

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



Strong Friendships—Part 2

KEY PASSAGE: Proverbs 18:24

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Proverbs 4:23, 25-27; 13:20; 20:19; 22:24-25; 24:21-22; 28:7; 29:3

SUMMARY

When it comes to friendships, more is not necessarily better.

Proverbs 18:24 warns, “A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” In other words, it’s better to have one loyal friend who encourages, helps, and lifts us up in times of trouble than to be popular with many people. When we’re indiscriminate in our choice of friends, we’re headed for ruin because some of them will drag us down. And the more friends we have who impact us negatively, the more violently we’ll be shaken and broken to pieces.

SERMON POINTS

Because of the positive or negative influence friends have in our lives, we must be discerning about our associations. Scripture clearly points out six kinds of friends to avoid.

Unwise Friendships

- **The Gossip.** “He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, therefore do not associate with a gossip” (Prov. 20:19).
- **The Quick-Tempered.** “Do not associate with a man (or woman) given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man (or woman), or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself” (Prov. 22:24-25).
- **The Disloyal and Discontent.** “My son, fear the LORD and the king; do not associate with those who are given to change, for their calamity will rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin that comes from both of them?” (Prov. 24:21-22).

- **The Self-Indulgent.** “He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father” (Prov. 28:7).
- **The Immoral.** “A man who loves wisdom makes his father glad, but he who keeps company with harlots wastes his wealth” (Prov. 29:3). God gives us further strong warnings about the dangers of immoral friends in Proverbs 4:23, 25-27: “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life . . . Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet and all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right nor to the left; turn your foot from evil.”
- **The Fool.** “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (Prov. 13:20). A fool is someone who refuses to acknowledge God and spiritual matters, and as a result, will not turn away from evil.

Knowing the powerful impact friends can have on our lives, it’s important that we examine our relationships to see if we have any ungodly associations. And as parents, we also have the responsibility of guiding our children in their selection of friends and guarding them from those relationships that could lead them astray.

Wise Friendships

Since we tend to become like the people with whom we associate, we must build relationships that are beneficial. True godly friendships are built with the following attitudes and actions:

- **Share a deep common interest.** Intimate friendships begin to develop with a mutual interest.
- **Meet the needs of the other person.** The goal is

not to focus on self but on our friends. We consider what's best for them and how we can build up and encourage them in their walk with Christ.

- **Risk rejection and pain.** To develop a genuine friendship, we must be willing to let our guard down, even if it means possible rejection. It may be that the person we're trying to befriend has received rejection in the past and is therefore accustomed to giving it back in return. Sometimes we need to see past our hurt to discover that the relationship is worth pursuing.
- **Love sacrificially.** This means we're willing to love unconditionally. Friendship is not all about receiving what we want and need. There may be times when we must give love without receiving it or sacrifice our time, preferences, or even money in order to express love to a friend.
- **Are open and transparent.** We all have areas in our lives we'd prefer to keep hidden. Maybe we're ashamed of our background or faults and fear rejection if our friend discovers the truth. But authentic friendships are built on transparency and the willingness to reveal who we really are.
- **Serve joyfully.** Genuine friendships are not based on what the other person can do for us. There's great joy when we view the relationship as an opportunity to give of ourselves without hesitation to meet the needs of the other.
- **Ask forgiveness.** In every relationship there will be occasions when we hurt or offend each other. If we let pride get in the way and refuse to acknowledge our wrong, we hinder that relationship. True friends are willing to humble themselves and ask forgiveness so the relationship can be restored.
- **Accept criticism and praise.** Most of us are much better at handling commendations than criticism, but to become a person worthy of praise, we must accept and learn from criticism. True friends are willing to receive hard truths in order to grow in the relationship.
- **Are committed to the other's spiritual growth.** When we truly love someone, our desire is that they have an increasing interest in the things of

God—Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, witnessing, and godly relationships. And if we're committed to helping them mature, then we must be growing in our relationship with the Lord as well. Conversations about the Lord, prayers for and with each other, and open sharing about our struggles are all part of building a relationship centered on Christ.

- **Are governed by principles of Scripture.** When our conduct and attitudes are in keeping with God's Word, we have a good foundation for true and lasting friendships. And if His Word is important to us, it should be a frequent topic in our conversations with friends. There's great benefit in sharing with each other what God is doing in our lives or how He has answered prayer.
- **Are loyal.** Friendships are a treasure, but they are also a responsibility. We don't want to be fair-weather friends who are only faithful when all is well. Loyalty means we're there no matter what happens, even when it's inconvenient or difficult. If others criticize, mistreat, or malign our friends, we stay faithful and encourage and strengthen them in their time of need.

RESPONSE

- Look over the warnings God gives about which types of friends to avoid. Have you ever had friends who displayed any of these qualities? How did they affect your character and choices?
- Have you ever had a friend who modeled godliness? What effect did he or she have on your life and spiritual growth?
- Now consider what kind of influence you are to your friends. Which of the characteristics of wise friendships are you practicing in your relationships?

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