

- \* Loving others is a visual illustration of our discipleship (13:34-35).
- \* Christians exemplify that they are friends with Christ when they love one another (15:14).
- \* Christians are to love one another as Christ loved them (15:12).
- \* Loving one another is a command, not a suggestion, for Christians (15:17).

A variety of weeds can hinder the flourishing of love in the Friendship Garden including:

#### *The Turned-Head Weed*

*The Turned-Head Weed* grows in one direction while its head faces the opposite direction. It might be called the 'if only' weed because it lives on memories of other friendships and experiences. It damages existing relationships by its continual reference to other, 'more prosperous' relationships or by possessing unrealistic expectations of current ones. This weed is best eradicated by thanking God for precious memories and concentrating on nurturing the current relationships He provides (Eph. 5:20; Phil. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:18).

#### *The I-Me Weed*

*The I-Me Weed* grows to enormous heights until nothing else in the garden can be seen; it is a real love-choker, often turning friendships into thickets of fighting and competition. The presence of this weed creates an environment directly opposite of the *agape* love commanded by God that challenges you to accept your friend exactly as

she is, forgives and forgets unintentional slights, places no demands on the friendship, and allows the will rather than the emotions to control it. Another name for selfishness, the *I-Me Weed* quickly establishes itself as the center of the Friendship Garden and demands to be in control. It is most effectively eradicated by sowing the *Our-We* seed in the Friendship Garden (Prov. 13:10; Gal. 5:15, 19-25; Phil. 2:3; James 3:16).

### *The Clam-up Weed*

*The Clam-up Weed* is one of the most difficult to eradicate because when one friend ‘clams up’ it is almost impossible to correct the situation; should this weed invade, the silence that falls over the Friendship Garden is like the silence of a tomb. The residual effect of this weed is often a suppression of one’s feelings that may eventually erupt in an explosion; to eradicate, communicate frequently and temper the tone, choice, and number of your words. Should disagreements arise, refuse to remain angry and be willing to admit your contribution to the conflict (Prov. 25:11, 26:20, 31:26; Eph. 4:15, 25-32).

### *The Wandering Affection Weed*

*The Wandering Affection Weed* is small, ugly, and has sharp leaves and roots that cut the roots of love, under the surface, out of sight, so a relationship does not know what is happening until it is too late. This weed seeks to cultivate a new relationship by destroying an existing one. *The Wandering Affection Weed* whispers slanderous comments about existing friends, suggests that she can best fulfill your friendship needs, and insinuates that it is permissible

to abort a long-established friendship for a new one with her. While it is important to pursue new friendships, it is not appropriate for you to undermine a deeply rooted friendship in order to do so. Eradication of *the Wandering Affection Weed* includes refusing to discredit an existing friendship, purposing to 'love at all times,' seeking to bear your friend's burdens, doing things which are particularly pleasing to her, and concentrating on her positive qualities rather than her weaknesses (Ps.101:5; Prov. 6:19, 17:17; Gal. 6:2, 10; Phil. 4:8, 9).

### *The I Am Always Right Weed*

Standing stiff and erect in the Friendship Garden, *The I Am Always Right Weed* offers a sharp, immediate response to anything she disagrees with; a pro at conflict, it is amazing that so many ugly words can spew forth from her lips if she is provoked. When she assumes this stance engaging in discussion with her is futile since she is always right. Eradication of the *I Am Always Right Weed* requires prayer on your part so that the words of your mouth and the meditations of your heart are acceptable to the Lord. Two ways to remove this weed from your friendship garden are:

- ✱ Filling your mind with God's Word so that your responses are His responses.
- ✱ Being willing to graciously and gently speak the truth in love so as to ensure you are not providing ammunition that keeps a conflict in momentum (Ps. 19:14, 39:1, 49:3, 119:11; Prov. 4:23-24, 10:20, 12:18, 15:2, 18:21, 21:23, 23:7, 25:21,

31:26; Matt. 12:33-37; Luke 6:45; Eph. 4:15; Col. 3:16; James 1:26-27, 3:6-10).

### *The I Call You When I Need You Weed*

*The I Call You When I Need You Weed* lies dormant for long periods and then suddenly appears. *The I Call You When I Need You Weed* extracts from the friendship what she desires then allows it to lay latent until another need arises. As with the *I-Me Weed*, selfishness is the primary source of the *I Call You When I Need You Weed*. Eradication of this weed includes choosing to love your friend as yourself, being more concerned about her needs than yours, and praying for a heart that desires to honor others (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:43; Mark 12:33; Rom. 2:6-8, 12:10, 13:7; Phil. 2:3-4; Heb. 13:1; 2 Pet. 1:7-11).

Regardless of the appearance of these weeds, all generate from the same taproot—pride, the first of the six things that the Lord hates (Prov. 6:16-17). Pride cultivates disharmony in the Friendship Garden while humility, the opposite of pride, generates an atmosphere of peace and harmony (Col. 3:12-17). The most effective time to eradicate weeds in the Friendship Garden is when they are young, tender, and actively growing—and you can only do this in the Lord's strength. As James 4:6, the spiritual weed killer, is applied to the invading weeds, your Friendship Garden will produce spectacular bouquets!

### Align Your Thoughts

The Lord pleads in John 17:20-21, 'I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their

word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent me' (NKJV). Are you quick to eradicate weeds from your Friendship Garden so that the watching world observes the love of God in your friendships?

## 8. Does A Portrait of Biblical Friendship Exist?

I enjoy studying the lives of men and women of the Bible because they allow me to see a practical application of Scripture (or not as the case may be).

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:1-12.

This is a reminder that every event recorded in Scripture was written for 'our instruction'—so it seems reasonable that we would look to biblical friendships as a guide for ours. One of the classic descriptions of friendship recorded in Scripture is that of Jonathan and David (1 Sam. 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-42; 23:16; 2 Sam. 1:17). The qualities of their relationship, as seen in the book of 1 Samuel, provide a wonderful role model for multi-tasked women:

- \* *Friendship requires effort* (18:1). In our twenty-first century society; too many friendships are based on surface attributes and selfish ambitions. Jonathan's cultivation of his friendship with David reflects a willingness to cross social barriers and personal agendas to develop a genuine relationship.
- \* *Friendship involves sacrifice* (18:4; 23:16-17). Unselfishness is always necessary to practice true friendship. Each individual must be willing to give up something treasured; in Jonathan's case, he willingly surrendered his rightful position as king.
- \* *Friendship promotes the best interests of the other* (19:1-7).  
Jeopardizing his own safety and relationship with his

father, Jonathan sought to alert David to potential danger, defended him, and cultivated a spirit of reconciliation between Saul and David.

- \* *Friendship is willing to take the brunt of another person's circumstances* (20:24-33). Every woman needs someone to 'go to the wall' for her, and, against insurmountable odds, Jonathan did 'go to the wall' for David.

Read: 2 Samuel 1:26

This clearly describes that David's love for Jonathan was reciprocated. 'A deep concern and affection was the basis of the covenantal relationship between Jonathan and David. This is the affection commanded by God when He said, "Love your neighbor as yourself."' <sup>8</sup>

May I encourage you to evaluate the qualities of Jonathan and David's friendship in light of the qualities resident in yours? Perhaps these questions will help ...

- \* Am I willing to pursue a relationship if it requires effort?
- \* Do I make significant personal sacrifices for my friends?
- \* Do I promote the best interests of my friends?
- \* Am I willing to take the brunt of another person's circumstances?

The writings of two authors, one from the twentieth century and one from the twenty-first, offer meaningful thoughts that aid women in focusing on the importance of cherishing

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8. John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville: Word: 1997), note at 1 Samuel 20:17.

our friendships. Would your friends be able to write a comparable tribute to you?

And a youth said, Speak to us of Friendship.

And he answered, saying:

Your friend is your needs answered. He is your field which  
you sow with love and reap with thanksgiving.

And he is your board and your fireside.

For you come to him with your hunger, and you seek him for  
peace.

When your friend speaks his mind you fear not the 'nay' in  
your own mind, nor do you withhold the 'aye.' And when  
he is silent your heart ceases not to listen to his heart;

For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires,  
all expectations are born and shared, with joy that is  
unclaimed. When you part from your friend, you grieve  
not; for that which you love most in him may be clearer in  
his absence, as the mountain to the climber is clearer from  
the plain.

And let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening  
of the spirit. For love that seeks aught but the disclosure  
of its own mystery is not love but a net cast forth: and  
only the unprofitable is caught.

And let your best be for your friend. If he must know the  
ebb of your tide, let him know its flood also. For what is  
your friend that you should seek him with hours to kill?  
Seek him always with hours to live. For it is his to fill your  
need, but not your emptiness. And in the sweetness of  
friendship let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures.

For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and  
is refreshed.<sup>9</sup>

KAHLIL GIBRAN

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9. Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, Inc.: 1923), 58.

## MY GREATEST PRIZE

It seems as each year ends,  
I look back and think of my friends,  
What I did right what I did wrong,  
Who came into my life and who is gone.

But every year there are those who remain,  
Looking only for friendship nothing else to gain.  
They have stayed by me through good and bad,  
Smiled when I am happy held me when I've been sad.

After so many years you begin to realize,  
That a friend is life's greatest prize,  
Not the pot of gold at the end of a rainbow,  
That we seem to seek wherever we go.

So as I grow older and begin another New Year's Day,  
I will thank God for those friends He sent my way.  
And my New Year's resolution will always be,  
To thank Him again for every breath of life He's given me.

Then I will pray He will show me the way,  
Give me wisdom and guide me through each day.  
And most of all at the end of each year,  
Keep by me those friends I will always hold so dear.  
And as I make new friends I'll treasure the old,  
For the first are silver the latter gold.

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## 9. Is There A Strategy for Me to Cherish My Friendships?

Only God can really know what you are truly like—the  
remainder of those with whom you interact must be satisfied