



Friends and Fitness Module

Table of Contents

Providential Relationships – Andy Stanley	5
The Foundation of Friendship – Craig Groeschel	11
Fitness–Mental and Physical – Roger Smithson & Dr. Thad Hardin	17



Providential Relationships

5 Things God Uses to Grow Your Faith Series

Session 9: Providential Relationships (41 Minutes)

Presenter: Andy Stanley

<https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/216?episode=9>

Synopsis of the Friends & Fitness Module: In this Module, we will focus on why men have so few close friends, why this is not healthy, and how men can build lasting relationships with other men. The goal of the Fitness “F” is not about how much weight you can lift, or how far or how fast you can run. It is about growing and preserving the energy that God gives you to live a life focused on others.

Synopsis of this Session: In this session, we will speak about “providential relationships.” A “providential relationship” is a divine appointment with someone you may or may not know, and when looking back upon that encounter at a later date, you see that God was engineering this appointment.

Session Introduction

Relationships with other people are extremely important. Through a deepening personal relationship with you, the unbeliever may find Christ as their personal Savior. If the person is already a believer, through their relationship with you, they may grow and mature in their spiritual life. In short, God often brings people into our lives at just the right time—when they are open to spiritual conversations.

In this lesson, we will focus on friendships. Friendships in life are important. In fact, after nearly 50 years of counseling believers and non-believers alike, I would say that at least

90% of the people who entered into a counseling relationship with me would **not** have come to see me if they had one good friend.

With whom have you had a relationship that God used to make your faith stronger? In what ways did their influence impact your life?

Has there been anyone in your life who God used to cause you to be more curious about your faith? Who was that person and what were the circumstances?

Relationships allow us to experience how faith _____ with other areas of life.

- ◆ How faith intersects with the **marketplace**.
- ◆ How faith intersects in my place of **employment**.
- ◆ How faith intersects in my **family, friends, neighborhood, and community**.

Friends can often _____ our faith, as God will use others to aid in our own personal spiritual development.

Think about how _____ have helped you grow in your walk with God. Andy Stanley shared how others impacted his personal life:

- ◆ Shaped and rescued his faith.
- ◆ Shaped his view of God.
- ◆ Shaped his understanding of Christianity.
- ◆ Shaped his view of the world.
- ◆ Helped him understand how the truth of God intersects with life.

When you hear a faith story, it is always connected to a relationship. You seldom hear of someone growing in their faith and their relationship with Christ by being _____.

Throughout the seasons of our lives there are relational intersections that mesh people into our story. Faith stories always have “relationships” as a common denominator. I often say, “If the Bible teaches me anything, it teaches me that we all need God and we all need one another.”

- **Someone made the following astute observation, “To the world, you may be one person, but to one person, you may be the world.”**

There may not be a defined conversation that shapes our faith as much as how we see “faith” lived out in the lives of others. Remember, more is “caught” than “taught.” We might call this “life-on-life discipleship.”

While God can use human _____ to impact our faith in Him, the opposite can be true as well. **Has there been anybody who has undermined your faith in God?**

Who is that person and what did they do that negatively impacted your faith?

Remember, the best kind of friend is one who pushes you closer to Christ.

- ◆ Some of life’s greatest regrets can be linked to a relationship with another person.
- ◆ Our habits, good or bad, are often connected to a relationship.

Right relationships can help build and _____ our faith. **How can I leverage relationships for the sake of building my faith?**

Remember, the following truths:

- ◆ You are around people every day that do not care about your faith.
- ◆ Culture continually pushes you away from your faith.
- ◆ Your sin nature tempts you to do the wrong thing.
- ◆ The people you choose to surround yourself will influence your spirituality for good or bad.
- ◆ There is a spiritual component to relationships because God uses people to aid in our spiritual growth.

Solomon warns:

“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise ...” (Prov. 13:20 ESV)

Human relationships can have a negative spiritual impact on our lives. Paul stated this truth in his first letter to the Corinthians:

“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’” (1 Cor. 15:33 ESV)

There is a spiritual principle that states we often become like those we spend time with.

How Do We Partner with God to Create Providential Relationships?

1. Be _____ about establishing relational environments. We need to actively funnel energy into activities and events where relationships might develop.

Paul stated that the greatest testimony to the truth of the gospel is a changed life. In fact, believers are “living” epistles that both believers and unbelievers can read:

“You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all.” (2 Cor. 3:2 ESV)

2. Be _____ so that God will use you to aid in the spiritual growth of others.
 - **Pray** that God would use you both to bless and edify others.
 - **Reject passivity.** Be willing and eager to become involved in people’s lives.
 - Providential relationships often begin with awkward moments and _____ conversations. We have to be willing to step-out of our comfort zone for the sake of souls.
 - We must intentionally do something that will intersect our lives with the lives of others. God can and will bring people into our lives at just the right time.
 - So, resolve to take the initiative and do something!

The _____ principle is working at all times. We are either working with it and benefitting from it, or if we are ignoring it and missing the blessings of being with other people.

Discussion Questions

1. **Why do you think men are so poor at building relationships?**
2. **When it comes to relationships, are you a consumer or an investor?**

3. How do we balance “walking with the wise” and spending time with unbelievers?

4. Specifically, who is God calling you to build a relationship with to nudge them closer to Christ?

Conclusion

William Arthur Ward defined a “real” friend in these words, “A true friend knows your weaknesses but shows you your strengths; feels your fears but fortifies your faith; sees your anxieties but frees your spirit; recognizes your disabilities but emphasizes your possibilities.” Are you that kind of friend to others? Someone is counting on you to be that kind of friend to them today.

Providential Relationships



The Foundation of Friendship

The Foundation of Friendship (38 Minutes)

Presenter: Craig Groeschel

<https://www.life.church/media/friending/the-foundation-of-friendship/>

Synopsis of this Session: This session focuses on the premise that we are all one friend away from a changed life. Simply put, the right kind of friends can move us closer to God. On the other hand, we are one wrong friend away from trouble. To help us make the right kind of friends, in this session we will offer practical suggestions to help you discover the lost art of making friends.

Session Introduction

Show me your friends and I will show you your _____. Solomon warned:

“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but **the companion of fools will suffer harm.**” (Prov. 13:20 ESV)

We believe that everyone can identify with the following two statements:

- ◆ Any success I have had in life is the result of God using the right friends to _____ me.
- ◆ Almost every time that I ended up in trouble—it was because of the wrong kind of friends.

List Your Closest Friends

Take a moment and list your current five closest friends:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

We asked you to list your five closest friends because you are the average of your five closest friends—financially, morally, the attitude you express, in your walk with God, etc. Like it or not, it is true that you _____ like those you regularly associate with. To quote Jim Rohn again, “You are the average of the 5 people you spend the most time with.”

Do you really want to become like those you are with? If you really desire to honor God with your life, you must seriously ask yourself, “Am I associating with the right people?” Solomon spoke of the “right” people when he wrote:

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.”
(Prov. 17:17 ESV)

According to the *American Sociological Review*, the average American has only _____ close friends. Just 25 years ago the average American had 6 close friends. Today, 1 in 4 Americans report they do **not** have one single friend.

Why Are Friendships Declining?

We suggest that the number of friendships in the lives of most Americans today is declining because of:

1. An ever-increasing number of hours spent at work.
2. Ever increasing divorce rates.
3. The explosion of social media.

It is sad but true that social media has redefined the meaning of the word “friend.” We have in fact become less concerned about _____ _____ _____ friendships. As a whole, we have become obsessed with our on-line image and who people think we are.

The simple truth is that the more followers or Facebook friends we have, or the more likes we receive, the more we feel alone (an inverse relationship). Social media has created the illusion of intimacy. Many of our social media “friends” are really “counterfeit” friends and this is certainly not what God intended. In fact, the more time people spend on social media, the more they crave true relationships.

Rediscovering The Lost Art of Friendship

In order to develop friendships, Craig Groeschel makes the following two suggestions:

A. Be Present.

We must resolve to develop our friendships face-to-face—not just thumbs to thumbs. When we say “be present”—we mean that you should be present with other people not just physically but also mentally. When you are with other people, do not allow yourself to be distracted from the people you are with.

Jesus knew the value and power of true friendships. He did not merely say, “Read this book” (a solo activity), he said, “Follow me.” (have a relationship with me)

Even our children have realized that something is not right! Today, more children are complaining that their parents are constantly on their phones than parents are complaining about their children constantly being on their phones.

The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of a believer’s need for godly friends—especially in the “last days” before the return of Christ:

“And **let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works**, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Heb. 10:24-25 ESV)

There is power in _____. Something special happens when people gather in Jesus’ name. When we gather with God’s people, we are not merely present physically—we are also present spiritually and emotionally. Perhaps we should honestly ask ourselves, “At the end of my life, will the number of ‘selfies’ or ‘likes’ really matter?”

Whenever you are eating a meal with others, put your phone down! It is actually rude to be looking at your phone in the presence of others. Have you ever thought about what

God thinks of this? The simple truth is that we may miss a spiritual opportunity to be a blessing, or to receive one, if our mind is consumed with the information on our phone.

Make the people in front of you a _____.

B. Be Transparent.

By “transparent,” we mean that you should be “open” with the people you are with so that they will be able to easily perceive your thoughts, true feelings, or motives.

One of the newest and fastest growing “phobias” in America is the fear of talking to people on the phone. The basis for this “fear” is that they cannot predict or _____ the direction of the conversation.

James, the half-brother of our Lord, exhorts us to be open and transparent with our friends and to pray regularly for one another because there is power in the act of prayer:

“Therefore, **confess your sins to one another and pray for one another**, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” (James 5:16 ESV)

We may impress people with our strengths, but we connect with people through our _____. If we convey vulnerability to others, this will put them at ease in our presence, and they may be transparent with us..

Show us your friends and we will show you your future. Remember that God did not intend for anyone’s life’s journey to be a solo flight.

We need the courage to acknowledge that what we are presently doing is not _____. The truth is that God desires more for us!

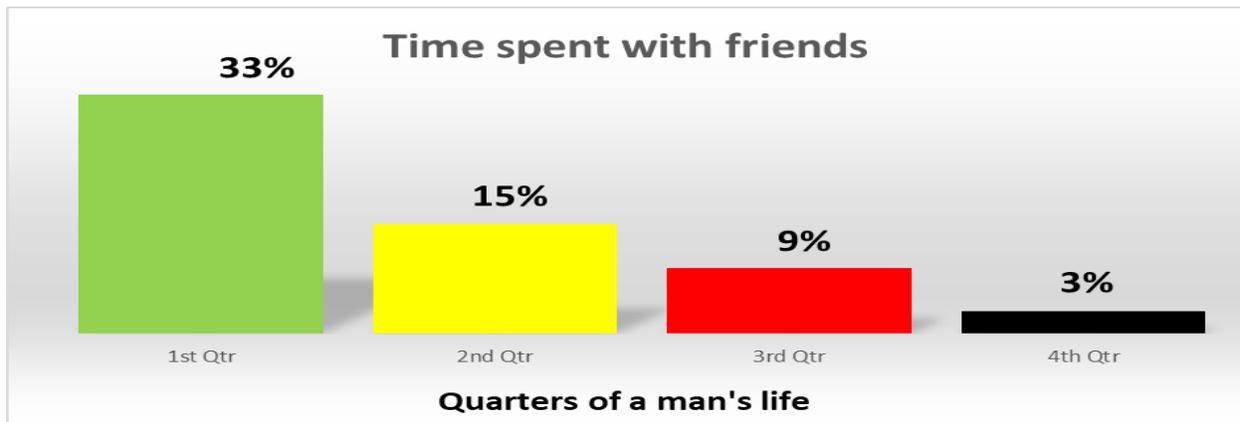
The energy it takes to grow more friends is truly a _____ in that the more we personally sacrifice to be a friend, the more we receive from friends.

As men, we should always be looking to:

- Create opportunities to encounter new people that will allow God the opportunity to work in us and then through us.
- Show a genuine interest in the stories of others.

When showing interest in the stories of others, _____ expect reciprocation. The sad reality is that most people only care about their own story.

The turnover (called “churn”) of our friends occurs about every _____ years.



Discussion Questions

1. Craig Groeschel ended his lesson with the question, “Are you pleased with where you are?” Are you? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think people do not invest their energy in other people?
3. How applicable is the seven-year “churn” to the friends you remember in your past?
4. What does the paradox of giving more and receiving more have to do with friends?

The Foundation of Friendship



The Fitness F

Physical and Mental Fitness

Presenters: Roger Smithson & Dr. Thad Hardin

Synopsis of this Session: The goal of the Fitness “F” is **not** about how much weight you can lift or how far or how fast you can run. It is about growing and preserving the energy that God gives you to live a life focused on others.

Session Introduction

The Apostle Peter penned these words of instruction:

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.” (2 Pet.1:5 ESV)

The goal of the Fitness “F” is to develop self-control in the area of the physical in order that we may actually increase and preserve the energy that God gives us in order that we may live a life focused on others.

The American Diet

In America today:

- ◆ 37% of adults are obese.

- ◆ Obesity-related conditions include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. These are in fact some of the leading causes of preventable death.

“The only difference between me and most men is 1 to 2 pounds per year.” –Jim Doan

Gaining weight is a _____. We take calories in and store them as fuel or we burn the calories. Simply put, if we take in more calories than we burn ... we gain weight.

A 2016 survey revealed that the average American eats almost five meals per week from a restaurant and breakfast was not included on the survey. This is not a healthy lifestyle and not an effective way to manage our weight. Why? Because:

- ◆ Most commercially prepared food has much higher levels of salt, fat, and sugar. These three items are the “unholy trinity” of nutrition!
- ◆ In 2016, for the first time in history, Americans spent more money on eating out than on purchasing groceries.
- ◆ The cost for a family of four to eat a meal in a restaurant is nearly \$50. In comparison, the same meal prepared at home is less than \$15. To put this in perspective, a family of four could save \$105 per week by eating their meals at home. If this amount was compounded over 40 years, with an average of 7% per year return, the financial savings is over \$1,000,000!

Structured diets are nearly impossible to sustain. Building common-sense eating habits is much more _____. Research has discovered:

- ◆ Less than 5% of Americans eat a healthy diet.
- ◆ The failure rate on a formalized diet is over 98%. You cannot stay on a diet long term but you can eat healthy over the long term.

The _____ rule is that you will eat healthy 80% of the time and deviate about 20% of the time. This means that I should eat:

- ◆ 17 healthy meals during the week.
- ◆ 4 meals of whatever I want to eat.

Carbohydrates and sugars are the greatest source of a dietary imbalance for most people. This includes:

- ◆ Breads, pastas, and starches.

- ◆ Sugary drinks such as sodas and sweet tea.

Our diet should be more focused on lean proteins and vegetables—foods such as:

- ◆ Chicken, turkey, fish, and red meat consumed in moderation.
- ◆ Lots of fruits and vegetables.

More than 1 in 3 Americans (36%) say they eat less than one serving per day of _____ and _____. This is also out of balance.

- ◆ The World Health Organization (WHO) guideline is a minimum of five servings per day of fruits and vegetables.
- ◆ Consuming up to ten servings per day has shown to have a dramatic effect on Type 2 diabetes, stroke, cancer, and heart disease.
- ◆ As general rule of thumb, a portion size is one cup.

Look for fruits and vegetables with a lot of color. You can provide most of the vitamins and nutrients your body needs just by eating a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables. Stay away from browns and whites and drink water, water, and more water.

Nutrition and My *Life Plan*

When writing your *Life Plan*, we suggest that you make the following resolutions:

- ◆ My diet will not interfere with me becoming the man I want to be.
- ◆ I will not allow my diet to diminish my energy.
- ◆ I will be disciplined in my approach but prefer simple, healthy habits.
- ◆ I will always keep the social aspect of food in perspective.

Physical Exercise

The writer of the book of Hebrews explains that all discipline, whether it is God's discipline or personal discipline, is difficult for the moment but the long-term benefits are worth any sacrifice we make today:

“For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” ¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees.”
(Heb. 12:11-12 ESV)

Exercise is typically viewed as a sin tax on enjoying food too much. Wouldn't it be different if we saw exercise as something bigger than a self-centered act and something to grow the _____ we need to give to others?

Exercise has the ability to ward off depression, reduce the risk of diabetes and heart disease, lower the heart rate, and improve memory just to name a few.

The American Heart Association reports that cardiovascular health can be improved by exercising 150 minutes per week. This breaks down to 30 minutes per day, five days per week. Higher intensity exercise, combined with weight or resistance training, requires even less time—only 75 minutes per week.

More than half (52%) of adults aged 18 years or older do **not** meet recommendations for aerobic exercise or physical activity. In addition, 76% did **not** meet recommendations for muscle-strengthening physical activity.

An exercise program should be quick, efficient, and _____. You need to do it long enough to become a habit and for it to become enjoyable. This typically takes about six weeks.

Our heart is the motor that drives our body and better knowledge of our heart rate determines how much exercise our body needs. This is the reason that when you go to the doctor the first thing he or she will do is check your heart rate.

God gave us a finite amount of heart beats in a lifetime. The more stress you put on your heart by being over-weight or having unhealthy habits, forces your heart rate to increase and in effect, shortens your life.

Any exercise program should be kept in _____ and you need to keep in mind why you are doing it:

1. For My family.

Dr. Thad Hardin puts the issue in its proper perspective, "My fitness goals are to be focused on outliving my wife. I do not want her to have to live a single day without me serving, protecting, and providing for her."

2. For My Lord.

The apostle Paul shared God's perspective on exercise in the life of the believer when he penned these words:

“For while **bodily training is of some value**, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” (1 Tim. 4:8 ESV)

In the mind of God, _____ is important—second only to godly living.

Mental Health

In an effort to prevent cognitive decline, we suggest that you:

- ◆ Realize that mental fitness is just as important as physical fitness, and maybe even more so as we age.
- ◆ Seek a healthy balance between mental and physical fitness.

In summary, neglecting one can compromise the other.

We submit that you can increase your cognitive development by:

1. Reading.

- We need to seriously analyze what we are placing in our mind.
- One of the most common characteristics of successful people is reading.
- Therefore, reading is a way to develop the habits of the most successful people in history.
- In summary, reading is exercise for your brain similar to what physical exercise is for your body.

“Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers.”—President Harry S. Truman

2. Social Interaction.

- A good social network is extremely important.
- There are many positive effects from friendships.
- As we age, we must fight against the _____ where we hole up in our houses and close our friends out.

“We are exactly the same person we will be five years from now except for the people we meet and the books we read.”— Charlie “Tremendous” Jones

3. Hobbies.

- Maintaining our mental fitness requires a regular mental _____.

- Parkinson's Law states that "Work will consume as much time as we will allow" or as I often say, "Work will expand to fill all available time."
- Do not wait till the end of life to develop hobbies. We all know what refreshes us. Whatever that is, make it a regular part of your schedule.
- Hobbies also allow easy entryways to increase our network of friends.

4. Prayer.

- A sizable portion of doctor's visits are precipitated by illnesses such as depression, hyper-tension, elevated blood pressure, intestinal issues, and headaches. The source of all these maladies is elevated levels of stress and anxiety.
- The medical community is slowly realizing that prayer is a benefit to health.
- When we pray, our rate of metabolism, heart rate, and blood pressure all decrease.

A daily time of Bible study, accompanied by prayer, can quickly address two of the most essential elements for maintaining an alert mind and a low level of stress:

- ◆ You are reading the greatest book ever written by the greatest mind in the universe. The benefits should be obvious.
- ◆ You are declaring the importance of God in your life and your total dependence on him to make that day count.

Preventive Care – Dr. Thad Hardin

Dr. Thad Hardin answers the following questions, "What can I do to get healthier?" and "How can I avoid preventable diseases?" with the following suggestions:

- ◆ If you do not have a Primary Care Physician (PCP), start the search this week. It is essential that you find a doctor whom you trust and one where you can get timely appointments.
- ◆ Exercise regularly.
- ◆ Eat a healthy balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- ◆ Maintain a healthy weight for your body type.
- ◆ Know your family history concerning disease.
- ◆ Protect your skin from exposure to the sun.
- ◆ Have a daily quiet time where you pray and read the scriptures. This helps your spiritual life, mental health, and physical health.
- ◆ If you are struggling mentally, do not hesitate to seek help.
- ◆ Develop a close group of friends whom you trust.

- ◆ Laugh every day and hug those whom you love. These actions have been shown to reduce stress, reduce blood pressure, and reduce your heart rate in general.
- ◆ Have regular wellness exams and cancer screenings.

After the age of 30:

- Have a yearly physical examination.
- Check your blood pressure, heart rate, and pulse regularly.
- Ask your PCP for a full blood work-up at least once a year.
- Remember, your PCP will also be your referral point to a specialist.

After the age of 50:

- Schedule a colonoscopy according to the current medical guidelines.
- Have a yearly prostate exam.
- Know your family history of disease. Begin having regular examinations before the earliest age a relative was diagnosed with a family disease.

Session Summary

Fitness is about keeping yourself fit enough to live a life focused on _____—the ones you love the most. They deserve both your physical energy and mental alertness.

The Fitness F

