

1-29-23 Friendship

Proverbs 13:20, Proverbs 27:6-10.

What is a friend?

Who feels that they are a good friend? By biblical friendship standards?

Jesus Christ died in our place, not only to restore our relationship with God, but also to firm up our friendships with other people. In fact, the Bible has just as much to say about interpersonal relationships as it does about theology and doctrine.

Last week we were reminded to seek after wisdom with everything we've got, and to implement God's wisdom into all areas of our life. Two weeks ago we talked about taming our tongues, and to choose to bring life rather than death with our words. This morning we're going to focus on how to become a true friend.

How do you make new friends? I'm convinced that worthwhile friendships are not simply found, they're made. While we can't pick our families, we can select our friends.

Proverbs 12:26, The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Proverbs 13:20, Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Casual friends are the result of circumstances. Close friends are the result of choice. The closer I am to a person, the greater the impact her or she will have on my life. I must therefore choose my friends carefully. Recognizing the power of a friendship to either build us up, or break us down, Proverbs describes at least three types of friends.

I. Frenemies (watch out).

- Definition: a person who is or pretends to be a friend but who is also in some ways an enemy or rival.

Signs that someone is NOT your friend, but rather a frenemy:

1. Selfishness.

- While we all struggle with self-centeredness, it's tough to build a relationship with people who incessantly think only of themselves.

Proverbs 18:1, A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment.

- We must be watchful for selfish people that desire to drain us. Friendship is about give and take, sometimes one may give more than the other, but in time the roles will flip. Selfishness will not humble itself and serve someone other than itself.

2. Users.

Proverbs 19:4, Wealth will bring you many friends, but become poor and your friends will leave you.

ERV

- Those who use you will eventually break things off when they've taken what they've wanted. Have you ever been in a relationship with someone who was only interested in what he or she could get from you? It doesn't feel very good, does it? If you're in a relationship like this, put your foot down and refuse to be taken advantage of any longer.
- Judas was a perfect picture of someone selfish and a user. He oversaw the group's money (**John 13:29**) and a thief who regularly stole from it (**John 12:6**). Judas was greedy and deceitful, a liar (**Matthew 26:14-15**).
- Judas was willing to pretend to honor someone for his own selfish purposes (**Mark 14:44 - 45, Matthew 26:49**).
- Jesus called him the devil. (**John 6:70**).

3. Talkers.

Proverbs 20:19, You cannot trust someone who would talk about things told in private. So don't be friends with someone who talks too much. ERV

- The image here is very vivid in Hebrew. It gives the picture of when captives were captured, they would be stripped of their armor and the clothing. Then the captured would be chained up and walked into the victor's city.
- If you've ever experienced the agony of gossip, you can attest to feeling vulnerable, embarrassed, and defenseless. You don't have to put up with people stripping you of your dignity with their venomous verbiage.

4. Trouble.

- As a teenager, I got into a lot of trouble; I made a lot of dumb decisions. I have gotten in trouble with law enforcement multiple times. Some of the things I was getting myself involved in could have gotten me sent away. The people I chose to hang with tended to be like gas and fire. I can't and won't say my behavior was their fault, it was all mine. But our friendship was the perfect storm to lead to a lot of trouble.
- Some friendships will lead you astray, be careful. Look at these strong words.

Proverbs 22:24-25, Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, 25 lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.

- We must be careful of the friendships we keep; no one is above peer pressure.

Proverbs 23:19-21, So listen, my son, and be wise. Always be careful to follow the right path. 20 Don't make friends with people who drink too much wine and eat too much food. 21 Those who eat and drink too much become poor. They sleep too much and end up wearing rags. ERV

Proverbs 24:21-22, Son, respect the Lord and the king, and don't join with those who are against them, 22 because people like that can quickly be destroyed. You have no idea how much trouble God and the king can make for their enemies. ERV

- Be careful about choosing your friends. Some of you are being led down a wrong path as you're pressured by peers who are selfish, who are using you, and who skewer you with their words

behind your back. Just as you can choose to make a friendship, you can also choose to break it off.

II. Faithful friends (Be thankful for).

Signs of a faithful friend:

1. They love you.

Proverbs 17:17, A friend loves you all the time, but a brother was born to help in times of trouble. ERV

- A faithful friend is someone who knows all about you and likes you just the same.
- A faithful friend always loves, even when we make mistakes. A faithful friend lets you know that you're a valuable member of God's team. A friend who loves hangs in there with you even when you feel like crawling into a hole.
- Are you this type of friend? Do you unconditionally love those God has placed on your team?

2. They are consistent.

Proverbs 27:10, Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away.

- To "not forsake" means that a consistent friend doesn't let you go or turn his back on you. He or she is dependable. I heard it said, "A friend is someone who thinks you're a good egg, even though you're a little cracked."

3. They are forgiving.

Proverbs 17:9, Forgive someone, and you will strengthen your friendship. Keep reminding them, and you will destroy it.

- The true test of a friendship is what I call the forgiveness factor. When we spend time with people, we will inevitably hurt them, either intentionally, or unintentionally. A faithful friend is someone who will cut you some slack and forgive you for what you've done, without bringing it back up into your face.
- I have had to seek forgiveness from several brothers and sisters in Christ. And when I have been given forgiveness, it was like they took a blanket and covered it all up for me, never even lifting a corner again. They have never repeated the matter, and our relationship was restored.
- Someone has said that if you really want to know who your friends are...just make a mistake and you'll know.
- Mankind's greatest need is forgiveness, to be reconciled to God. We all have the same need, who is willing to be first to forgive?

4. They keep their mouth shut.

Proverbs 11:13, People who tell secrets about others cannot be trusted. Those who can be trusted keep quiet. ERV

- A faithful friend is one who doesn't share your secrets with others.
- Do you have a friend you can be completely real with? Do you put things "in the vault" when someone shares something with you?

5. They sharpen/challenge.

Proverbs 27:17, Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

- A true friend is one who helps you become who God has made you to be. Someone once said, "A friend is one who knows you as you are, understands where you've been, accepts who you've become and still gently invites you to grow." We all need friends who will sharpen us by giving us advice and counsel.
- We should have friends who rub off on us in a good way and we should be rubbing off on others, without letting them rub us the wrong way!

6. They use discernment.

Proverbs 25:17, Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house, Lest he become weary of you and hate you.

- A faithful friend is also one who is aware of the needs of others. They know when to give space and when to offer grace.
- That means that we shouldn't spend every waking moment with our friends, or they will get tired of us. Familiarity can breed contempt.

Proverbs 27:14, Whoever blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, will be counted as cursing.

7. They are honest.

- A faithful friend is not afraid to tell the truth when we need to hear it. This truth telling can be a good thing, if it's delivered in the right spirit and received with the right attitude.

Proverbs 27:5-6, Open rebuke is better Than love carefully concealed.6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

- Oscar Wilde has said, "A true friend always stabs you in the front." False friends butter us up to slice away. Faithful friends speak the truth for our benefit and for theirs according to,

Proverbs 28:23, Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue.

- Have you given your friend permission to be honest with you? Do you tell the truth to your friends?

III. Be on the lookout for a forever friend.

- Friendships must be cultivated and maintained for them to last. If I want to have a good friend, I must work at being a good friend. Having said that, all our friends, every single one, will

ultimately disappoint us, and let us down. Your friends have unintentionally, and maybe intentionally, hurt you, failed you, and made you mad. If they haven't yet, they will.

- God doesn't want us to find complete satisfaction and happiness in our relationships. That means you can't completely find what you're looking for in a husband or a wife, or in a best friend. Even the most faithful friend will bail on you or cave under the pressures of life.

Proverbs 18:24, A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

- The phrase, **"come to ruin"** literally means "to break in pieces by a blow." The teaching of the first part of this verse is that there is a limitation to all human relationships. A person with many companions or a few close friends can still be broken into pieces by the blows of life.
- Do some of you here this morning feel like you must have a boyfriend or a girlfriend to find happiness? Do you feel like you will be truly content only when you get married, or when you have kids?
- Some of the most miserable people in the world are those who have pinned their hopes for fulfillment on other people only to have those people fail them.
- God created you with a void in your life that cannot be filled by relationships. He longs for you to find what you're looking for in a friendship with His Son. He is the missing piece. He is what you've been looking for.
- The key word in this verse is the word **"but."** Even though our friends can wipe us out, there is **"a friend who sticks closer than a brother."** There is a friend whose friendship has no limitations. There is a friendship that cannot be broken. No matter how intimate your friends are, that friendship is severed at death. You pass over to eternity without your friend, without your spouse, without your brothers and sisters.
- We need a forever friend, one who will never leave us or forsake us. This passage is declaring that Jesus Christ sticks closer than any other friend or family member. The word **"sticks"** literally means, "cleave, or adhere" and refers to the soldering, or joining of two metals together. When we put our faith and trust in Jesus, we are welded to Him forever and nothing can separate us from Him.

Conclusion

Can I introduce you to my friend? The one that sticks closer than a brother. His name is Jesus.

If you already know Him, or not sure if you are ready to know Him, what kind of friend are you to others?

Are you a frenemy? Someone who is selfish, a user, talks and hates on supposed friends, maybe jealous of them, a troublemaker?

Or are you a faithful friend? One that loves, is consistent, forgiving, able to keep your friend's business quiet, do you sharpen and challenge your friends to be more godly, do use common sense, are you honest?

I think we could all be better friends, right? Didn't Jesus give us a perfect example of a friend?

