

# DISCERNING LEVELS OF FRIENDSHIP

[adapted from the Institute in Basic Life Principles Seminar]

## Four different levels of relationships (from shallowest to deepest):

### 1. Acquaintances

These relationships are based on occasional contact, such as people you may encounter at work, shopping, or just out for a walk. You each feel free to ask general questions like, "How are you doing?" "What do you think about this weather?"

### 2. Casual Friendships

These relationships are based on common interests, activities, and concerns. They may be people you play golf with, those in a Bible study with you, or a close neighbor. With these people you have the freedom to ask specific questions about their opinions, ideas, wishes, or goals.

### 3. Close Friendship & Fellowship

These relationships are based on establishing mutual life goals and aspirations. In the closeness of these relationships you have the freedom to suggest mutual projects you can work at together to reach life goals and purposes.

### 4. Intimate Friendship & Fellowship

This is the deepest relationship that followers of Jesus can have with each other, the type that is based on mutual commitment to each other's Christ-like character development. In these relationships you have the freedom and mutual responsibility to correct each other and to help each other to keep pressing on.



Next, list the most important relationships in your life. Then, next to each name put a number from 1 to 4 to represent the level of relationship you have with each person. Are the numbers you put by each person the reality of your relationship, or instead what you hoped it would be? Be careful about too readily giving someone a 4. (see below)

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Several essential factors must have taken place in your life and in someone else's for you to have a level 4 relationship with them. Through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit there must have occurred in each of you:

1. Complete repentance resulting in a clear conscience. (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Acts 2:38)
2. A distinct reduction of fear in your life, and a humble, vulnerable openness to input from others. (1 John 4:18,19; Matthew 10:28; James 4:6; Ephesians 4:1,2)
3. A strong, responsive desire to bear fruit for the glory of God; a noticeable wholeheartedness about the things of God; a trusting obedience by grace to the will of God. (Matthew 3:8; 7:16; John 15:1,2; Mark 12:30; Matthew 7:21-27)