

Proverbs: Skillful Living - Friendship

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[0 : 00] My goal this morning is to extol the love of Jesus among us, amen. Let's pray. God, thank you for this morning.

Thank you for your word that helps us live this life, Lord, for your glory and for the good of all. And Lord, I pray that this would be a church that is marked by the characteristic of friendship, that we, as your friends through the gospel, would consider one another friends.

And that our friendship would be such that it empowers our body, it strengthens our fellowship, and it draws others in.

We thank you for your fellowship, your friendship. And I pray that we would only revel in that this morning, amen.

What is it that inspires us about friendship? Friendship is what drove Sam Weis-Gamgee to consider himself a servant of his friend, Mr. Frodo, and literally carry him up the treacherous mountain at the end of their journey when Frodo, his friend, had lost his strength.

[1 : 21] Friendship is what drove Frodo to find contentment and joy in the presence of his friend Sam in the midst of imminent death and destruction.

Friendship is building a relationship of mutual interest, talking about the shared love of Norse mythology and the excitement of poetic fictional worlds between J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis.

Friendship is having meaningful conversations about God and the beauty of the ancient myth that is Jesus Christ, the only true myth that leads a friend to salvation.

Friendship is what urged Jonathan to risk his life by the hand of his own father in order to save his beloved friend, David.

Friendship is what David does when he takes in Jonathan's poor, crippled son, Mephippotherith, as well as his own son, Micah, out of his love for his friend.

[2 : 23] Friendship is what led Ruth to physically, metaphorically, and spiritually cling to her mother-in-law during the midst of their loss.

Friendship is also what brought about Naomi to be the trusted nurse and caretaker of her grand child, Ruth's first son.

Friendship is what led John to rest his head on Jesus' bosom, to be present at the cross during his friend Jesus' Anguish, and take care and responsibility of his friend's mother, Jesus' mom, Mary.

And friendship is what Jesus perfectly demonstrated by sacrificially dying in the place of his friend John and all of us.

Friendship is at the heart of what it means to be human, but also what it means to be made in the image of God.

[3 : 24] We are built for connection and intimacy with others. God Himself exists in a perfect unity and fellowship.

God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. Perfect fellowship, perfect communion. A model for us, those made in his image of what we are also made for.

And what's beautiful about the idea of friendship is that friendship can be found most chiefly as Christians as those friends of God and those redeemed by the blood of the greatest friend Jesus.

It is found, brothers and sisters, in so many places, but especially it is found in the church. And it ought to be named among us as those who are friends of the same Savior.

So we have to ask the question that Proverbs is going to answer. And the question is this, what makes up a biblically healthy friendship? What is the Bible's idea of a healthy friendship?

[4 : 38] So I'd love for us to review some basic ideas about friendship from the treasury of scriptures that is the Proverbs. So what we're going to do is we're going to look at a number of different scriptures in Proverbs.

We're going to read the Proverb. Pastor Jay calls these micro-parables, which is a really good way of explaining what a Proverb is. You read this tiny little parable, if you will, and then you unlock truth that applies to our lives.

And that's what wisdom is in Proverbs. So we're going to look at a couple ideas of what friendship looks like in Proverbs. And then we're going to look at one big section and break it down.

So let's look at just some basic verses on friendship in Proverbs. First is Proverbs 3, 28 to 29. It says this, do not say to your neighbor, go and come again, and tomorrow I will give it when you have it with you now.

And do not plan evil against your neighbor who dwells trustingly beside you. It's Proverbs teaching us that friendship is quick to give aid and doesn't abuse trust.

[5 : 43] When a neighbor or a friend comes to your door and says, I need something, and you have it with you in the house. You have it with you in your possession.

The Proverbs is urging us, give it to them now. But also it says, don't plan evil against your neighbor who dwells trustingly beside you. There's this dual focus on being an aid to our friend, but also not taking advantage of our friend that trusts us.

Next is Proverbs 14, 20 to 21, which says the poor is disliked even by his neighbor. But the rich has many friends. Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.

Now this Proverb shows us the value that friendship should take of dignity over status. See, it says the rich man has many friends, which is speaking to us that just because someone has something to give, it has someone, something that someone else might want does not mean it's real friendship.

But the rich person has status, the rich person has wealth, and that person has many quote, unquote friends. But then the next verse talks about the need to take care of the poor.

[6 : 58] Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor. Next is Proverbs 16, 20 to 29, which says this, a dishonest man spreads strife and a whisper separates close friends.

A man of violence entices his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not good. And this Proverbs is talking about, friendship believes the best and speaks redemptively.

A dishonest man spreads strife and a whisper separates close friends. See, for this Proverb, the antithesis of what a friend would be would be someone that intentionally tells lies or intentionally tries to rile up disunity by pitching a view of somebody that they know or maybe consider a friend that they might look poor and I might look good.

And so this person, this dishonest man spreads strife and separates friends. But true friendship believes the best and speaks redemptively. Proverbs 17, 17, one of the most famous Proverbs on the idea of friendship.

It says this, a friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity. How beautiful is that? Essentially saying this that friendship loves through any circumstance.

[8 : 18] In the highest of highs, in the lowest of lows, in the middle of middles, the friend is there to love, to guide, to cherish, to encourage, and to enjoy relationship with you.

Proverbs 19, 67, many seek the favor of a generous man and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts. All a poor man's brothers hate him. How much more do his friends go far from him?

He pursues them with words but does not have them. Friendship seeks out others for who they are, not what they can offer or do.

Everyone wants the favor of the generous man. I want to be friends with you because what you can give, everyone's a friend to a man who gives gifts.

But true friendship values who someone is, their dignity over what they can offer. Proverbs 13, 20, whoever walks with the wise becomes wise but the companion of fools will suffer harm and similarly in Proverbs 22, 24, 25, make no friendship with a man given to anger nor go to a wrathful man lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.

[9 : 31] In other words, friendship admires and reflects the other's attributes. That true friends see one another, they see their attributes and they say, I want to become more like you. I admire you. I love you. I appreciate you.

And as your friend, I want to take on a lot of who you are. That's a friendship that believes the best, that sees the value and worth of the relationship. But also there's a caution that we are not make friendship with a man given to anger or any other attribute that is unbecoming to Christians because we will also take that on.

This is a good statement about the beauty of close friendship but also the beauty of marriage. I have found that the longer I have been married, the more I have noticed myself becoming more like my wife.

And that is good because my wife is someone I consider worth becoming like. She has strengths where I am weak.

She has humility where I am prideful and she has joy where I am joyless. I want to become more like my best friend, my wife.

[10 : 41] And lastly, Proverbs 25, 17, let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house lest he have his fill of you and hate you. We read a similar proverb earlier, one of the few weeks ago, and it basically talked about do not go early in the morning to your friend's house and yell for things because he will hate you.

In other words, friendship respects boundaries and demands little. Good friendship establishes known boundaries, social, emotional, spiritual, physical, that both might have the freedom to operate willingly in that friendship and to give what they would desire to give and we do not demand much of our friends but instead expect to give all this proverb I was talking about.

So there's a treasury of scriptures that deal with friendship as a general concept. I didn't want to ignore those. I want to set that as the foundation and the sort of the ground that we're going to build up from.

But the key text we're going to look at the rest of this morning is Proverbs 27 verses 1 to 10. Now Proverbs 27, 1 to 10 arguably gives us the most cohesive one section on the idea of friendship in the Proverbs.

So we're going to spend a little bit of time seeing how these 10 verses connect together to give us an idea of what friendship should look like. So we ask the question, what makes up a biblically healthy friendship?

[12 : 11] And the answer is this. Selfishness makes the greatest enemies.

Selflessness makes the greatest friends. Proverbs 27, 1 to 10 is going to teach us that the most biblically healthy friendship is one that values selflessness.

Selfishness makes us the greatest enemies. Selflessness makes the greatest friends. Now the word friend and all the Proverbs that we've seen it so far and repeatedly in Proverbs 27, the word friend here is Chrea.

And Chrea can be translated from a wide range of colleague to companion, to neighbor, to lover, it's a very broad term, but in the context of Proverbs 27, 1 to 10, in the context of friendship, what we can glean from this word is it's implying two things, mutuality and reciprocity.

I think this is really important. That true friendship goes both ways willingly.

[13 : 24] It's not a business partnership because I may not be willing but I have to do it because it's good for my business. It's not a one-sided relationship where I really want this friend but they don't really want me.

True biblical friendship is mutual and reciprocal in nature, that both see the worth and value of one another and earnestly long to be with, to spend time with and to fellowship with the other.

That's what Chrea is going to show us. When two selfish people come together, they make enemies. When one selfish person and one selfless person come together, it's a one-sided relationship, but when two selfless persons come together, that's friendship.

So let's look at Proverbs 27, 1 to 10. We saw two things, that there are the selfish persons and they make the greatest enemies and then there are the selfless people and they make the greatest friends.

So first we're going to look at the markers of selfishness, me-ishness, I-ishness. And these are the markers of selfishness according to Proverbs 27.

[14 : 39] We're going to first look at verse 1 and 2. The first marker of selfishness is self praise. Look with verse 1 and 2. Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.

Let another praise you and not your own mouth, a stranger and not your own lips. You may be asking, well, what does this have to do with friendship?

Isn't this just a general principle? And I say, yes, of course it is, but we're building a case from Proverbs 27, verse 1 all the way up to Proverbs 5, 6, and 7, and 8, and 9, and 10.

We're building this friendship to what friendship should be, and we start off with the most indicting thing about those that are not good friends.

The selfish, as Proverbs is going to teach us, and that is self praise. One of the biggest killers of any friendship is self praise, self exaltation.

[15 : 41] Verse 1 says, don't boast about tomorrow, for you don't know what the day may bring. Tomorrow I'm getting my promotion. Tomorrow I'm going to get my grade report card, and it's going to be always.

Tomorrow I get this. Tomorrow I'm doing that. Tomorrow is the day that I looked long for, because something's going to happen that's going to do what?

Raise my glory. This is what it's speaking of. And then it follows with verse 2, which brings other people now into the mix. Let another praise you, and not your own mouth, a stranger, and not your own lips.

The idea here is that those who are too full of themselves will feel no need for others to feel them. Self reliance is one of the deadliest sins, for with it comes isolation.

With isolation comes a lack of joy, and with a lack of joy comes emptiness. When I discern that I am good enough for my own needs, I push others out.

[16 : 54] And this is one and two, what it's idealizing as wrong. That we would see ourselves as the end of glory, and ourselves as the end of our own purpose.

That me, my glory, my exaltation in the world, and in my friendships, and in my social circles, when I am raised higher, I am most pleased.

Self praise. I was talking with a relative recently and having a conversation with them, and they said the quote, I don't have a huge need for friends, I'm pretty independent and self-confident.

And I just thought in my head, how many times I've believed that I don't really need friends. I'm doing fine on my own. I'm killing it in my job, in my school, and even I feel like I have enough joy relationally, where I don't really need friends.

I know some people, and this was the tone of the conversation, and I thought the same thing with this relative, the tone was I'm doing well. I know other people need friendship, and they need to have the person that they talk to all the time, that they can call it any whip, but I don't really need that, that was the tone.

[18 : 07] I don't know about you, I've thought this before. But let me tell you, we need friends, brothers and sisters. We need others to build us up. We need to build others up.

For self praise leads to nothing but emptiness. The second marker of selfishness is verse 3. A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both.

All throughout Proverbs we have touched upon the fact that fools are those who despise knowledge, and those who despise knowledge end up aggravating all those around them.

The heaviness of both the rock and the sand implies crippling weight, the sand in some sense being a reference to the sand of the seashore that no one could take up and carry, but when you try in the stone that's so heavy that it pulls you down to the ground, when we spend time with the fool of provocation or the person who aggravates from a lack of knowledge, what leads to us is selfishness.

A poor friend is one who is constantly causing emotional, physical and mental trauma. They are those who demand the full patience and attention of the other to endure their recklessness.

[19 : 32] This verse talks about the proverbial tornado of a person that cares little about the repercussions of their actions on others, that cares little about the need for someone to correct them and hold them to truth and to right conduct and just does what they do.

And every person that deals with them, they realize the weight of dealing with this person's trauma.

Aggravation is the second marker of selfishness. The third marker of selfishness is verse 4. Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?

I don't know about you, but I've seen more relationships destroyed because of jealousy than almost any other virtue, fallen virtue.

And I think jealousy is really interesting here because it's actually stated as something that is harder to stand against, harder to persevere through than even wrath, that's a big term.

[20 : 40] That someone who's wrathful, they're cruel, they're angry, they're overwhelming with their anger, that's already a hard person to be a friend with, but here's the killer, who can stand before jealousy?

Quite simply, a poor friend is one who reacts angrily and wrathfully to things, but much worse, a poor friend is one who easily becomes jealous.

Now, what's at the heart of jealousy? At the heart of jealousy is I don't have, but I want selfishness.

This person has seen better in their social circle than I am. I want to be seen like that person is seen. I want to be acknowledged like that person is acknowledged.

I want the things that that person has, the life they have, the friends they have, the whatever they have. Jealousy is one of the absolute critical pieces of division in any relationship or community because it strives for its own glory and its own purposes and will wreck all who get in the way.

[21 : 51] Think of King Saul, his jealousy of David's fame and glory drove him into a mad fury of anger and wrath. Why? Why? It's clear. He says this.

He says they have said he has killed his hundreds of thousands, immediately my thousands. And he says what left is there but for him to have the kingdom?

What's going on in Saul's heart? David has adoration and praise. I got nothing. I want praise and it leads him to a year by year man hunt at all costs of David.

Jealousy is often the source of anger and wrath but sometimes we forget. Sometimes I forget that when I'm angry or when I'm really upset at something and I want to pour out my wrath on a situation or a person that jealousy is really the root.

I don't have what I want. So I'm going to express it with anger. But conversely a true friend is somebody who wants what's best for you and readily celebrates with you.

[23 : 00] The fourth marker of selfishness is dissatisfaction. We got to skip to verse 7 and 8 for this. Verse 7, one who is full loads honey but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet.

Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home. Now this is an interesting makeup, these two verses, they make up an interesting scene.

And there's a lot of people who think that this is referring to a failed marriage. Look at the language of somebody who is full of something. Proverbs talks about being full at times of sexual immorality, being full of the flesh.

But to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet. And then it's like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home, some overtones of some infidelity. But others think that this is descriptive rather of just a general wayward and gluttonous life.

Think the prodigal son. They had everything they need and could want at their home. Their family, their father, their possessions, all of the things that God has provided for them and they willingly say it's not enough and they go, I want whatever else I can find.

[24 : 09] Regardless of what this is actually speaking to, what's true is that the selfish person cares not for the people of his household or the things that God has already supplied, but instead the selfish person pursues all appetites of the flesh.

I've been this person. I've been this person many times. Any desire that comes at me, yes, just grab onto it. Those periods of just total unrepentance where everything looks appetizing.

I have no self-control. Ever been there? It's the idea here, dissatisfaction. So markers of selfishness, self-praise, aggravation, jealousy, and dissatisfaction.

I don't know about you, but the worst friendships I've ever had either have been me as those things or someone else as those things. And in all smacks of me, you want to kill a friendship?

Pursue yourself. Now secondly, this is the joyous part. Selflessness makes the greatest friend.

[25 : 16] So now let's look at verse five to six. The first attribute or marker of a selfless person, a selfless friend is accountability. Now I love this accountability.

Verse five says this, better is open rebuke than hidden love. Now this verse, when you read this verse, you can, you probably experienced something that I experienced when first reading and studying this, which is this bittersweet aspect.

Man, I appreciate so much when people I know, people I trust, they come to me and they feel like they can share something with me. It's like the mark of a really healthy open friendship.

But also, man, can you please not rebuke me? My spirit and my soul does not like it. That's intended to be this sort of bittersweet reality, but this is the truth that in the midst of that bittersweetness comes such incredible, selfless, loving, caring heart of a friend.

And this verse better is open rebuke than hidden love is not referring to the place where the conversation happens. You're openly rebuking your friend in front of anyone and everyone, but rather it's speaking of the manner in which this conversation happens, which is this, from my heart, I open my mind and my heart and my conscience of how I feel about how you've done something or how you're behaving and I love you and I care for you and this openly what I feel and I want to speak it to you, that's what it's talking about.

[26 : 53] This is not an open invitation to start rebuking anyone and everyone. We must learn this, but rather we must learn the right to rebuke in love, that when you've experienced the bond of fellowship with a friend, you've spent time with them, you've got to know them, you've done life together, you've experienced things together, you've spoken about things with a generous and charitable heart, you've had conversations, then slowly comes the right to rebuke in love.

And that's the key about rebuke. Rebuke does imply an outward expression, even discernment or even you could use the word accusation of something wrong in someone's life.

It is that harsh and it's true and this is good and right, but following the rebuke or in the manner of the rebuke we ought to build up in love and encouragement and grace.

Our Lord even does this and models this. Leviticus 19, here's what he says, you shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor.

There it is, open rebuke, lest you incur sin because of him. And then verse 18, don't miss this, you shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of everyone and people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

[28 : 11] I am the Lord. There's almost this immediate context when the Lord is saying, if you have an issue with your neighbor, go to them and rebuke them and reason frankly, love the language there, but also, next breath, love the neighbor as yourself.

And that is open, honest, true rebuke, true accountability. And I think about marriage. In any friendship this process can be true, but in marriage something I've learned through even the premarital counseling that me in Brooke did, but also from others like Scott, marriage, one of the key aspects of marriage is learning to handle conflict well.

By practicing the following, listening, being willing and open to say, I hear your rebuke, I'm taking it in, I'm not just casting it aside, but secondly, to learn to practice expression, to really state what is frustrating, what is frustrating you as a spouse about your spouse, to share those openly in that culture of listening and reciprocity, but then third, practicing confession, that once I've heard how I have hurt to you, how I've heard once how I have not served you, not loved you, that I would confess readily, I'm so sorry, I have sinned against you, I have sinned against the Lord.

But then lastly, we handle conflict well in marriage and in relationships when we forgive. Now I've been the one who has listened, expressed frustrations and done mutual confession with somebody and watched them forgive me and say, I can't forgive you yet.

I've been that person. And I can tell you, the definition of friendship is lost. Mutuality, reciprocity is not there. You're willing to go with me the extra mile, I'm not willing to go with you.

[30 : 11] Now verse six. Faithful, faithful are the wounds of a friend, profuse are the kisses of an enemy. And again, we're talking about a marker of selflessness, which is accountability and friendship.

But notice, notice the irony of this verse six. Typically wounds are always used in a context and explained in a context of something bad, right?

Does anybody want to be wounded by an arrow here today? No one would say yes. So it's very strange that the author would say a wound of a loving friend.

But it's also very strange, look at me at the second part, profuse are the kisses of an enemy, also strange. Think of the person that you consider an enemy.

I love to be kissed by them. No. There's some irony going on, there's some very intentional word play that's trying to draw out something. We've already talked about it a little bit, but it's this.

[31 : 12] That which is painful isn't always that which is bad. And that which might seem good is not always that which is really good. That which is pleasant can sometimes be that which is bad.

An enemy here refers to somebody who literally hates you. That's the language. The person who hates you kisses you on the face.

Talk about a duplicitous relationship. The person that hates you, the enemy is someone who outwardly flatters you, maybe subtly in conversation or something, but inside is completely uninterested in your spiritual growth.

They hate you. Yeah, you're a great guy. Yeah, I admire you. That's awesome. All right, see you later. I hate that guy.

Like we've all done this. We flatter on the outside, but we walk away and we are completely convinced that that person is the second spawn of Satan. And my shame, I have done this.

[32 : 15] I don't want to pose them to their face, but I will say flattering things on the outside and leave my real opinions at the door. But here's the reverse. And this is so beautiful. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

See, the friend is the opposite. They don't come and flatter you on the outside. They come in love and in earnestness and in truth. And they say, let's sit down. I love you. I care about your spiritual growth so much.

I want to share something with you. And a form of immature love is being fearful or timid about confronting the behavior of someone you love.

But here's the thing. There is a risk in confronting someone you love about their sin. You might lose them. I have both been the one who turned away a loving word of rebuke from a friend.

And I've also been the one who has been turned away after giving a loving rebuke to a friend. But here's the question. If you are not the one to lovingly risk rebuke your friend's sin, who will?

[33 : 22] And this is a culture that we're admonished to in the church, that we would confess our sins to one another, that we would uphold truth and grace simultaneously to say all of us are washed by the blood of Christ and not one of us is beyond the grace of Jesus to save us and we all commonly recognize our redemptive identity and our temptation to give into the flesh.

And the more we're honest about both of those truths at the same time, the more as a church we will be inspired and empowered to invite loving rebuke and to receive it and also to learn to give it.

And it's good for all of us. Faith for the wounds of a friend. My childhood friend, we literally have pictures of us chasing each other in diapers.

His name is Jordan and he's down in our hometown. He's gone all over the country. I've gone all over the country. Once we graduated high school, the best of friends did everything together.

It's interesting, the Lord has kept us apart. I did my thing, he did his thing and we almost never see each other anymore.

[34 : 35] But what was amazing was that the second year into college, I remember calling Jordan and just, we've always been close. We always shared experiences. We always enjoyed fellowship and talking and having a good time, but we never ever had the depth of relationship to where this would have been welcome for 18 years.

And finally I get to college and we're not even with each other anymore. And I remember I just, I needed help. I needed counsel. I was in a dark place and I felt like Lord, I need some brother, some friend to come alongside and build me up.

So I called him. One of the hardest calls ever in my life. I just, I can't admit sin to my friend. He's known me forever. I can't do that. This is so embarrassing.

We went for 18 years. I must do it. So I called him and I just said, Jordan, I need help. I'm in sin and I need help.

And I confess to him over the phone. This is where I'm struggling. I need you to hold me accountable. I need you to speak truth into me. I just poured myself out. It was one of the hardest things ever to do to my lifelong friend.

[35 : 44] But that was the point at which the relationship exploded into spiritual vitality because you know what he said back to me? Me too.

And from that point on, me and Jordan had a real friendship. One that transcended fun and games and mutuality, which is important, but one that stepped willingly into a vulnerable place to say, here I am.

Sharpen me, brother. Help me mold me into the image of Christ. I trust you. I love you.

And now we're both 29. And our relationship is only blossom because of this. It's always over the phone. Few times in person. It's amazing what open rebuke and faithful wounds can do to strengthen relationships.

The second marker, the first marker is accountability. The second marker of a selfless person who enters selfless friendship is availability. Verse nine, oil and perfume make the heart glad and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.

[36 : 57] Just as oil and perfume was a sensory experience that would give people joy. Enjoy the perfume, enjoy the oil, so too the sweetness, the blessing of a good friend that gives earnest counsel does the same.

And this is where we need to learn that availability is important, that friendship grows when we are available to one another. We're willing to set aside the things that may normally keep us from one another in order to love.

Friendship engages others on a heart level. Notice earnest counsel, which is more than just giving advice. It's earnest counsel that comes and is sweet.

It's a friend saying, I'm here for you. Watch for the ones in your life who engage you on a heart level. These are your true friends and the ones that this verse speaks of.

Friends speak into your life, not in a superficial way, but in a genuine compassionate way. Instead of asking someone you care about, the off repeated phrase, how are you doing?

[38 : 02] Which can be good. But I know for me, when I hear how are you doing, depending on the person, I'm going to give a certain response. I'm doing great. Yeah, things are good. How are you?

And while that can be good, it can build some commonalities. Consider asking people these questions. What's on your heart?

How is God working in your life? Or how can I encourage you today? Those are all three lines that many of you have taught me and have shaped me to think more critically about my conversations.

Am I just saying how are you because I want to just have this mutual conversation that doesn't go far? Or am I trying to actually connect with somebody's heart and build a friendship?

I just called a friend recently and I actually used one of these questions and said, is there anything I can encourage you with today before we're about to get off the phone? You should feel, all right, well, you have a good, yeah, man, is there anything I can encourage you with today, as I said?

[39 : 04] And he said, yeah, actually, I'm in a really hard place right now. I'm glad you asked. My friend just started dating a non-believer, or my sister just started dating a non-believer, and he has nothing to do with Christianity.

He actually is an atheist and he doesn't, he doesn't even, he argues with her about her faith, but she wants to date him and I love my sister. I love her to death and I want to maintain it in that relationship and love her, but also do this open rebuke and wounds of a friend and speak into her and guide her and love her through this.

Can you help me? Like, wow, I'm glad I asked how I can encourage you today and it opened up a channel of relationship that I had not had with that person previous.

And then verse 10 also tells us about availability. Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend, and do not go into your brother's house in the day of calamity, better as a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away.

Now what's interesting here is again you have this idea that your friends, which sometimes can be synonymous with the idea of a neighbor, your friends who are in proximity to you are better placed and better equipped to help you than family that is distant and far away.

[40 : 16] And in a world where business and productivity can claim the number one spot on our priority list, we can miss what is important sometimes.

I was recently humbled by a friend who felt that I was not making myself available enough to him. And he was right. I hurt this friend. Not by something I said or I did, but by something I failed to do, which is be available.

And at first we read this verse and it's tough to grasp because so many of us rightly value family relationships, but upon further study the verse is speaking very practically.

I'm a member of a nine person family. All of us kids are adults and I moved out of the house. My mom, dad, oldest brother and sister live in Medford Oregon where I grew up. My brother Jeff lives on the west side.

My brother Chad lives in Portland. My sister Nicole lives in Oklahoma. My sister Amanda lives in Florida. We live in Spokane. About two years ago I got in a severe accident with my wife and child in the car.

[41 : 17] Total excursion, which is hard to do. Now I want to just ask you who do you think I called? I love my family.

I am not calling my dad. He's an 11 hour, 10 hour drive away. Who did I call? A literal neighbor and a literal friend, Josh.

I lived right down the street. Friends with Josh. He's literally my neighbor. This is what the Proverbs talking about. In your day of need, reach out.

Be the one that speaks and says I need help to the people who are immediately around you. And again, another call to the church. Our families are so important. And if your family lives in proximity to you, they live in Spokane, they're near you.

They can fit the description of the friend and the neighbor who is near. It's not what the Proverbs is saying. The Proverbs is saying we ought to build relationships and value those that are in proximity to us.

[42 : 13] That way, in our day of calamity, our friends, our neighbors are near to help us, whether it be a physical tragedy, an emotional tragedy, a spiritual tragedy, whatever the tragedy may be, lean on those in your proximity.

But that assumes something. That assumes that we're being available. And I'm so grateful Josh was available. But I also think this verse is teaching us to value something special as a community.

This ideal of being available as a friend applies to the local church. And your local church, with all of our covenant and to the agreement to be in community as members of a church, these are our friends and our neighbors.

And in this context, we are all here together with the greatest immediate potential to be friends, serve, help, and love one another. I'm grateful for the church. I'm grateful for all of you.

So many people on my phone, I could call. I'm looking at all of your faces. I could call so many of you in my day of need, and I know you would be available. Look around and see the people that are here for you in your time of need.

[43 : 26] Remember them. This is what the church does. Selfishness makes greatest enemy, but selflessness makes the greatest friend. Now we're going to end with John 15, which Wendy read.

We have to look at Jesus. We have to look at Jesus when we talk about friendship. Here's what John 15, 12 to 17 says, This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, than someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends.

For all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you, these things I command you, so that you will love one another.

What are the benefits of friendship with Jesus? Verse 13, life. The greatest benefit of being a friend of Jesus is life.

[44 : 47] Verse 14, you are my friends if you do what I command you, another benefit of being a friend of Jesus, he guides us in truth with his commandments. Another benefit of being friends with Jesus, verse 15, no longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends.

Companionship, friendship, we're not called just servants, we are considered reciprocal and mutual friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, let that sink in.

And then, 16a, you did not chose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. Another benefit of being a friend of Jesus is he gives us purpose.

He gives us purpose. I've appointed you, I've chosen you for a task to go bear fruit for my name's sake. And then lastly, in the end of 16, the last benefit of you is in this, of having as a friend in this passage is so that whatever you ask in my Father in my name, he may give it to you intimacy, that we have the Father to ask of and to be in relationship of because the pleading blood of Christ on our behalf.

But what are the bookends? So we're going to end with, what are the bookends of all these benefits? An identity has been handed to us through the gospel. As we receive Jesus and repentance and faith, what happens is he considers us friends.

[46 : 14] We're friends of God and friends of Jesus. But what are the bookend commands out of our identity who we are flows what we do?

What are the bookends? This is my commandment that you love one another as I loved you. These things I command you so that you will love one another. Brothers and sisters, how do we do biblical friendship?

How do we love one another? How do we embody selflessness removing me so that you can have more, laying myself down so that you can be blessed?

That's the marker of biblical friendship according to Proverbs. Selflessness, sacrifice. And what is it? Love for one another. And all these benefits of friendship with Jesus are only possible because of his radical selflessness.

He sets the bar for friendship. The ultimate selfless act was to go to that cross, was to look at all of his disciples and his friends, and to say through the blood of the cross, greater love has no one than this than the man laid down his life for his friends.

[47 : 32] Biblical friendship is the natural pathway for the church to fulfill the one another, to endure suffering and hardship, to steam and uphold marriage, and to exemplify the fellowship of Christ to the world.

Friendship does all of that. Brothers and sisters, we must learn to lay our lives down for one another, and we will watch the blossom of friendship bloom and grow for the glory of God and the good of all.

Lord, we thank you that you have invited us as friends. Lord, we know that as your word tells us, we were once children of wrath, that we were once far off, that you have brought us near by the blood of your son.

Lord, there is few things that bring as much joy as just thinking on the reality that you have called us friends, and God, I thank you, that in our friendships with one another, in our friendships with our spouses, in our friendships with our childhood friends, in our friendships with our family members, in our friendships with our church family members, in all of our friendships, God, that there is a common theme, your example, your radical sacrifice, your radical selflessness, Lord, that we be empowered when we think of the cross and we think of the great love of Jesus to love us and bring us into friendship, that we would be those who model selflessness and sacrifice.

Teach us this, Lord, and may this church be a church that is blossoming with beautiful biblical friendship. In your name we pray. Amen.