

#tribe | #adulting | Phil 4:1-8 - Discussion Guide

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Introduction:

Today is the first message in a series about becoming a person who has "people". Together, we will discover how we find "our" people in life. We will start by becoming a person who can be in community.

Studies have shown that the number and quality of friendships have been declining in America. The blame has been levied upon increased work hours, rising divorce rates, and the explosion of social media. Whatever the cause, the consequences are apparent.

I read of a pastor who met a young woman in the gym. She commented on his sermon regarding close friendships. *"I have 700 friends on FaceBook and I could not think of one close friend during your message."* The point is that it's time to take our relationship status in life seriously.

Proverbs 17:17 (NLT) *A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.*

#conflict - Learn from Conflict

How to Sabotage ANY Relationship? Every relationship quickly becomes a story of good and bad experiences. Certainly, we can work very hard to make as many positive memories as possible but harmful, hurtful interactions are unavoidable. Learning to navigate conflict in such a way as to resolve those painful events is a necessary skill for all mature adults.

The Problem is that we often live under the misdirected assumption that conflict can be avoided and therefore we never learn those skills. In fact, we resort to immature conversational skills that sabotage our relationships and often end them. We avoid conflict hoping it will go away. We overgeneralize our accusations using words like "always" and "never" often. We get defensive and stop listening to the other person. There are any number of ways we handle conflict that do great damage to our relationships. How should we handle them? Does the Bible address this?

How to #adult like an... Well an Adult - Phil 4:1-9.

Philippians 4:1 (NLT) *... I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown...*

Learn to Find Joy in Relationships. Even though this may not be a factor for many, it is for some. Some people are naturally reclusive while others have chosen isolation because of their wounds. Please accept this as it is intended (gently). As a Christ follower, we do not get to be a recluse.

Philippians 4:2 (NLT) *Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement.*

So first we must *Learn to Deal with Conflict*. It may be hard to find but there IS a gift in every conflict. It may be a lesson, a correction, or a help. God has something for us. We don't need to accept every attack, but we should consider every attack and look for the lesson. Also remember, the lesson is not always in the attack. It is often in our reaction to it.

Make the Choices, that you are free to make. According to Paul our freedom in Christ empowers us to choose Joy, Kindness, Gratitude, Prayer, and our own perspective in all of life's difficulties.

Philippians 4:4-6 NLT Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. 6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

And we must never forget that *we ARE Responsible* for our thoughts and actions. So many of the immature relationship behaviors we exhibit are simply a refusal to take responsibility for your own life and relationships.

Philippians 4:8 *And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts..*

Remember, *It takes a MATURE person to be in a HEALTHY relationship.*

#give - Give what you need.

We all have needs. It is not wrong to have needs. There are so many scriptures that describe beautiful relationship. And, so many that teach us how to be in relationship. God knows we need people around us. We are meant to share our lives with others so that our needs are met. So..

Give what you have. There is a story in **John 6:9-13** that teaches us how Jesus turns our lack into abundance. The simple answer -- We give our lack Jesus. The people in our lives may be hard to love. They may not be meeting our needs. Our normal reaction is to demand our needs be met or to walk away. Why not give what we have? Give the love we hold dear. Give the service we need.

#vulnerable - Be Here and Be Open

What are you ashamed of... We often hide our truest self because we all have a deep-rooted fear. That fear tells us we are not worthy of connection and belonging. The only way to beat that fear is to experience love, belonging, and acceptance.

John 16:33 (NLT) *I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."*

Take Heart... Long ago Courage meant to live with your whole heart. Those who "beat" their shame are those who take the courage to be imperfect. This is the courage to *let go of who you THINK you SHOULD be in order to BECOME who you ARE.* Grow as a person, Give as a distributor of Christ's bounty, and Live with your heart wide open and you are on your way to having "people".

Discussion:

- Is it difficult to find and keep friends? What are the challenges to close friendships?
- Discuss **Proverbs 17:17**. Discuss the kinds of friends you would like to have in your life?
- How do friendships shape our lives? Discuss **1 Corinthians 15:33**.
- Discuss poor conflict resolution skills. List a few and discuss them.
- Review **Philippians 4:4-7**. How might we choose joy, kindness, or gratitude in a conflict? How could we endure conflict and yet still experience peace?
- Discuss the word "vulnerable" in regard to finding community. Why does it take courage to be vulnerable? Discuss this as a group.
- Did anything stand out in your reading today that you could share with someone else?