

Proverbs Description of a Friend

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[0 : 00] Please open your Bibles to the book of Proverbs. We're going to look at several Proverbs, but specifically seven of them tonight as we talk about friendship. Kids desire to have good, strong friendships.

Kids desire to have close friends. But oftentimes, adults have given up on that idea of having a close friendship. We don't think that it's possible, but I would like to encourage you towards it, to have hope in it, that there are friendships that you can have.

Proverbs gives us a good description of what we should be looking at, going beyond just the surface level of friendship, but something to a deep, meaningful friendship that will help you fight against sin, a person in your life that will help you live life in a way that would bring glory to God.

If you get the sermon outlines on Saturday, if you'd like to, you can let me know. This is a different sermon than the one I sent out. Very eager to get to our theme of our missions conference, Church Together. That may be one of my favorite topics, is to talk about what God did when he created a church and how wonderful it is.

But as our kids are going back to school, I'd really like to encourage them to listen to me here and speak about the right type of friendships you have, because it's so important.

[1 : 17] Those that walk with wise men shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall be destroyed. That sounds like Bible, doesn't it? It is Bible. Proverbs 13, 20. A wise man will walk with wise people.

Picking our friendships really matter. So we're going to look at friendship through the book of Proverbs. October the 9th, we're going to be done with this series in Proverbs, and we're going with the Lamentations.

John Astley and his wife, Miss Joanne, will be here for their ministry when life hurts, and he'll be speaking on Thursday night, and on Sunday morning and evening service, we're going to have a panel about grief and interviewing different people and an introduction to the book of Lamentations.

A few weeks later on Sunday nights, we'll be starting a grief share ministry, and in here we will start the book of Lamentations later on in this fall. But we have a few more in Proverbs.

We could be here every Sunday night, as long as we would want to be, but I just want to be there until the end of September. All right? And we've got to pick a time to move on, or we won't ever. But the night looking at friendships, I thought we should have.

[2 : 23] You have friends for a variety of reasons. You have friends by proximity. These guys right here on the front, they're friends because they're sitting together. They go to church together. Their parents are friends. They came to the same church.

You have friends by family. That's always good. Cousins are good friends to have because no matter how much you fight, you've still got to make up because you're going to see the family again, right? And so they help you. And in the same way, church families should be like that.

This is kind of a side note on that. Cousin friendships are so great because the parents have such a strong commitment to each other that when the kids fight, they're going to have to work through it because the families aren't going to walk away from each other just because you don't get along.

And that's also a wonderful thing in church that you would have is to teach kids how to work through difficulty because we're not walking away from each other just because of the problems that we work through.

So when you see families meeting in the hallways with their kids because one of my kids pushed down one of your kids, I'll say it like that, all right? Or somebody else's happened. And those conversations, that's a wonderful thing because that's going to happen in life that they have the opportunity to have Christian men and women around them helping them work through those.

[3 : 32] You have friends by circumstances that bring you together, like work makes you, you have the same lunch break with somebody, and so there's some type of friendship that would be there by association. You know people that know them, but I would like to encourage you about friendships by conviction, that I need this person in my life because the Bible says that I need to have friends.

That person is the kind of person I need to be a friend with, so I'm going to pay the cost of what it is to stay friends with them. The cost when it comes to a commitment of getting together, organizing, spending time together, the cost in when that person confronts you lovingly in your sin, all those things.

You need friendships. Proverbs 17, 17. A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. This word here is the same word as we'll see when it says that Jonathan had a love for David in 1 Samuel 20, 17, and Jonathan calls David to swear again because he loved him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

That's what we are told in the Gospels, that we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We should love our friends there. This is a close friendship, and it says here in Proverbs that the brotherhood, a brother was born for adversity.

This is a reason in which God gives us friends, is to help us through the adversities in life. And so Solomon says, look for people in life that are steadfast and unloving.

[4 : 57] Proverbs 19, 22 says it like this, the desire of a man is his kindness, and a poor man is better than a liar. A friendship, Carson, listen to me here.

You listen. It is better for you to have friends with a poor man than it is to be friends with a dishonest person. If you're in here and you have a boat, I want to be your friend, all right?

If you're in here and you have this, it's nice to have friends that have resources and can help you. It's better to have friends that are honest. It would be better for you to find a friend of honesty than a friend that had great means and that could help you out.

So the people you want to friend are people that reflect God's character and that will stick with you. Proverbs 17, 17 says, a friend liveth all time, and a brother is born for adversity. What does our heart long for?

It's that friend that sticks us closer than a brother that we find in Jesus Christ. That's the character of God, this dependability. Number two, good friends are honest about their sin.

[5 : 58] Proverbs 28, 13, he that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. This means that friends confess sin to each other.

They hold each other accountable. Accountability is kind of a buzzword in the Christian world. I told you about Tinsley's orthodontist who told me to keep him accountable, bro, right?

And I'm like, that's just not the language for what, that's not what we have here, right? We have a business relationship. I gave you a lot of money. You're going to fix my daughter's teeth. We're probably not going to be friends. But in the Christian world, there is accountability because accountability doesn't happen just by writing something on a calendar.

An accountability isn't taking place just by meeting somebody occasionally. It takes a real commitment to one another to hold each other accountable, bro, as he said, right? And so here's a good definition for accountability.

It's being honest with our truest friends about temptations, our sins, and our state of our heart. How are you doing? This is how I'm doing. This is what I'm thinking.

[7 : 02] It's not what I'm supposed to be thinking. It's not what I'm supposed to be feeling, but this is what I'm doing right now. That's a way you can talk with your friend. And then a good friend says, you're right. I understand why you may feel this way right now.

However, as you have said, that is not where you're supposed to be. That is not the way that you're supposed to be thinking. And we confront them. There's different ways that people try to. Some people just avoid accountability altogether, never putting themselves in those discussions, always just never getting into one-on-one conversations with other Christians, going to Christian events, but never having Christian conversations.

Just being on the outside, but never sitting down where somebody can ask you any questions. Other times we do it by playing the Wii game, which is where you never take anything personal.

It's like, you know how we deal with this, and how humanity deals with this, and all mankind deals with this. No, accountability says, I deal with anger. I deal with whatever the issue that I'm dealing with, that I would share that with somebody, and not just speak about it in a vague term.

And then confession. There's no real confession. This is on a surface level. I've told you before, me and Brother Doris were talking about Bonhoeffer right before, when a Bonhoeffer's quote talks about the reason it's so easy, it's so hard to confess our sins one to another, is because the reason that we often find it easy to confess it just in prayer, is because we're not talking to God, but we're just talking to ourselves.

[8 : 28] And we're not really confessing to God in our prayers. And so when you speak to another person in a vague confession, you're being open and honest. You're saying something that you know is being heard.

Another way that we avoid accountability is always talking about things in a lapsed time, which is to say, yeah, I used to have a problem with this a month or so many months ago, and acting like that distance has made the problem go away.

And then just lastly is just moving around all the time, so there's no accountability, kind of a musical chairs. I'll talk to you a little bit, but I'm going to talk to you a little bit, but I'm not going to ever just be accountable to any group of people.

So I want to encourage you in that, that good friends are honest about their sin with you, and they will allow you to be as well, not glorifying it, but honestly dealing with it.

Third, good friends are trustworthy. Proverbs 16, 28, A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends. After all we've said about confession, we need to know that brothers, that there's people that we can depend on, that we can speak with, and have confidence when we speak to them.

[9 : 38] Solomon's is simply saying here, don't be friends with a gossip, a person who just wants to spread information. In 1 Thessalonians 5, 13, it says it like this.

They're called busybodies. They just want to know things. They want to know what's happening in life so they can share. And with all they learn to be idle, wondering about from house to house, and not only idle, but taddlers also, and busybodies speaking things which they ought not to do.

Busybodies. I don't say this about you in the church. If I did, I would let you know, because I'm your friend. But occasionally I'll get off the phone with somebody, and Stephanie will say, what did they call about? And I'll say, they were just fishing.

They were just simply fishing. They just wanted to know what I knew about something, and they were just calling to pretend to be friendly, because they just wanted information, because some people like to watch their drama on television.

Some people like to watch it on social media. Other people like a front row seat to it, and they just seek it out wherever it is at. Okay. It is a little bit uncomfortable up here, right?

[10 : 42] I think we all relate. We just really relate with this, because we have that desire for real friendships. We know it's possible. Sometimes we don't. We kind of give up on the idea.

So this is something, as I was reading, that was in a devotion on this passage that I thought was helpful, that you should say, you know, you've just been burned a lot of times. I've just been burned. It's hard to develop good friends.

I've had friends, and it just never really worked. People weren't trustworthy. People didn't seem to really care about me. And so you just kind of give up on it, as if it's a luxury that you can just do without, right?

Like, I won't eat ice cream all the time. I can just give up on it. Well, friendship's not one of them. It's an important part of your life. Like, music is an important part of the Bible tells us in our lives. There's certain things you shouldn't just go without.

You need to have a healthy relationship. You need to have a healthy understanding. Friendship's one of them. You need to have friends. But it said this. It said, Despite my fears, I choose to believe that God has placed me into a redeemed family, the church.

[11 : 43] Among people who are being changed from the inside out. And as I pray for discernment, God will guide me into relationships with brothers with whom I can be completely honest.

God tells me to pursue healthy relationships and friendships. He says that I need them, which means that I need to trust that in the church family that God has brought me into, there are deep friendships that I'm going to have here.

I'm speaking about on a level that's different than just being part of the same church. Brothers and sisters in Christ. Once we get to having more than 10 people in church, when you get to a place where you know there's going to be different levels of friendships, you cannot be the friends with 100 people in the same way that you're going to be hands with a few.

You need to go beyond just being a faithful church member once another. But every one of us need to have deep, meaningful, Christ-honoring, sin-confronting, God-glorifying friendships.

Number four, a wise brother confronts our sin. Proverbs 20, 7, 6. So a good friend is going to lovingly confront you. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

[12 : 52] It's better to have that friend that will confront you in your sin than have somebody who's not your friend that would be deceitful. Sometimes when we get together, people just want to commiserate over our sin and to get something off our chest or we want to tell something to somebody else about our sins so that we feel forgiven by them hearing it.

But a good friend will not do that. When a friend wounds your pride, it's not intended to harm you, but to bring healing. Does being rebuked hurt? It certainly does.

But it is worth it in that. James 5, 19 and 20. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, brethren is the first word of that. If any of you do err from the truth and one convert him, being going back to the word brethren, let him know that he which covereth converteth the sinner, which is the same person as the him, which is the same person that's being addressed, which is brethren.

So Christians, converteth the sinner from the errors of his way, shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sin. Share the gospel with unbelieving people most certainly, but share with our Christian friends, avoid sin.

Come back from it. God is the good shepherd, but he will use us in a person's life to help call back people from sin. Using the analogy of the shepherd and the staff, we are oftentimes that staff in which he will reach out to a sheep that is going astray and say, come back in here.

[14 : 17] Come back into the fold. Don't do that. So real friends are willing to risk some friction because with that, there will be a love. It's not just a popularity contest in our friendships, but there's a responsibility.

Iron sharpeneth iron, so man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. That's pretty strong language. Iron sharpening each other requires sparks, requires conflict, requires real connection that is there.

And then, for the sake of time, I'll give one more. So let's review these. Zach, why don't you just go ahead and tell me what they were. I'm just kidding. All right.

First of all, you're a good friend. First of all, good friends are dependable. All right. A good friend is dependable. Next, when a good friend is a good friend. Good friends are honest about their sin. Good friends are trustworthy. Good friends will lovingly confront us.

And good friends, number five, will know when and why to extend grace. Proverbs 17, 9. He that covereth the transgression seeketh love, but he that repeateth the matter separateth the very friends.

[15 : 19] Repeating a matter, continuing, never showing grace to a person, micromanaging the situation, just being heavy on top of a person and always keeping that in front of them.

Sometimes love is better served silently. Sometimes it's what is need is empathy and not a sermon. A good friend learns the balance between confrontation, compassion, persistence, and patience.

Stephen and I were taught in college that we're not supposed to talk about balance, you know, in the Christian life, but we're speaking about completeness. And so I think that's a better way to think about it because when we're thinking about the balance between confronting people and also being gracious to people, balance has this idea that we're always going to be erring in one way or another or that these are two things that are opposed to each other, but they're not.

A complete view is that these things aren't opposed to each other, but they're both found in Jesus Christ. And so having that type of wisdom of knowing when to show grace to a friend, to be encouragement to them, and also when to confront them in their sin, to know the when and the why to do that.

The when is after that you've confronted them in sin and that they're trying to move forward, you ought to be the greatest source of encouragement into their life because that's what he's shown to you. But the only way you're ever going to know how to have that type of friendship with people is when you have it in your own, with your relationship with God.

[16 : 43] When you know that God through the Spirit brings conviction in your life, but you also know that when you repent of your sin, he shows grace. And that relationship should be modeled in our friends.

Remember what I told you was one more? I really meant two more. Okay, I'm going to get them. All right, real quick. Good friends keep things real. Proverbs 25, 20. As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather and has vinegar upon nighter, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart.

We looked at this one before when we were going through it as a friend that takes away your jacket in the winter. It's a person that you think is going to bring you joy, but they are depriving you of the warmth that you need.

It's the friend that's always just overly optimistic. It's a person that just says, hey, don't worry about it. Or maybe even the super spiritual friend in quotes there. It's like, well, that's no big deal.

I've said this many times, and it may seem like a small thing, but I shared with Dan one time something about my brother that I was really going through. I didn't need a class clown that was like, well, let's go eat wings and you'll forget about it.

[17 : 45] That's not what I needed. Sometimes it is, but I wasn't on that day. All right? And also, I wasn't needing somebody who was just like, that was just going to say something spiritual, that sounded spiritual, that was empty.

But I needed a friend that day that says, you know what, Trent? That really stinks. I know that's heavy upon your heart. I feel for you. And it really made a difference, because that's a real friendship.

That isn't where we stayed, but that's where we started, and to say that it's okay that I recognize this in you and what's going on. And though they keep things real, they're not just empty and shallow in the response to them.

A good friend of someone who knows there is more to life than just feeling good. I don't just have to, oh, you feel bad, let me make you feel good. That isn't what's needed. If that was the case, we'd just live all of our time at the carnival or at the circus or whatever would make me fun.

Those don't sound fun to me at all. I'm first going to say mall, and I hate malls, and then I went to the carnival. I don't know. Golden Corral. If we all just want to be happy all the time, we would just live at Golden Corral.

[18 : 46] But that isn't what God has for us. Sometimes you're not supposed to feel good, but they want you to do good. They want you to be good, not just feel good. A good friend will focus on your heart.

Proverbs 20, verse 5. Counsel in the heart of a man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out. The depths of our human heart. Why do we do what we do? What motivates us?

Where does our anger come from? Our fears, our cravings. Our hearts are like deep water. Look all you want, and you cannot see the bottom of it. But a friend of understanding is someone who will help you discern the motives of your heart.

A person of understanding thinks deeper than just what you've said or what you did, but they want to probe beneath the surface to not only seek God's wisdom, as they know more about you.

A friend is a person of understanding. Proverbs 2, 3 says, Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and lift up thy voice for understanding. A friend in your life that says, I'm going to go talk to this person, I'm going to cry out to God for understanding, because I don't know what's in my friend's heart, but I want to know, that's a good friend.

[19 : 51] If you have somebody who's praying for you, and that's praying for how they can give you advice, you have a good friend. One that says in Proverbs, He that is void of wisdom despises his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his peace.

Being a good friend means that we are quick to listen and slow to speak, because we want understanding. Brother Ty, I hear what you're saying, but I really want to know what is in your heart about it.

What is it that you're saying about this problem on the surface? What does it really say about your heart? Because that's what I care about. I don't just care about helping you solve problems. I don't care about you just minimizing the mess in your life so it doesn't get in my life, but I want to know what's really at your heart, because I care about you.

He doesn't find humor in the things that God calls folly, but he finds pleasure in wise living. Proverbs 10, 23, It is a sport to a fool to do mischief, but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

They take your friendship and their conversations seriously. And I would like to encourage all of you in that. I'm going to pray before you're dismissed, and I'll give you a moment to pray there in your seat.

[20 : 57] But I would encourage you, if you're just having those kind of cliché conversations of just like, How are you doing, brother? How are you doing? Good to see you. All right, I want you to take it from there and move it on to those that have to do with real opinions and thoughts.

Say something that you believe. Say, I think this. That's going on. Go farther than that, the things that you're dealing with, to full transparency. I would encourage you to pursue godly friendships, not just because it's a luxury, but it's the way that we've been designed to live out our Christian life.

Proverbs speaks so much about it. It has great influence upon your life. It has great influence on you living out your Christian life. And then parents, our kids need to know how to develop strong friendships.

And you can buy every book there is out there about it, and they can listen to what I'm saying right now as they've done such a good job in doing, but they need to see what it looks like modeled. They need to see it lived out in your home so that they know.

I know what kind of friends my dad has. That's the kind of friends I'm going to look for. And then kids, I'm going to pray for you. You're making decisions all the time, and you need to have a conviction about the friends that you have.

[22 : 07] Just because they're in your class or just because they're your neighbor, it means you'll be friendly to them. It means that you'll want to invite them to the things of church and tell them about Jesus. We are friendly with all people, but friends are people that we let into our lives and let into our hearts, which means they have great influence.

And in that, you need to be selective. You want to have influence and share the gospel with all people, but the people that you allow have influence upon your heart and your thinking need to be people that are filtered through the word of God and say, are they somebody that I need to be a friend to or there's somebody that can be a friend to me and be very decisive about it.

Bible is not silent about it. Don't be haphazard in here about it. Some of you, especially men, seem to have a harder time developing friendships. We don't think that we need them. And sometimes in life, maybe after a while, you just say, well, I'm not used to, I haven't had a close friend in a long time.

This is just enough for me. I would encourage you to know that you're really, you're missing out. You're missing out if you're not continually developing deeper friendships. Now we'll sing the song by Mr. Rogers about will you be my neighbor.

No, no, that's not the case. It's something that the world doesn't even understand. They kind of get a hint at it and they kind of know it and they're attracted to the idea of what a friendship is.

[23 : 26] But they just don't know what it is to have a friend that loves you so much that they want to fight for you. To have a friend that you're going to spend eternity with. A friend that you have not just things on earth that come and win, but all those things that Greg talked about in common.

It's just so wonderful and I'm grateful for it. Why don't you take a moment, pray in your seat, and I'll close us in a word of prayer. Father, I pray for every man and woman and child in here.

I pray that right now that they will say in their heart by conviction that they should have strong friendships, that the friendships that they have, that they will work at nurturing and maintaining and keeping up with and they'll know it's a gift from God that's needed in their Christian life.

Those in here that would just say, I have many associates, I have many people that I talk to throughout the week, but I am missing that close friend in my life, the one that would really help hold me accountable, one that could be that source of encouragement.

I pray that they will pursue it. I pray that they will take those steps towards having those in their lives. Lord, I thank you for that. Thank you for putting us in communities of believers with people that have said yes and amen to your word and want to live it out.

[24 : 41] In Jesus' name I pray, amen. Pray that you will be praying for us.