

Good Friends

As you fill your life with good things, it will be more difficult to make progress if friends take you back to your old ways. Sure, nobody's friends are perfect—we all make mistakes. But if a friend gets you into trouble you would have stayed out of on your own, that is not helping you.

Meet positive new friends in positive places: churches, recovery meetings, volunteer activities, parks, libraries, etc. It may not be fun or easy to talk to people you do not know, but it is worth it. Be tolerant. Use some of the “Good Words” you have been practicing. We are all people and we all like someone to speak nicely to us. How do you keep friends? Easy! Never lie to them.

Good Work

One of the most useful things in life is finding a job that you enjoy, and that provides for your family's needs. King Solomon said:

And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God (Ecclesiastes 3:13, NLT).

Yes, all jobs have difficult people and tough tasks at times, but it is worthwhile to look past those things for the greater good. If you do not have a job, make finding a job your job—and work hard at it. If you can't work due to disability or incarceration, look for things that you can do—no matter how simple—that will help yourself and others, and do them like work. Some people clean things, some write cards to others, some fix things, some read current news or funny jokes to tell others. What can you do?

Good Play

Like most other things, entertainment is over-marketed to our culture. Most people want to pay to see professional musicians, athletes, actors, etc. But how much better is it to learn to initiate these things ourselves. Can you, or do you want to learn how to play an instrument, do artwork, play a sport, make a dessert, etc? Can you learn to be a fun, interesting or dramatic person? These skills often do not cost much—and they can be valuable throughout your life.

Good Other Half

The first couple chapters of the Bible tell us that God intended a man and a woman to live together in a life-time marriage, and to raise children. Marriage is the best environment for intimate relationships—including sex. No matter what your past has been, you can probably overcome it and receive the learning, love, and other benefits of a good relationship that lasts the rest of your life.

Good Plans

Think about these good things and decide which ones are important to you and how you will try to achieve them. Pray, read and study about them. If you have trouble staying on track, make a daily log of what you want to do. Write down what Bible chapters you read or what jobs you applied for today. By keeping and reviewing this log, you will find it easier to **Do Good Things**. May God bless you in it!

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Do Good Things

Are you trying to put the problems of the past behind you and move on to a better life? May God bless your efforts! He wants you to be a blessing to yourself and to others!

So how do you do that? Obviously, you try hard to stop doing the things that used to get you into trouble. But that cannot be all. Often, that just leaves you bored with not enough to do. You need to fill your life with good things, so that you can look forward to a happy future, not simply try to refrain

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from those things that tempt you.

Here are 12 kinds of good things to do. They will be a wonderful replacement for the things you are trying to get away from. They all can be done by anyone, without money—even if you are imprisoned right now.

Good Bible Study

We start with Bible study because we have to know **what is good**. If we think we can be happy by having a lot of expensive things, or a flashy boyfriend/girlfriend, then we probably never will be happy. The Bible shows us that we are the special creation of God designed to live forever as His children. We can be happiest now by loving Him, loving others and establishing good life-long family relationships.

You do not need to attend a church to study the Bible. Some churches teach the Bible very well, others do it very little. Churches or Bible study groups can be very helpful—or just plan to read it yourself.

If the Bible seems too big to read from cover to cover, start by reading the Old Testament books of Genesis, Judges and Proverbs. Then read the New Testament Books of Luke, John and Acts. Then keep going through all the short letters (epistles). There are many translations of the Bible, all with the same message. The old King James Version is difficult to read. Try the New King James Version or New Living Translation.

Good Prayer

No church or preacher is required to have access to God. You can talk to Him like a friend, but giving Him the respect that the

creator of the universe deserves. Do not expect to lie to Him or convince Him of something that is not true. He knows your thoughts. He is not interested in helping you do something that is not good for yourself or anyone else. Christ said:

Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:9-14, NLT).

Good Words

Strive to always speak to others and about others in a kind and encouraging manner. When we are overly critical or angry with ourselves or others, it rarely makes a situation better. Learn to talk about solutions.

Stop using profane and vulgar words. They do not make you more powerful or make good things happen. They stir up anger in others and make a "low class" person in many people's eyes. Professional people learn to use good words in public, it is better to learn to use them all of the time.

Good Health

Most good health comes without money or medicine. It is simple, but too few people do it: Sleep enough; exercise regularly; eat a balanced diet; don't eat too much or too lit-

tle, avoid processed "junk" foods and drinks designed for good taste and corporate profits—not nutrition; and stay away from smoking, drugs and excess alcohol. There are numerous books and videos about how to do these things better, but for most people it is a matter of doing what they know.

Good Looks

Our media puts way too much emphasis on the Barbie and body-builder look for women and men. You don't need that—it often leads to insincere attractions. Everyone can learn to look neat, clean and friendly, without looking sexy or grungy. If you look like a "loser", people may treat you that way.

Good Reads

Books, magazines and the Internet are almost everywhere today. Millions of messages tell the masses that merchandise and casual sex will make us happy. But they won't. On the other hand, we can learn all about how to do all kinds of jobs, repair our dwellings, play musical instruments, etc. We must take advantage of those opportunities.

Good Vids

DVDs, Blue Rays and host of other digital video are almost as plentiful as reading material—but make a greater emotional impact. If we continually view things where people are bad to each other, what will we become?

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8, NLT).