



FRIENDSHIP

LESSON 4

HOW TO LOSE A FRIEND IN 10 DAYS

HOW TO KEEP ONE FOREVER

Part 1



Get Healthy: Friendship

Lesson Four - How to Lose a Friend in 10 Days; How to Keep One Forever (Part 1)

Look Back: 10 Minutes

Last week's lesson focused on the prescription for healthy friendships: Get healthy ourselves. Being an emotionally, relationally, and spiritually healthy person happens when we:

1. Can identify unhealthy ways of relating
 2. Can identify healthy ways of relating
 3. Stop relating in unhealthy ways
 4. Start relating in healthy ways
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1. **Since beginning our study on healthy friendship, have you identified any unhealthy ways you relate with friends? Have you thought about healthy ways to relate, instead? Discuss.**
 2. **In the past week, did you stop yourself from acting or relating in any unhealthy manner, and relate in a healthy way, instead? Discuss.**
 3. **What positive qualities do you bring to your friendships?**
 4. **How are you seeking to be a better friend? Be specific.**

Look Forward: 50 Minutes

Even before I started writing this Bible study, when the words on these pages were still unformed thoughts in my mind, I knew we'd need to tackle the one issue that can make any friendship unhealthy: insecurity. Insecurity prevents us from making new friendships, and causes us to sabotage existing ones. Insecurity is so far-reaching in its influence I devoted an entire Get Healthy study on how to overcome it (Get Healthy: Confidence). This week, though, we're going to see how insecurity affects our friendships, in particular.

Perhaps the most famous friendship in the Bible is the friendship between Jonathan and David. Ironically, the most notorious rivalry in the Bible is between Jonathan's father, King Saul, and David. In this lesson we'll explore the messy relationship between Saul and David, and next week we'll unearth some truly life-changing principles of healthy friendship in part 2.

A quick note: we'll dig a little more deeply into scripture in this lesson, but don't worry; I've included the scriptures with each question. The Bible offers a goldmine of practical wisdom when we read the real-life stories of people between its pages. No doubt, you'll recognize a little bit of yourself and your friendships issues here, too!

1. Before we dive in, let's review the definition of a good friend. Write it down below (For a reminder, turn to page 2 of *Get Healthy: Friendship*).

With our definition of a good friend firmly in mind, let's get to know a little bit about the relationship between Saul and David.

Saul was the first king in Israel. He was born into a wealthy, influential family, and was the tallest, most handsome man in Israel (Got a picture in mind? Good!). Yet Saul never quite saw himself as others did. Despite God's physical and spiritual blessings, Saul continued to live in insecurity. Case in point: Saul hid among the baggage on his own coronation day! (True story. Read 1 Samuel 10). Many years later, Saul's insecurity catches up with him. God sends Saul on a mission with specific instructions, and Saul only partially obeys.

2. Read the interaction between the prophet Samuel and King Saul, recorded in the passage below. Pay special attention to verses 12, 17 and 24. Answer the questions that follow.

10 Then the Lord said to Samuel, 11 "I am sorry that I ever made Saul king, for he has not been loyal to me and has refused to obey my command." Samuel was so deeply moved when he heard this that he cried out to the Lord all night.

12 Early the next morning Samuel went to find Saul. Someone told him, "Saul went to the town of Carmel to set up a monument to himself; then he went on to Gilgal."...

16 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! Listen to what the Lord told me last night!" "What did he tell you?" Saul asked.

17 And Samuel told him, "Although you may think little of yourself, are you not the leader of the tribes of Israel? The Lord has anointed you king of Israel. 18 And the Lord sent you on a mission and told you, 'Go and completely destroy the sinners,

the Amalekites, until they are all dead.' 19 Why haven't you obeyed the Lord? Why did you rush for the plunder and do what was evil in the Lord's sight?"

24 Then Saul admitted to Samuel, "Yes, I have sinned. I have disobeyed your instructions and the Lord's command, for I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded. (1 Samuel 15:10-12; 16-19, 24)

a. Fill in the blanks (see verse 17): "Although _____ may _____ of yourself, are you not the _____ of the tribes of Israel? The _____ has anointed _____ king of Israel."

b. Samuel pinpoints Saul's lifelong struggle in verse 17a. What was it?

Saul fought a lifelong battle to reconcile what was *true* about him with what he *felt* about himself. Though Saul had everything humanly necessary to be secure--good looks, wealth, influence, position, power, and even God's very own anointing--his struggle with insecurity would plague him till it destroyed him.

It would be easy to assume Saul's deep-seated insecurity was a personal issue, a demon he alone would have to fight. But that's not how insecurity works. **Insecurity bleeds into behavior, which means it bleeds into relationships, leaving destruction in its wake.**

c. Why did Saul disobey God? Who was he trying to please (v. 24)?

People pleasing is rooted in insecurity and driven by fear. Ironically, people who try to please people end up pleasing no one. Not people. Not themselves. Not God. As a result, people pleasers eventually lose friends, not keep them.

d. Which of the following people-pleasing tendencies affect (or have affected) you, and your friendships?

- Find it difficult to say "no"
- Often worry about what I said or did
- FOMO (Fear of missing out)
- Tend to avoid conflict
- Feel overly responsible for other's feelings
- Don't admit when my feelings are hurt
- Go along with the crowd--sometimes against my better judgment
- Pretend to agree with others, even when I don't
- Easily Manipulated
- Other

- e. **Can you identify any people-pleasing tendency in yourself that you know God wants you to overcome? If so, write it down, here:**
- f. **Look at verse 12 once again. Why did Saul go to Carmel? What was he building?**

Insecure people build monuments to themselves. They have to. Since they aren't secure on the inside, they seek things on the outside to validate their significance. And boy, does this affect friendship! Hold that thought, because we'll come back to it in a minute.

Enter Saul's relationship with David...

1. **1 Samuel 17 records the story of David and Goliath. You know the story, right? So you'll recall everyone in Israel, including King Saul, was thrilled with the victory. They were on the same side, after all! But do you know what happened soon after? Read 1 Samuel 18:6-11, written below, to find out.**

⁶ When the victorious Israelite army was returning home after David had killed the Philistine, women from all the towns of Israel came out to meet King Saul. They sang and danced for joy with tambourines and cymbals. ⁷ This was their song:

*"Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands!"*

⁸ This made Saul very angry. "What's this?" he said. "They credit David with ten thousands and me with only thousands. Next they'll be making him their king!" ⁹ So from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

¹⁰ The very next day a tormenting spirit from God overwhelmed Saul, and he began to rave in his house like a madman. David was playing the harp, as he did each day. But Saul had a spear in his hand, ¹¹ and he suddenly hurled it at David, intending to pin him to the wall. But David escaped him twice.

- a. **Fill in the blanks: "Saul has killed _____, and David _____ thousands."**

Everything was fine between Saul and David until a pesky little thing called comparison entered the picture (and we thought comparison was a function of Facebook and Instagram!)

But here's the thing: **Comparison doesn't necessarily incite insecurity, but comparison does expose insecurity.** David's success didn't make Saul insecure. As we've already seen, Saul dealt with insecurity long before David entered the picture. **But when insecurity lies beneath the surface, comparison brings it out.**

- b. In what ways have you seen comparison expose insecurity and affect friendships?**

- c. What emotions bubble to the surface when you compare your life with your friend's life?**

- d. What emotion is recorded in verse 9?**

- e. Why do you think jealousy is destructive to a friendship?**

- f. I can be a good friend (one who propels others to be the best version of themselves) if I allow jealousy to remain in my heart. True or False?**

Jealousy is a slow poison in the cup of friendship. A friendship filled with jealousy will eventually die. Sadly, Saul allowed his jealous feelings to reign unbridled. Verse 9 says, "*from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.*" Saul lit a fuse under his jealousy, when he could have defused his jealousy. As a result, his jealousy overwhelmed him. **Unchecked jealousy affects our emotions internally which affects our behavior externally. Jealousy is not just a personal issue; it's a relational issue.** Jealousy affects how we treat people who should be our friends.

- g. What other emotion did Saul experience as a result of the comparison, according to verse 8?**

- h. What does Saul do to David as a result of his personal insecurity, his anger, and his jealousy (vs. 11)?**

Today, women don't hurl spears, but don't think for a minute we don't hurl other things, which are equally intended to harm. We have our own 21st century spears.

i. Which of the following “spears” have you seen women hurl at friends?

- Insults
- Innuendo or sarcastic remarks (sometimes followed by “I was just joking”)
- Back-handed compliments (which are really insults)
- Gossip or slander
- Accusations
- Rejection/Snubbing others
- One-upmanship
- Judgment
- Passive/Aggressive Behavior
- Criticism
- Truth, spoken apart from love
- Avoidance--won't talk *to* the person who offended them; will talk *about* them
- Other_____

Nice Christian women don't usually throw spears for no reason. Usually, we *feel* provoked; sometimes even justified. However, if we pause long enough to ask “why?” we'll almost always find some small comment or action pierced an area of insecurity or vulnerability in our life.

- j. Look again at the list of “spears”. Have you ever hurled these spears as a result of comparison, jealousy, hurt, or anger? In other words, has insecurity ever caused you to behave badly? (Your honest answer will help you understand why you do what you do, and why other women do what they do.)**

Let me pause right now and tell you how impressed I am that you've chosen to do the deep, real work in becoming a healthy friend. It's not always easy, but the beautiful result is oh-so-satisfying!

Now, let's explore one last observation about Saul...

Earlier, we discussed how insecure people build monuments to themselves to feel significant. Monuments don't have to be physical altars, like Saul's. More often, monuments are things like a successful career, a satisfying marriage, an attractive appearance, successful kids, a Pinterest-worthy home, social media followers, or even a thriving ministry.

How does this relate to Saul, David, comparison, jealousy, anger, spear throwing, friendship...and us?

When we compare our life with our friend's life, it can seem like our "monument" is threatened, which makes us feel defensive and insecure.

Consider this example: Let's say I'm perfectly happy at work--until I learn my friend received a promotion I secretly longed for. Suddenly, every time she talks about her job--even innocently--it rubs me the wrong way. I find subtle ways to criticize her, or I distance myself from her, altogether. My little digs and subtle distance are disguised spears, designed to demolish her monument, and defend mine.

Suddenly, I become Saul.

So what do we *do* when feelings of insecurity, jealousy, anger, or inadequacy threaten to overwhelm us? And how should we respond if we're the target of a friend's jealousy, anger, or insecurity?

Let's look at three ways healthy women deal with these harmful emotions in healthy ways.

A. Step One: Don't Pretend You're Not Jealous, Selfish or Hurt

2. Read James 3:14-16, below.

But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. ¹⁵ For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. ¹⁶ For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.

- a. If we are jealous and have selfish motives what are we *not* to do?**
- b. How do you think bringing impure motives into the light by confessing them to God makes us healthier women and healthier friends?**

B. Step Two: Refuse to Let Jealousy or Bitterness Define Your Life

3. Read Hebrews 12:14-15, below:

¹⁴ Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. ¹⁵ Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.

- a. What verb is repeated twice in verse 14?**

Sometimes living in peace with everyone is work. *Hard work*. Overcoming jealousy and bitterness isn't a day at the beach. Though it takes work, wise women ruthlessly root out these destructive emotions. If we allow jealousy and bitterness to germinate in our hearts, they'll grow up to "trouble you" and "corrupt many" (v 15). Jealousy and bitterness *will* kill you, and your friendships. And you'll take others down with you.

C. Step Three: Talk TO the Person, not ABOUT the Person

"If another believer^w sins against you,^w go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back" (Matthew 18:15)

4. If you are offended how does God tell you to respond? Is this a suggestion or a command?

Mark these words: **If you don't respond by going to the friend and talking about the issue, you'll talk about the friend and perpetuate the issue. Then you'll be the one who's offended your friend and God.**

D. Step Four: Choose to Do Right...Even if Others Do Not

5. Read Romans 12:9-10,14, 17-21, written below. How do these instructions apply to you, and your friendships, today? Be specific.

⁹Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves...¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse...¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

I've found the most practical (and helpful) thing to do when faced with the temptation toward jealousy or bitterness is counteract these feelings with an act of kindness: Praise the gal who got the promotion you wanted; pray for the friend who wounded you--and not the "Lord, smite her!" kind of prayer! (Just keepin' it real.); smile at the neighbor who snubbed you.

a. How can you put the principles of Romans 12 into practice *right now*?

Sadly, Saul never overcame the deep-seated insecurity that plagued him personally, and destroyed him relationally. Just think how this story might have ended if Saul honored David, instead of hurling spears at him!

Saul didn't learn from his mistakes, but we can. We don't have to live enslaved by insecurity and the resulting people pleasing, jealousy, comparison, and anger that accompany it.

We don't have to let insecurity ruin us, or our friendships. Ever.

This week we learned how to lose a friend. Next week we'll learn how to keep one forever.

Life Application:

- 1. Review the four steps to dealing with harmful emotions in healthy ways. Write them down below:**
- 2. Write down one thing you learned about healthy and unhealthy friendship from this week's lesson. Choose one way you will seek to be a healthy friend. Be ready to discuss next week.**
- 3. Re-read Romans 12:9-21. Ask God to show you any way he wants you to apply these verses in your life this week. Write down whatever God impresses on your heart in the space provided below. Then, no matter what--do it.**
- 4. If you struggle with insecurity (and who doesn't every now and then?) and you sense it's affecting your relationships, don't hide it. Talk to God about your insecurity, and the resulting feelings like jealousy, fear, or anger. Ask God to help you. He wants to help you, sweet friend.**

Optional: Further Reading, Reflection, and Bible Study

1. Continue your exploration of the life of Saul and David by reading the following:
 - a. 1 Samuel 9
 - b. 1 Samuel 10
 - c. 1 Samuel 17
 - d. 1 Samuel 18

Make a list of any insights God brings to light as you study the life of Saul and David.

