

Forge Godly Friendships
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Various scriptures in Proverbs (I'm using the New Living Translation today)

- **What is the difference between a FRIEND and an ACQUAINTANCE?**
- **What are the characteristics of a TRUE FRIEND?**

Elbert Hubbard said it simply:

A friend is one who knows you and loves you just the same.

George Washington advised us:

Be courteous to all, but intimate with few, and let those few be well tried before you give them your confidence.

The Christian life is to be lived in RELATIONSHIP with other believers. Jesus MODELED friendship. Think about Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. The disciples. His inner circle.

John 15:13–15 (ESV)

13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 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, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

Here's the big idea: Proverbs is a wonderful guide to what FRIENDSHIP looks like.

We'll look at three main thoughts:

1. It pays to be careful when choosing friends
2. It takes patience to enjoy true friendship
3. It takes love and loyalty to grow true friendship

Be Careful When Choosing Your Friends!

Proverbs 22:24–25 (NLT)

24 Don't befriend angry people
or associate with hot-tempered people,
25 or you will learn to be like them
and endanger your soul.

Anger is a natural emotion. If anger eliminates friends we're all sunk! That's not the point.

What do you think is meant by "angry, hot-tempered people?" What is this verse really saying?

- What about TROUBLE-MAKERS? Three verses to look at...

Proverbs 17:14 (NLT)

14 Starting a quarrel is like opening a floodgate,
so stop before a dispute breaks out.

Proverbs 17:19 (NLT)

19 Anyone who loves to quarrel loves sin;
anyone who trusts in high walls invites disaster.

Proverbs 26:21 (NLT)

21 A quarrelsome person starts fights
as easily as hot embers light charcoal or fire lights wood.

- **Verses 17:14 and 26:21: What's the best way to avoid a quarrel?**

- Verse 17:19 says it's a sin to love quarreling. High walls or high thresholds speaks to a person who is ARROGANT and PRIDEFUL.
- Two lessons in these verses: Don't HAVE a TROUBLE-MAKER as a friend and don't BE a TROUBLE-MAKER as a friend.

- We want a friend to be someone we can COUNT ON! Don't place confidence carelessly:

Proverbs 25:19 (NLT)

19 Putting confidence in an unreliable person in times of trouble
is like chewing with a broken tooth or walking on a lame foot.

- Here's a good summary verse about choosing friends:

Proverbs 13:20 (NLT)

20 Walk with the wise and become wise;
associate with fools and get in trouble.

- **Question: If we avoid these types of people, how can we influence them toward faith in Christ?**

- Remember: I may not be BFFs with them. But I need to try to make them a BIC or SIC...a brother or sister in Christ!

Short Fuses Make for Short Friendships! Let's point the finger back at our OWN conduct.

Proverbs 14:17 (NLT)

17 Short-tempered people do foolish things,
and schemers are hated.

Proverbs 14:29 (NLT)

29 People with understanding control their anger;
a hot temper shows great foolishness.

Proverbs 15:18 (NLT)

18 A hot-tempered person starts fights;
a cool-tempered person stops them.

- These verses are the flip-side of the same coin we just discussed. It's one thing to AVOID being friends with someone with ANGER ISSUES. It's WORSE to BE that kind of person!
- **Question: In your own experience, how have you worked to control your TEMPER and ANGER? What resource does a believer in Christ have for this?**
- Here's a verse with a pretty good technique:

Proverbs 19:11 (NLT)

11 Sensible people control their temper;
they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.

- In the words of that song every little kid in America is singing right now: “Let it go!”
 - To be clear, we’re not talking about overlooking sin. We’re talking about letting go of offense.
- A good summary verse:
Proverbs 16:32 (NLT)
32 Better to be patient than powerful;
better to have self-control than to conquer a city.

What Does True Friendship Look Like? Two words: Loyalty and Love:

Proverbs 3:3–4 (NLT)
3 Never let loyalty and kindness leave you!
Tie them around your neck as a reminder.
Write them deep within your heart.
4 Then you will find favor with both God and people,
and you will earn a good reputation.

Verse 3: Look at the language. What does Solomon’s choice of words indicate about HOW to be a LOYAL and LOVING friend?

Proverbs 20:6 (NLT)
6 Many will say they are loyal friends,
but who can find one who is truly reliable?

- Great friends are a rare treasure!

Proverbs 10:12 (NLT)
12 Hatred stirs up quarrels,
but love makes up for all offenses.

- We’ve heard it said: “Love is a choice.” By choosing to LOVE we can overcome “all offenses.”
- After a falling out, sometimes people say: “I’m not sure it can ever be the same with them.”
- Aren’t you glad Jesus didn’t say that about us? They may have to earn back your TRUST and that takes time and work. But nowhere in the Bible does it say people EARN forgiveness.
- Forgiveness is a gift. You may not soon forget...but you can soon FORGIVE.

Proverbs 11:17 (NLT)
17 Your kindness will reward you,
but your cruelty will destroy you.

- The world is filled with people who are miserable by choice because they are cruel rather than kind. It’s a SELF INFLICTED problem. If they’d choose KINDNESS it would change their lives.

Proverbs 15:17 (NLT)
17 A bowl of vegetables with someone you love
is better than steak with someone you hate.

- I may not be rich with money but I can be RICH in friendships.
- It's been said a *"Friend is one who walks IN when everyone else walks OUT."*

Proverbs 17:17 (NLT)

17 A friend is always loyal,
and a brother is born to help in time of need.

- How can you tell a FAKE "FRIEND" from a REAL FRIEND? Look at 18:24:

Proverbs 18:24 (NLT)

24 There are "friends" who destroy each other,
but a real friend sticks closer than a brother.

- One of the most valuable roles of a TRUE FRIEND is someone to whom we can vent.
- Someone who will listen without judging. Who will advise with our BEST INTEREST at heart.

Proverbs 27:9 (NLT) tells us...

9 The heartfelt counsel of a friend
is as sweet as perfume and incense.

Marian Evans Cross (aka George Eliot) wrote it beautifully:

"Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort, of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but to pour them all out just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then, with the breath of kindness blow the rest away"

- Why are believers to be LOVING and LOYAL?
- Because it's the very essence of how we've been SAVED.

Proverbs 16:6 (NLT) tells us...

6 Unfailing love and faithfulness make atonement for sin.
By fearing the Lord, people avoid evil.

Because of the Jesus' "unfailing love and faithfulness" we can be free from the bondage of sin and have eternal life with Him. We should, in turn, show LOVE and LOYALTY to those around us.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Proverbs gives us some solid advice on HAVING FRIENDS and BEING A FRIEND.
- There are some types of people we should avoid as close friends. Pray for them. Care about them. By all means share the Gospel with them. But don't get so close that their bad qualities rub off on you.
- We need to make sure WE aren't THOSE KIND OF PEOPLE!
- How well do I control my temper? How easily can I overlook an offense? Can I let it go?
- Finally, can I look at my friendships and honestly say that I am LOVING and LOYAL to my friends? We should all ask God this week to reveal to us any area where we are falling short and to help us be a friend who "sticks closer than a brother."

