



## 1: The Foundation of Friendship | Pastor Joe Wittwer | February 7, 2010

### A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

### B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

**Introduction:** This week we kick off a four week series called “Build it Right,” on how to build a lasting marriage. Great marriages are built over time, and when you are starting out, there is a proper sequence. If you mix up the sequence, you can mess up the relationship! Start with friendship, let that blossom into romance, let that deepen to the point of a life-long commitment of marriage, and then celebrate with sexual intimacy. Each step in this sequence is a living step, something we keep doing and building upon. The best marriages start as friendships. If you want a great marriage, marry your best friend and keep it that way! Friendships are built on what we share together. To build a great marriage, you lay the foundation first, and that foundation is friendship. Let’s look at four things that will build a great friendship, and lay a solid foundation for a lasting marriage.

**1. Friends love to do things together.** If you hope to build a lasting relationship, it’s important to share some common interests. If you don’t share any common interests or activities, it’s going to be tough sledding. You don’t have to like all the same things, but it’s important to share something together. Each partner in a marriage is a unique individual and will have his or her own sphere of interests, but if these don’t overlap at some points, a couple will grow farther apart. **Ecclesiastes 9:9a** says, “*Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love.*” You build a friendship by shared interests and by having fun together. If you and your spouse aren’t taking time for fun together, if you’re not laughing together, if you’re not having some adventure together, you probably have a boring marriage. And a boring marriage is a marriage in trouble! It’s time to have some fun. Go play together. Marry your best friend and keep it that way.

**2. Friends love to talk together.** **Exodus 33:11** states, “*The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.*” Best friends love to talk together, face to face. You build a friendship one conversation at a time. Young couples who are falling in love say, “We can talk about everything!” They spend hours in intimate, private conversations over tea or coffee. After a few years of marriage, these same couples often say, “We don’t talk much anymore.” Dr. Willard Harley, Jr. in his book, *His Needs, Her Needs*, says, “If a husband seriously wants to meet his wife’s need to feel close to him, he will give the task sufficient time and attention.” Remember men, most women fall in love with a man who set aside time to exchange conversation and affection with them. They stay in love with a man who continues to meet those needs. Set aside friendship time to talk with your wife, to listen and understand her feelings. You both need to exhibit that same intense interest in each other and in what you have to say, especially about your feelings. Go for a walk together and talk. A quiet drive can work wonders. Have a lunch date or a coffee date. Don’t settle for just a few minutes a week. Best friends make time to talk. Marry your best friend and keep it that way.

**3. Friends love to be together.** Best friends love to be together. They simply enjoy each other’s company. And when you’re building a friendship, you hang out a lot. You enjoy being together. That’s not to say that you have to be together all the time. Every couple needs room to breathe and to spend some time apart. The saying “Absence makes the heart grow fonder” is true to a degree as long as the absences aren’t too long or too frequent. Too much absence can make the heart grow colder, not fonder. You can’t be apart too long and maintain intimacy. Best friends *need* time together to maintain the friendship. Some couples grow apart in marriage simply because they stop spending time together. They each develop separate lives, and it jeopardizes both the friendship and the marriage. Marry someone whose company and presence you enjoy, someone you love to be around. Marry your best friend and keep it that way.

**4. Friends love God together.** The most important ingredient in a close friendship is a shared center or goal. As Christians, that center or goal is Jesus. We want to know Him, love Him with all we have, and follow Him. Because this is our life goal and highest purpose, naturally, we should seek out friends who share it. Building a friendship around a shared love for God is the very best foundation for marriage. **2 Corinthians 6:14–15** urges that we “*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?*” And the prophet Amos wrote, “*Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?*” (**Amos 3:3**) If we agree to go on a walk, we must agree on the direction, otherwise we will have a hard time walking together. Likewise, we must be aligned spiritually. **Ecclesiastes 4:9–12** says, “*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*” Do you want to build a friendship that will last a lifetime? Build it around Jesus. Make Him the deep center of your friendship. Friends love God together. Marry your best friend and keep it that way.

**C. Life Group Questions** (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)

1. What are the steps to building a successful, long-lasting relationship? Name the four things that will build a great friendship. Are any of those four things missing in your marriage? Or growing relationships?
2. What do you and your friends like to do together? Describe how you can incorporate your significant other. Do you have hobbies or interests that you do not share or want to share with your significant other? What are those hobbies or interests? How do you balance your personal interests and hobbies with the interests you share with your significant other?
3. Couples and friends can grow apart. Describe how you and a friend have grown apart. Why did this happen? Were you able to become close again, if so how?
4. If you're married, your partner married you because he/she thought the pleasant things you did during your courtship would continue for the rest of your lives. Are you holding up your end of the bargain? If you're single, how will you prepare for a relationship with someone you might marry? How will you implement the four ideas Pastor Joe shared as you build the foundation of your relationship?
5. Describe how you and your spouse do or will put God at the center of your relationship. How do you keep God in the center of your friendships? Re-read **Amos 3:3**. Describe a time when you felt you and your spouse were going in different directions. How did you resolve the issue? Describe how loving Jesus more will make you a better spouse, friend, employee, parent, sibling, etc.

**D. Personal Application** (1-3 Minutes).

- If you are married or dating, plan a time to spend quality, uninterrupted time with your significant other. This coming Sunday is Valentine's Day, men, plan to do one of those hobbies that you like to do with your spouse or significant other, or spend time together if you haven't lately.
- If you are single, begin to thoughtfully process how you will prepare for a future relationship with someone special.

**E. Prayer Time** (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4:10-15 Minutes)

- Thank God for blessing you with friends and your significant other. Ask God to reveal how you can better serve your friends and significant other.
- Ask God to help you prepare, repair or build upon the foundation of your relationships and make Him the center.
- Bring any requests or praises from the group to God.