," "urges," "impels," and "move."

Strong words which carry strong meaning. What does it mean for something to constrain us, to compel us, to control us, or to move us to action? What kind of love is this? Let me share a story with you.

Thirty-four-year-old Susan had been blind for a year. Due to a medical misdiagnosis she had been rendered sightless. Suddenly she could no longer see, not even the dear and loving face of her husband Mark. How this could have happened to her was her daily question. She was depressed and had every right to her bitter with feelings of regret and loss.

Mark felt his wife's pain and was deeply saddened at her loss and her struggle to come to terms with her situation. What could he do? Susan was too frightened to move around by herself, so Mark went everywhere with her including taking the bus with her to work each day. But he could not keep it up. It was costly and hectic. Once he dropped her off, he had to take another bus to his job.

Finally, one day Mark told Susan that she would have to start taking the bus by herself. She was angry and stunned to think that she would have to ride that bus alone. "I'm blind," she screamed at him. "How am I supposed to know where I am going? I feel like you are abandoning me." Mark's heart broke to hear these words, but he knew it had to be done. He knew that in time Susan would become accustomed to the bus ride and she would become more confident. But she would never reach that place if he kept on doing it with her. So for the next few trips he talked to her about everything he did and then had her try it on her own. He even helped her make friends with the bus driver.

Finally, the day came when Susan believed she could take the bus on her own. Mark would take a taxi to his office as he used to before her blindness. On that first Monday morning she hugged her husband as though she did not want to let him go. But then she released him, carefully climbed into the bus and was on her way. Each day she did this—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Each day she felt more confident about her ability to travel to work on her own.

One morning as she was paying for her fare to exit the bus, the driver said, "I sure envy you."

Susan wasn't sure if the bus driver was speaking to her or not. After all, who on earth would envy a blind woman? Curious she asked the bus driver, "Why do you say that you envy me?"

The driver responded, "It must feel so good to be taken care of and protected like you are."

Susan had no idea what the driver was talking about and asked, "What do you mean?"

The driver answered, "You know, every morning for the past week a fine-looking gentleman has been standing across the corner watching you when you get off the bus. He makes sure you cross the street safely and he watches you until you enter your office building. Then he blows you a kiss and walks away. You are one lucky lady."

Tears of joy poured down Susan's cheeks. For although she couldn't physically see him, she had always felt Mark's presence. She was lucky, so lucky for he had given her a gift more powerful than sight—the gift of love. Amazing love.

What kind of love would compel a man, urge him and constrain him to look after his wife in such a manner? Only the love of God. ***That's amazing love!***

GOD'S LOVE FOR ME

But God's love for us is even more amazing than Mark's love for Susan. God's love caused Him to send His only Son to this earth to die for us so that we can have life eternal.

John, the beloved disciple, writes about God's love in his first epistle. He describes the effect God's love has in our lives in 1 John 4:7-12. We are reading this passage today in New King James Version.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

⁸He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

⁹In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

¹²No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

God has called each one of us to share His love with the world. In Women's Ministries we say, "Touch a Heart, Reach My World." That word "touch" means to touch those with needs with God's caring love. Because of challenges and trials that we face in our lives, because of struggles with self and others, we may not have that love to share with others. But if God lives in us on a daily basis, we will have that love.

We read in verse 7 that "love is of God." God is the source of love. Any other love is not true love. 1 Corinthians 13 gives us a clear description of what true love is and how it behaves. Some of the phrases Paul uses to describe true love are:

- suffers long
- kind
- does not envy
- bears all things
- never fails

I know by now some of you are thinking, "Who can love like this?" The answer is, God can. And we can, too, if He lives in us.

We know God can love like this because He says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (Jeremiah 31:3, NKJV). Regardless of our past or present, our daily struggles with sin, or the many times we fail our God, He still loves us. He does not give up loving us or in drawing us to Himself. Having a daily relationship with God is vital for us to love others as God loves.

All who have been born into the heavenly family are in a special sense the brethren of our Lord. The love of Christ binds together the members of His family. Wherever that love is made manifest, the divine relationship is revealed. 1 John 4:7 says, "Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (emphasis added).

Listen to how these two short quotes from the Spirit of Prophecy support John's message.

It is not pleasing to God to see man looking only upon his own things, closing his eyes to the interests of others.¹ (emphasis added)

The love of God in the heart is the only spring of love toward our neighbor.² (emphasis added)

MY LOVE FOR GOD

John is straightforward in writing 1 John 4. He counsels us in verse 7 to love one another and then explains that the ability to love as God does comes from knowing God. He states this again in verse 8 but in the negative form so that we pay attention. "He who does not love, does not know God". Finally, he challenges us in verse 11 to show God's love to one another.

It is clear from scripture that if we do not love others, we do not truly know God. If others around me—my family, friends, members in the church, co-workers, strangers—do not see Christ's pure and true love in my life then I do not know God.

You may be coming to church each Sabbath and even during the week. You may be paying a faithful tithe. You may be giving of your time, talent, and means to the church, but if God's love is not seen in your life then you do not know God. And that translates to being lost. Imagine doing all those things and still being lost? No one wants to be lost! Yet, we are all lost without the love of God in our hearts. I ask you to honestly evaluate your heart at this moment and plead with God to bring change to your heart right now.

GOD'S AMAZING LOVE

What proof do we have of God's love? Let's read 1 John 4:9.

⁹In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

John reinforces the same thought even more clearly in his gospel.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16, NKJV).

God's love for us is so limitless that it compelled Him, urged Him, and constrained Him to make that great sacrifice for you and me. ***That sacrificial love is amazing love!***

¹ E.G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1923), 309.

² *Ibid.*, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), 505.

Paul tells us that God “chose us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4, NKJV). Think of it! Before we were conceived, even before time began, God thought of you and me. God’s love for us began even before the first sin was committed because a plan was already in place to save us. ***That infinite love is amazing love!***

Ellen White writes, “The one thing essential for us in order that we may receive and impart the forgiving love of God is to know and believe the love that He has to us.”³ ***That forgiving love is amazing love!***

Because of God’s amazing, forgiving love for us, we are expected as believers to show love to others. John reminds us in 1 John 4:11, “Beloved, if God so loved us we also ought to love one another” (emphasis added).

MY LOVE FOR OTHERS

Certain fruits are favored by different people and each favorite fruit is called “the best.” Mangoes (*or substitute mangoes with a beloved fruit from your country*) are sweet and juicy. Lovely to the eyes and so tempting! Another fruit found in Southeast Asia is loved by many people. It’s called durian. However, the smell of the fruit is strong and most unpleasant. Many people won’t even try it because the smell is so strong. It is so unpleasant that hotels will not serve this fruit, nor can passengers take it onboard a plane because of the offensive smell. Yet people claim the taste is sweet and heavenly.

When we think of loving others we are faced with many challenges. Some people are like mangoes (*or your chosen fruit*). We love them at first sight. We find them a delight have around us. However, some people are more like durian. Often, they have offensive habits. It’s hard to get to know them and sometimes we run the other way when we meet such people. Yet once we persist, we find good things about them. God can use your influence to soften their hearts.

What is your daily prayer? Is it Lord change the other person? Or is it Lord change me? When others look at us, do they see a love that amazes them? Do they see Jesus? They should see a love that compels, urges, controls, and constrains us to love them, whether they are mangoes or durian.

CHRIST’S LOVE IN ME

My friends, be encouraged! If we are like durian, malodorous and smelly to others, God can change our hearts and make us new creatures in Christ.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV),

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he [or she] is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

We need to be IN CHRIST. Why IN CHRIST? Because IN CHRIST we have righteousness, forgiveness of sins, life eternal, joy everlasting. IN CHRIST we are new creatures.

What is a new creature? Does this mean our faces will change? Is this an external change? The answer is that it is both internal and external. Externally, people will see it in the change in our behavior and the

³ Ibid., Prayer (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2002), 298, 299.

joy on our faces. Internally, it is a change of the heart and mind. When we are in Christ and He is in us He changes our character. As a result of the change inside, our behavior is changed on the outside. That is what others should see.

Old things are passed away. Old habits, behaviors, attitudes, all those things are fading away. Oh yes, they may surface from time to time when we look to self instead of Jesus. But when we seek our Savior each day, we will see a change in the way we treat others and they will see it too. Having a relationship with Christ means that we are recipients of His love being poured into us. ***That regenerating love is amazing love!***

The old heart—you know, the heart of the woman fussing with her family over little things, the woman constantly criticizing and complaining, the woman sometimes revealing a mean and short-tempered attitude, yes, that woman's heart—is subdued by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Our families, our friends, our co-workers, and our neighbors will see in us the amazing love of Jesus.

SHARING GOD'S LOVE

Yet, it's not enough to receive God's love. We also need to pass that love on to others. The love that God bestows on us affirms that we are loved, that we are precious in God's eyes. As we pass that love to others, they too will know that God loves them and sees them as precious. What a difference that can make in the life of someone who is drowning in guilt, regrets, sadness, anger, loneliness, hopelessness, and unforgiveness. To know that God loves them just as they are and died to save them will make the difference between a life of pain or a life of joy. And we are the joy-givers whom God chooses to bring His love to His children in need. ***That life-changing love is truly amazing love!***

Ellen White writes eloquently of the amazing, life-changing love that moves our hearts.

When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not merely because favors are received of them, but because love is the principle of action, and modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and elevates the affections. This love is not contracted, so as merely to include "me and mine," but is as broad as the world and as high as heaven. It is in harmony with that of the angel workers. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the entire life, and sheds a refining influence on all around. Possessing it, we cannot but be happy, let fortune smile or frown. And if we love God with all the heart, we must love His children also. This love is the spirit of God. It is the heavenly adorning that gives true nobility and dignity to the soul....

Our duty is to live in the atmosphere of Christ's love, to breathe His love deeply, and to reflect its warmth around us. Oh, what a sphere of influence is open before us! How carefully we should cultivate the garden of the soul, so that it may bring forth only pure, sweet, fragrant flowers! Words of love, tenderness, and charity sanctify our influence over others.⁴

Let's read 1 John 4:10-12.

⁴ E.G. White, *Our Higher Calling* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1961), 175.

¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

¹²No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

APPEAL

God calls each of us to salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

He calls us to surrender our lives to Him so He can live in our lives.

He calls us spend time with Him each day and receive the Holy Spirit and the gifts He brings.

God's love compels, controls, urges, and constrains us. His love moves us to desire the change we need to become new creatures.

He calls us also to be one with Him and His church as we reach out to those we meet, those who need a touch of God's love in their lives.

Yes, my sisters, God calls us each day to receive His love and to give His love to those we meet. And so, God needs women—

- ❖ Women who are fully surrendered to Him each day.
- ❖ Women who love Him and are willing to give their lives as a sacrifice of praise to God.
- ❖ Women who will put Him first in their lives, and that means before husband, children, family, friends, job, everything. God first.
- ❖ Women who are studying God's Word and are led by the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ And women who are willing to serve others.

If you want to be such a woman, moved by God's amazing love, please join me in standing and allowing all present to see that God has an army of women who are ready and willing to love the world for Him.

—End of Sermon—

Seminar

THE ART OF FRIENDSHIP
What Friendship Means in Our Relationships with Others and with God
By Lou Blanchfield

INTRODUCTION

- What kinds of blessings do people miss because they don't have close friends?
- What blessings come when you and I do have close friends?

A quotation I found:

LIFE IS TO BE FORTIFIED BY MANY FRIENDSHIPS.
TO LOVE, AND TO BE LOVED, IS THE GREATEST HAPPINESS OF EXISTENCE.
—Sydney Smith

Have you ever been lonely and longed for a friend and did not know how to make friends?

Ellen White penned these words in *The Desire of the Ages*, p. 148:

But the gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. The feast that He provides for the soul never fails to give satisfaction and joy. Each new gift increases the capacity of the receiver to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. He gives grace for grace. There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow. The words of Jesus to Nathanael express the law of God's dealing with the children of faith. With every fresh revelation of His love, He declares to the receptive heart, 'Believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.' John 1:50.

Today, we will consider many ideas for building friendships that will be encouraging, inspiring, practical, and fun. You will have an opportunity to select ideas you can use to enrich your life at home, at church, and in your neighborhoods.

NATURAL FRIENDSHIP

Friendships between women begin when we are little girls. Girls play with their mothers and pretend they are "best friends." Childhood and youth are spent striving to find and keep a "best friend." There are many factors present during childhood and youth that assist us in developing and maintaining friendships. The school classroom environment places us in contact with people in our own age group. At academy and college, in boarding schools, we are placed in intimate contact with people our own age and generally with people who share like interests.

However, in our mobile society, and in the normal process of growth and development, many of us move away from our friends, our parents' home, and our family support system.

- Jobs take us away from our friendship circles.
- Our lives become busy with making a living, building our own families, and we find less and less time to cultivate friendships.
- We also find fewer people who share like beliefs, and like interests.

- If we are married, our best friend then must have a spouse who is compatible with our spouse.

Researchers indicate that becoming a friend is a skill which can be learned, and that it has to do with a person's ability to love, to be loved, and to communicate love!

The Bible tells us that God is love. It tells us that God's greatest desire is to teach us how much He loves us. The Bible is God's record of how He has tried to make that love known to us, hoping that in turn we would respond by loving and trusting Him. It goes further to say that when we know God, we will be like Him. He is love! When we are love, others will be attracted to us; we will have friends. More than that, we will be able to make friends for God!

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 says:

Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into His friends and gave us the task of making others His friends also. Our message is that God was making all human beings His friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and He has given us the message which tells how He makes them His friends (TEV – Today's English Version).

We will discuss three principles for building friendships: communicate warmth in your friendship, assign a top priority to your friendship, and create openness in your friendship. These principles are discussed in several books on friendship such as *Making Friends*, by Em Griffin, and *The Friendship Factor*, by Alan L. McGinnis.

Both authors developed a model for building friendship based on the principle of John 15:15: "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from my Father I have made known to you." From this verse, it appears that even though friendship seems illusive at times, for the Christian, it is not an option; it is the highest calling! Jesus upgraded our relationship with Him. We are no longer servants—but friends!

God's model for building friendship is found in John 15:12-17. We will be using Today's English Version (TEV). Let's look at the first principle.

PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING FRIENDSHIP

The first principle in our model for building friendship is:

1. COMMUNICATE WARMTH IN YOUR FRIENDSHIP

McGinnis suggests that many people hold back expressions of warmth for fear of being rejected or of seeming sentimental. It is important to communicate warmth. Saying what is on your heart can help build friendships. Here is an example of not saying what is on your heart:

We say "thanks," when we mean "God bless you"
and "so long" when we mean "I'm going to miss you."

It is important to communicate warmth. Let's look at John 15:12. We see that God's model for building friendship begins with the concept of communicating warmth: "My commandment is this: love one another, just as I have loved you."

How is that for communicating warmth? But you may wonder how someone can command another's love. I wondered this and looked up the verse in *Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 29). In this verse, the word "commandment" is defined as "an authoritative prescription"! Think of it! A prescription to love, from the Great Physician Himself—who first loved us and asks us to share His love with others.

If we follow this prescription, what can love do?

Love—can heal broken hearts!
Love—can restore broken relationships!
Love—can build friendships!

Does God know we need love to encourage friendship? Listen to how God communicates warmth to us: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3, KJV).

Nothing encourages friendship more than knowing someone loves you. Communicate warmth in your friendship!

The second principle in our model for building friendship is:

2. ASSIGN A TOP PRIORITY TO YOUR FRIENDSHIP

Counselors and psychologists suggest that people who are deeply loved, believe other people are a basic source of happiness. Their friends are very important to them. No matter how busy their schedule, they have developed a lifestyle and way of managing their time that allows them to have profound relationships with people.

On the other hand, lonely people lament their lack of close companions, however, they actually place little emphasis on the cultivation of friends...and there may be many reasons for this:

- past hurt
- personal pain
- and...time...

Lack of time may keep us from maintaining a profound connection with more than a few people. Deep friendship requires cultivation over years—time together, time for lots of talk.

The next verse in God's model of friendship, John 15:13, says, "The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them." ("Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down His life for his friends," KJV)

How is that for assigning a top priority to your friendship? Do we understand all it meant for Jesus to lay down His life for His friends? What does it mean to you to lay down your life for your friends?

John 15:14 says, "And you are my friends if you do what I command you." This prescription to love must be important because it is repeated again in this verse. When you are ill and your doctor prescribes a medication or treatment for you, what is his purpose in giving the prescription? To bring healing to our bodies. What do you think God's prescription "to love" is for?

God longs to heal our broken hearts:

- to heal our broken relationships and
- to heal our friendships

And so, the Great Physician prescribes treatment He knows will work. Jesus could have spent all His time with large crowds of people, yet the gospels are full of instances which show us how He assigned a top priority to building relationships with a few people.

Jesus built a relationship with His disciples. "When Jesus spoke with the crowds, He used parables, "but when He was alone with His disciples, He would explain everything to them" (Mark 4:34, TEV).

Jesus developed a relationship with three special friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. In three of the gospels we read how He spent the night at their house, how they prepared meals for Him, how they confided in Him (Matthew 21:17, Mark 11:11,12, and John 12:1-8).

Jesus also made time for His relationship with His heavenly Father. "After sending the people away, He went up a hill by Himself to pray" (Matthew 14:23, TEV). He asks us to spend time with Him too. "Come to Me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28-30, TEV).

Jesus spent time with His close friends. He needed friends to give Him comfort. He needed friends with whom he felt safe.

Close friendship does not just happen. When friendship develops, it is because we recognize the importance and we devote ourselves to it. Close friendship can grow for those who assign it enough importance to cultivate a friendship. It takes TIME to develop a relationship with our friends. And, it takes time to develop a relationship with God. We need to spend time with those who matter most.

Nothing encourages friendship more than knowing someone has chosen you and wants to spend time with you. Assign a top priority to your friendship!

The third principle in our model for building friendship is:

3. CREATE OPENNESS IN YOUR FRIENDSHIP

McGinnis and Griffin both suggest that people with deep and lasting relationships have the characteristic of "openness."

- They have a certain transparency, allowing people to see what is in their hearts.
- They do not pretend to be more than they are.
- They know how to share the hurts and joys of others.

Have you ever felt you could not be open, reveal your sadness, your concerns, or even your joys with another person, for fear they would find out something bad about you, that you were not perfect?

In the medical field we are aware that people who repress their thoughts and fears often develop stress-related illnesses. On the other hand, honesty and openness can prevent both mental illness and certain kinds of physical illnesses.

In God's model for friendship, John 15:15 tells us He has created an open relationship with us: "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" (NKJV).

God created an open relationship with us. He has made known all of heaven to us. He wants us to know Him. John 17:3 says that it is eternal life to know God. John 1:17, 18 says that Jesus came to make God known. The whole plan of salvation is a plan to restore friendship between God and man by winning man's love and trust.

If you want to deepen your friendship with another person—a friend, your spouse, or with God—create openness in your relationship.

I love the way the Good News Bible translates the next text, John 15:16: "You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (GNT).

Isn't that exciting? Think of it! "You did not choose me, but I chose you!" If you think no one has ever chosen you to be a friend, you must know that the King of the universe, the Savior of mankind, has chosen you to be His friend!

What does it mean, you should go and bear "fruit," that it should abide? Fruit is the result of friendship with God and after spending time with Him, His attributes make a home in your heart. Galatians 5:22, 23 tells us: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (NKJV). Don't those sound like the characteristics you would choose in a friend if you could choose a perfect friend? This is a description of God, our perfect Friend. What better way to be a friend to others than to share the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

Nothing encourages friendship more than a relationship filled with the lovely fruit of the Holy Spirit. Create openness in your friendship!

SUMMARY

"This, then, is what I **prescribe** for you: love one another," (John 15:17).

(Note: **command** in TEV is substituted here with the word **prescribe** from *Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*).

GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

Handout 1—GOD'S MODEL OF FRIENDSHIP: Divide in groups of four or six and discuss how you can apply the Biblical model of friendship in real life? With real people? With God?

Handout 2—JESUS OUR EXAMPLE: Divide in groups of four or six and find practical ways to follow the example of Jesus in our daily lives.

—End of Seminar—

Handout 1

GOD'S MODEL OF FRIENDSHIP [Discussion Outline]

Based on John 15:12-17, TEV

1. **Communicate warmth in your friendship.**

(vs. 12) "My commandment is this: love one another, just as I have loved you."

2. **Assign a top priority to your friendship.**

(vs. 13) "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

(vs. 14) "You are my friends if you do what I command you."

3. **Create openness in your friendship.**

(vs. 15) "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you."

4. What is the outcome? A close friendship and abiding trust which develops over time and lasts into eternity.

5. What is the outcome? (vs. 16) "You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide. (An abiding trust which develops over time and lasts into eternity!)

The fruit of an abiding friendship with God... Galatians 5:22-23—"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Galatians 6:8 (last part)—"but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

—adapted from McGinnis, A. L. (1978). *The Friendship Factor: How to Get Closer To The People You Care For*. Minneapolis, NM: Augsburg Publishing House.

GOD'S MODEL OF FRIENDSHIP
Principles in Building Friendships
[Discussion Time]

How can you apply this model in real life? With real people? With God?

1. COMMUNICATE WARMTH IN YOUR FRIENDSHIP:
2. ASSIGN A TOP PRIORITY TO YOUR FRIENDSHIP:
3. CREATE OPENNESS IN YOUR FRIENDSHIP:

What changes do you expect if you apply what you've been learning?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Handout 2

JESUS OUR EXAMPLE

[Discussion Time]

Jesus our example in all things, demonstrated methods for creating freedom in relationships. How do we apply these principles in real life, following His example?

1. **Protect your friend's reputation** – Jesus our example: Knew all about Mary, and He knew all about the leaders who accused her of committing adultery, but He wrote their sins in the dust, so they would be blown away by a puff of wind. He did not expose their sins publicly. He protected their reputations. John 8:2-11.
2. **Be cautious with criticism** – Jesus our example: "He exercised the greatest tact, and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, and never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes." *Desire of Ages*, p. 353.
3. **Employ the language of acceptance** – Jesus our example: He accepted everyone; rich, poor, rulers, servants, untouchables. "Every soul was precious in His eyes; in all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save." *Desire of Ages*, p. 353.
4. **Allow for solitude** – Jesus our example: "After sending the people away, He went up a hill by himself to pray." Matthew 14:23, TEV.
5. **Encourage other relationships** – Jesus our example: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." Matthew 28:19, RSV.
6. **Be ready for change in your relationships** – Jesus our example: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever.... When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you." John 14:16 & 18, TEV.

—adapted from McGinnis, A. L. (1978). The Friendship Factor: How To Get Closer To The People You Care For. Minneapolis, NM: Augsburg Publishing House.