

“Friendship”
Proverbs 13:20; 17:17; 19:11; 27:6,9
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Main Idea: If we want to have wise friends, we must seek to be a wise friend.

Key Points:

1. Recognize the influence a friend can have (Proverbs 13:20).

- a. This proverb is teaching us that friendships shape us. Friends influence us in how we interpret the world around us, the choices we make, what we set our affections on, and how we make choices. Friendships can draw us closer to the Lord or push us from Him. Friendship can spur us to grow in godliness or influence us to pursue the world. Therefore we must make wise associations a priority and avoid associations with a fool.
- b. We should be careful not to misapply this proverb. The fool should not be confused with the weak - the weak couple in your care group or the new believer that is struggling to overcome sin patterns. The fool is the one who disregards God, who takes lightly the things of the Lord and who despises His Word. The weak actually need the wise to come along and be a biblical friend and help them to make progress in their spiritual lives.
- c. This proverb is not contradicting our call to go to the lost. We are still called to be salt and light to a lost world. Jesus ate and drank and associated with “sinners”; we should do likewise.

2. Seek to be a wise friend.

- a. A wise friend is faithful (Proverbs 17:17). Wise friendship is not based on common interests or fun or what we can get out of it. Wise friendship is focused on expressing biblical love by investing the time and energy to enter into the joys and the sorrows of others.
- b. A wise friend loves by providing counsel (Proverbs 27:9). A wise friend comes alongside of others and speaks words that remind them of God’s faithfulness and promises. Genuine friendship seeks to strengthen the weak, encourage the fainthearted, help the downcast and spur friends on to godliness through the promises of God’s Word.
- c. A wise friend loves through correction (Proverbs 27:6). A wise friend is not willing to look aside when the Lord is dishonored because of sin. In other words, if we want to be a biblical friend, there are times when we must stir up our courage, risk disapproval and step into friends lives and challenge or correct them.

d. A wise friend overlooks an offense. (Proverbs 19:11). At times, it is wise and loving to overlook an offense. We should make every effort to walk patiently with one another, bearing with one another in love and humility. If our friend is working on an area and making progress, it is not necessary we point out every issue or sin. We should overlook an offense if our friend's offense does not create a wall between us or cause an offense in our hearts and if his or her sin does not do serious harm to God's reputation or to others. If we can genuinely let it go, we should.

3. **We can be a friend because we have a Friend (John 15:12-15).**

a. Because Jesus is our Friend, He laid down his life to redeem and reconcile us to His Father. We are members of His family and brothers and sisters with all who have been likewise redeemed. Therefore, we can pursue genuine relationships with our other brothers and sisters and walk together in Christian community.

Fellowship Starters:

1. Kenneth taught us that friends exert an influence on us – for good or bad (Prov. 13:20). Are your closest friends drawing you closer to God or away from the Lord? Are your closest companions influencing you toward godliness or worldliness?
2. What practical ways can you seek to be faithful friend?
3. If you find yourself with little or no friends in this church, how can you not “grow weary in doing good (Gal. 6:9) and persevere in pursuing friendship and cultivating relationships? Are there any heart issues (e.g., selfishness, self-righteousness, self-pity, discontent, resentment or bitterness) that are affecting your pursuit of friendships?
4. Kenneth shared that a wise friend loves through correction (Proverbs 27:6). Are there any friends with whom you need to faithfully pursue to bring an observation or correction? Are there any friends who you could ask for input about your life?
5. Who can you encourage today for all the ways they have been a faithful friend to you?