

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 3/22/92 PM

Proverbs 17:17 "Practical Truth about Friends from Proverbs--part 2"

Intro: Two weeks ago we ran out of time considering what I feel is a vitally neglected topic in our society today. A topic about which the book of Proverbs has much to say. Friends.

Illust: "An Open Letter to Men and their Pastors" Morley, 271

We finished our last study discussing the question, "Why do men have so few real friends by the time they reach 45?" I received some good feedback after the service. I'm convinced that we've hit a sensitive, even vulnerable area for many of us.

Q: Do you have good friends?

Let's review quickly. . .

Proverbs: God's Wisdom for Daily Living

How to be Wise. . .

1. In Life--An Introduction (1:1-7)
2. In Developing Friendships (1:10-19; 22:24; 17:17)
3. In Your Marriage Relationship
4. As a Parent (6:1ff)
5. In Your Finances
6. On the Job
7. In Dealing with Temptation (23:26-27)
8. When It Comes to Alcohol (23:28ff)
9. In Handling Your Tongue (15:1-4; 18:4-8)
10. By Being the Man or Woman God Wants You to Be

Challenge: How to get the most out of our study. . .

1. Read Proverbs daily (a chapter a day for the next 3 months)
2. Use of Role Plays/Dialogue in our Study--Constantly be thinking, "How does this apply to my life?"

Friends:

Key: We need friends. God designed us to need other people.

Gal 6:1-2 "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Eccl 4:9-10 "Two are better than one. . . For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him that is alone when he falls. . ."

Friends are key for moral protection. Tragically, many of us try to sail through life with few, if any, relationships of accountability.

Illust: (Morley, 276) The British steamer, the Titanic, was considered by experts to be unsinkable. . . until it struck the hidden part of an iceberg on 4/14/1912

Transp: "The Accountability Iceberg" (Morley, 277)

Key: We need friends.

Problem: I agree with Morley, "For most relationships we never get past the "cliche level" of conversation--news, sports, and weather. We ask, 'How are you doing?' 'Great, just great!' they say. Their kids are flunking, their wife isn't speaking to them, and they are 2 months behind in their rent, but everything's 'just great!'"

Discuss: What is the difference between fellowship and accountability?

Review:

I. The Suspicion: The Danger of a False Friend

Not everyone who claims to be a friend is truly a friend.

READ: Prov 1:10-19

Proverbs tells us to be suspicious of an individual who. . .

1. Will USE you for what he can GET out of you

What are false friends after? What do they want to GET out of you?

a. Money (19:4)

19:4 "Wealth makes many friends. . ."

14:20 ". . . the rich has many friends"

b. Popularity (19:6, 7)

19:6 ". . . every man is a friend to him that gives gifts"

Illust: I hated as a child to wade in the creek. Why? Leeches

Illust: Ticks on our dogs

A false friend is a leech, a tick. Look out for someone like that.

2. Has a Dangerous Tongue

One of the best guages to test for a true friend is a person's tongue. A false friend is:

--Not Confidential (17:9)

17:9 ". . . he that repeats a matter separates friends"

--Strife Causer (16:28)

16:28 "A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates chief friends."

--A Flatterer (27:14; 29:5)

27:14 "He that blesses his friend with a loud voice. . ."

29:5 "A man that flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet."

Key: Pr 18:21 "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

Q: Are you are encourager? Are you a refreshing person to be around?

3. Has a Bad Temper (22:24, 25)

22:24 "Make no friendship with an angry man. . ."

22:25 "Lest you learn his ways"

4. Doesn't know when a Joke has gone too far (26:18-19)

Listen. There's a fine line that separates wholesome humor and hurtful humor.

Some people will do anything for a laugh, even cut down a "friend."

A false friend doesn't know when a joke has gone too far.

26:18-19 NIV "Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows is a man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I was only joking."

Illust:

II. The Standard: The Marks of a True Friend

Prov 27 is a key chapter on friendships.

Q: What are the marks of a true friend? We saw 4. A friend is a . . .

1. Risk-taker (6)

27:6 "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

True friends are willing to take risks. They're willing to subject themselves to personal rejection, because they love you so much.

Q: What does v 6 say a true friend is willing to do to you?

A: Hurt you. Inflict wounds. Sound crazy? What does that mean?

Listen. A true friend is willing to inflict necessary wounds. He will take the risk to be honest with you, in love, even if the immediate result is personal pain. Do you know why? Because the long term benefits are worth it.

2. Revealer (9)

27:9 ". . . the sweetness of a man's friend, by hearty counsel"

A true friend has depth to him/her. Wisdom. A true friend has a godly influence on you. A true friend helps you know how to live a better life for Christ.

The next mark is key. . .

3. Reliable (10)

27:10 "Thine own friend, forsake not. . . better a neighbor that is near. . ."

A true friend is reliable. You can count on him/her in the tough times. See:

17:17, 18 "A friend loves at all times. . . adversity"

A true friend is also true to his word. He keeps his commitments.

6:1-3 "My son, if thou be surey for thy neighbor. . ."

Q: Do you pay back people when you borrow from them?

Illust: Tragic--Many friendships have deteriorated because of money!

4. Rewarder (17)

In what way is a true friend a rewarder?

27:17 "Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friends."

A real friend makes you a better person. When you spend time with a real friend, you grow to become more like Christ.

Q: What impact are your friends having on your life? You on your friends?

Q: Do you have any friends that meet the biblical standard in Proverbs?

Illust:

Discuss: Name some examples of friends in the Bible that meet this standard.

--David and Jonathon

--Ruth and Naomi

--Paul and Tim

Tran: Prov has given us the Suspicion of False friends, and the Standard of true friends. We can't stop yet. It's one thing to want good friends. It's another thing to be a good friend. Both go hand in hand. So let's consider thirdly. . .

III. The Steps: Three Steps to Becoming a Friend

Q: What must I do if I am to become a good friend?

A: There are several possible answers. I would propose 3 steps, not because this list is exhaustive, but because these seem to be at the heart about what the Bible says about God's prescription for becoming a friend.

If I am to become a friend, I must. . .

1. Be a Friend of God.

There are lots of reasons you need Jesus Christ in your life. Here is one.

Before you can ever experience meaningful friendships with other people, you must have a right relationship with God. You must be reconciled to God.

Jesus put it this way. We must be Jesus' friends. Listen to our Lord's words in John 15:13-15, ". . . you are my friends if you do whatever I command you."

2. Realize it's impossible to be a True Friend on your own strength.

Why? Because the Standard is so high!

Key: Only when you have a relationship with Christ do you have the power and ability to BE a friend. It's only after you become a friend of Christ that you have the capacity to fully enjoy meaningful relationships with other people.

Observation: It's fun to watch new Christians. Jesus Christ changes our lives. In this area too. I've watched new Christians who for the first time in their life experienced the joy of genuine friendship. Their countenance changes. They used to be the first to leave church when the service was over, but now enjoy mingling with God's people.

Illust:

Why is that?

I Jn 1:3 "These things write. . . that ye may have fellowship with us."

3. Never forget that being a friend involves a commitment to Give, not to Get.

17:17 "A friend loves at all times. . . adversity"

18:24 "A man who has friends must show himself friendly. . ."

Being a friend is costly. You must choose to take the risk. You must choose to get close to people. You must choose to be friendly. You must choose to view people with a desire to give, not get.

The world is full of people who use friendship for what I CAN GET OUT OF YOU--attention, money, prestige, favors. . .

Illust:

Application:

Q: What must I do if I'm going to experience real friendships?

For Starters: I must want to! I must choose to get close to people. That may be difficult for some. Why? There may be barriers that need to come down.

Transp: Trauma of Transparency, 60, 80, 81

--What are some examples of walls?

--How do we take the walls down?

Illust:

Q: Why take the risk of developing friendships?

A: The rewards are tremendous!

Challenge: Some here tonight. . .

--Have the wrong kinds of friends and need to make some changes.

--Are living in shell, refusing to get close to people. You need to confess that to the Lord, experience His healing, and claim His authority to BE a friend.

Recommended Reading:

The Trauma of Transparency, J. Grant Howard

The Man in the Mirror, Patrick Morley

Caring Enough To Confront, David Augsburger

Encouragement: The Key to Caring, Lawrence Crabb, Dan Allender

The Marriage Builder, Lawrence Crabb

Assignment: Hand out Encouragement Cards. Write a note to a friend right now. Tell them you thank God for their friendship. Send it in the mail tomorrow.

Role Plays:

#1 A Christian teen and parent talking--The teen says, "I'm frustrated with my life. I don't have any real friends. Nobody seems to like me. And those that do eventually let me down. What should I do?"

#2