

Making New Friends

Why is it that as soon as we make new friends and get life settled everything changes?

Once high school is over, life is never the same again, or so it seems. If we go off to school, we spend our first year making new friends only to discover that the next September some of them do not return to school and others change so much that we hardly recognize them any more. Deep inside, we also understand that we ourselves are changing and, therefore, are not content with some of the friends we made last year.

If we go to work rather than to college, life is pretty much the same. We ourselves often change jobs. Our friends change jobs, too. We meet new people and they challenge us to grow. It isn't easy to keep the same friends year in and year out.

Here are a few suggestions for forming friendships. These suggestions can be of help to you whether you are starting college, returning for another year, or already working.

1. Get out and meet people. Don't excuse yourself from this important part of young adult life. You do not have to agree with other people or imitate the way they act. All you have to do is meet them, talk with them, and listen for clues that someone in the group may become an important part of your life.

2. Pick your close friends wisely. Friendship almost always requires that friends share the same values. If your values are those of Jesus, you may discover that it takes time to find others who share the same attitudes toward life you do. Don't be discouraged, keep looking. Your search will be rewarded. There are many other people your age who share those values with you.

3. Look for friends in the right places. If you spend all your time looking for friends in bars, don't be surprised if everyone you know seems to drink more than is good for them. Try joining church groups, groups that show an interest in the environment or in other social causes. Join a group that is interested in the out-of-doors. People with the same values tend to cluster around causes which strengthen their values.

4. Be a good listener. Listen to what others say about themselves, their families and their interests. You cannot learn about other people if you yourself are always talking.

5. Be enthusiastic about life. Nobody likes a wet blanket. Your optimistic enthusiasm will make you a person others enjoy being with. If you are pessimistic, sullen and moody, only the most confused people will want to be with you.

6. Talk to your parents or other adults you trust about your friends. Remember, they have been in the friend-making business for years and can shed valuable light on your new friendships.

Friends are a very special gift from God. Most of us experience only a few close friendships in a lifetime. We can have many acquaintances, however, people who enjoy doing what we enjoy. These are not people we share our deepest feelings with nor people we can count on to help us with our most serious problems, but, they are valuable.

Expect to have many acquaintances and just a few close friends. Be sure that God is one of those close friends. He wants it to be that way.