

Session Four Homework

To be a good friend, one who does not seek to control but one who seeks to truly love her friends with a heart full of grace, we first have to experience God's love for us. We cannot give what we do not have. This week, before we delve into characteristics of healthy friendships, let's dig deeper into our friendship with God.

Day One – I need to feel loved. God gave me that need. God meets that need!

1. Read John 15:14-16. What does God call us?
2. In verse 15, what do we learn is the root of the intimacy we have with God?
3. Below are demonstrations of God's love. Draw a line and match them with the appropriate scripture verse.

Servant hearted love	John 13:5-20
Acceptance and unearned love	Hebrews 12:6
Security and committed love	Romans 5:5-8
Guidance and disciplined love	Zephaniah 3:17
Truth and instructional love	Exodus 34:14, 15, Hosea 11:1-12
Protection and jealous love	1 Timothy 1:12
Significance and affirming love	Psalms 33:4, 119:160
Trust and faithful love	Lamentations 3:32, 33

4. If I am confident of all the ways God loves me, how does that change how I relate to my friends?

Day Two

Like so many other things in life, shifting control in our relationships is about balance. Jesus makes some strong statements to get us to keep things in perspective.

1. Read Matthew 19:28-30 and Matthew 22:36-40. Compare these two verses and think about relationships. Do you see contradiction in terms of how much we are to love others? How can we balance this?

2. For a hint, read Matthew 6:33. How can setting priorities help us when it comes to controlling our relationships?

3. Think of a particularly close relationship in your life, one in which you know you struggle with issues of control. Can you set a goal this week to put Jesus first in that relationship, ask him to come to the forefront and see how things change?

Today's prayer

Father, thank you for relationships. I know you created me to be in relationship with others. Help me to balance my desire to be a friend and have a friend with my need to be in deep relationship with you.

Day Three

Today let's move our thoughts toward the quality of our relationships. Remember our solution to the challenge of shifting control in relationships? Commitment, Christ-focus, courage and compassion. We'll spend the rest of this week's study looking at these things.

1. Read Acts 2:42-47. List some of the characteristics of the relationships those early believers had with one another. Don't list the actions, but think about the motivation behind those actions!

2. Read Jesus' prayer for his followers in John 17:1-23. It's lengthy, but don't get bogged down.

Look for two things:

What's the main thing Jesus seems to pray that believers will have?

What is the ultimate goal of their relationships with one another?

3. How would your relationships be different, how would you shift control, if a commitment to unity was the primary characteristic of your relationships and if showing Christ's love (v. 23) was the primary goal of your relationships?

Day Four

1. Read the opening of Paul's letter to the Colossians, in Colossians 1:1-8. What was the reputation of those relationships?
2. What was the result of their relationships?
3. We see again and again that our relationships are to point us to Jesus, and in turn to point others to Him. How can we live in relationships that are focused on Christ and not control?
4. What are hallmarks of healthy relationships according to the following verses:
1 Peter 3:8, 9

Ephesians 4:2, 3

Matthew 7:1-5
5. Feeling challenged yet? How do we live lives characterized by this level of humility and love?
Read Ephesians 3:13-21. Read it and rejoice.