

FRIENDS

Lesson #20

By Dr. Gary M. Gulan, ©1986 (Rev. 96) Proverbs 6:1-3; 27:6,9,10,14,17

Introduction: One missing ingredient in many lives today is that of a close friend. When individuals review the history of their lives they can attest either to not having close friend or to having broken up with a close friend. Solomon gives great insights into friendships.

1. APPRAISING THE CONCEPT OF FRIENDSHIP (What is a friend?)

Solomon uses four Hebrew words to describe a friend in Proverbs.

A. Proverbs 14:20 "**friend**" (Hebrew "allup") meaning "**guide.**" Found 3xs in Proverbs, 14:20; 18:24; 27:6. "The primary sense is that of **one who is always in company with another, i.e.** a guide or companion or friend. As such, the companion is not expected to betray (Ps 55:13); he ought not to be forsaken (Prov 2:17); and it is tragic when such friends are divided (Prov 16:28; 17:9). However, times come when one cannot trust them (Mic 7:15)."

("allup" by Jack B. Scott in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1, page 47-48)

B. Proverbs 16:28 "**friend**" (Hebrew "aheb") meaning "**one who is liked or loved.**" Found 2xs in Proverbs, 16:28 and 17:9. "The participles often translate as 'friend.' From 2 Chr 20:7 comes the notion that Abraham is the 'friend' of God."

("aheb" by Robert L. Alden in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1, page 14)

C. Proverbs 6:1 "**friend**" (Hebrew "ra'a" "rea" "re' eh" "merea") meaning "**companion, associate, confidant.**" Used 17xs in Proverbs, "friend" in 6:1,3,3; 17:17,18; 18:24; 19:4,6,7; 22:11,24; 27:9,10,14,17, and "companion" in 13:20, 28:7. This is the most common word used for friend in the OT. "The word 'rea' is used for friend, neighbor, associate, close or occasional. Often it is used in the phrase '**one to another.**'"

("ra'a" by R. Laird Harris in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 2, page 853)

D. Proverbs 28:24 "**friend**" (Hebrew "habar" "heber" "hebra" "haber") meaning "**have fellowship with, be joined with, company with, associate, or companion.**" "The main idea of 'habar' in the OT is to join or unite two or more things. Men were joined together in political, military, religious, racial, or communal activities. The word as an adjective and a noun can also refer to **the very close bond that can exist between persons such as close friends or even a husband and wife.**"

("habar" by Gerard Van Groningen in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1, page 260)

Summary note: Based on the above Hebrew words the following facts should be remembered about friends:

#1. A friend is one who is always in company with another.

#2. A friend is one who is liked or loved.

#3. A friend is one who is a guide, companion, associate or confidant.

#4. A friend is one who is in fellowship with another.

#5. A friend is one who is joined or united with another.

#6. A friend is one who has a very close bond to another.

2. ATTRACTING FRIENDS IN RIGHT WAYS (How does someone make a friend?)

Solomon gives three direct insights on making friends.

A. Proverbs 6:3 = avoid pitfalls and through open honest communication make corrections

B. Proverbs 18:24 (KJV) = show friendliness toward others

The Phrase "make himself friendly" is may be questionable. The Hebrew 'lehitro' has been understood as 'being crushed' or 'to be shattered' and the translation 'to show oneself friendly' has been difficult to derive from it by Hebrew scholars.

(Book of Proverbs, Crawford Howell Toy, in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, page 1029)

C. Proverbs 22:11 = be pure of heart

"Purity of motives and thought (a pure heart) and gracious words are appreciated by a king. Naturally he wants to have people like that around him. So purity and graciousness are advantageous; they help give a person a friendship with leaders in high positions."

(Book of Proverbs, Sid S. Buzzell, in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, page 955)

3. ADOPTING FRIENDS FOR WRONG REASONS (What should we guard against?)

Solomon exposes at least two of the wrong reasons on which to make friendships.

A. Proverbs 14:20 = the rich have many friends "Possessions determine popularity"

(Book of Proverbs, Crawford Howell Toy, in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, page 988)

"Besides the economic frustrations that come with poverty, poor people suffer socially as people often refuse to associate with them. . . . Verse 20, contrasts this social problem of the poor with the fact that many people want to befriend the rich."

(Book of Proverbs, Sid S. Buzzell, as found in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, page 936)

B. Proverbs 19:6 = every man is a friend to him that gives gifts

"People seek the friendship of influential people."

(Book of Proverbs, Crawford Howell Toy, in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, page 1031)

"Flattering a ruler is often done to take advantage of other people, sometimes to pervert justice. The rich, with money to buy friends, are subject to many such offers of 'friendship.'"

(Book of Proverbs, Sid S. Buzzell, as found in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, page 948)

4. AVOIDING THE WRONG TYPE OF FRIENDS (Who should not become our friends?)

Solomon warns of making friends with the wrong type of people.

A. Proverbs 1:10,14-15 = walk not in the way with sinners

B. Proverbs 4:14-15 = enter not into the path of the wicked

C. Proverbs 13:20 = avoid being a companion with fools

D. Proverbs 22:24 = make no friends with an angry man (NASV, NIV = "hot tempered")

"The warning here is against being a friend or even associating with a hot-tempered man (lit., "an owner or possessor of anger") or one easily angered (lit. "a man of wrath") because such association leads a person to take on wrathful ways, which are foolish (14:17,19), divisive (15:18), and sinful (29:22), and become ensnared (cf. 29:6), caught up in a situation which is hard to get out of."

(Book of Proverbs, Sid S. Buzzell, as found in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, page 955)

E. Proverbs 23:20 = be not among winebibbers (NASV "heavy drinkers of wine")

F. Proverbs 23:20 (28:7) = be not among riotous eaters (NASV "gluttons")

G. Proverbs 24:1-2 = do not desire to company of evil men

H. Proverbs 25:19 = confidence in an unfaithful man (NASV "faithless") is painful

5. ACQUIRING THE QUALITIES OF A FRIEND (How do friends act toward each other?)
Solomon suggests six ways friends should respond to each other.

A. Proverbs 17:9 = a friend covers a transgression

"How people respond to the faults of others reveals whether or not they have compassion. There can be no friendship without such understanding and discretion. . . .Such friendship requires the ability to forget; harping on the past has destroyed many friendships and marriages. The point is . . . that the true friend buries the wrong done for the sake of love."

(Book of Proverbs, Crawford Howell Toy, in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, page 1016)

"Covering over an offense is an evidence of love and therefore promotes love. Love contributes toward peace because it covers or forgives the faults of others. It does not dwell on those faults. A righteous person covers up wrongs by forgiving the wrongdoers. But repeating or gossiping about others' sins can lead friends to be suspicious of each other (cf. 16:28)."

(Book of Proverbs, Sid S. Buzzell, in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, page 926 and 942)

B. Proverbs 17:17 = a friend loves at all times

C. Proverbs 18:24 = a friend should stick closer than a brother

D. Proverbs 27:9 = a friend offers wise counsel

E. Proverbs 27:10 = a friend does not forsake his friend

F. Proverbs 27:17 = a friend builds up or improves

6. AGGRAVATING THE BASIS OF A FRIENDSHIP (What puts stress on a friendship?)
Solomon reveals five activities that challenge a friendship.

A. Proverbs 6:1 = being a surety (i.e. giving credit, a loan, or a pledge)

B. Proverbs 16:28 = being a whisperer (NASV "slanderer" NIV "gossip")

C. Proverbs 17:9 = repeating a matter

D. Proverbs 17:17 = adversity

"True friends. . . are faithful in times of adversity as well as prosperity."

(Book of Proverbs, Sid S. Buzzell, in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, page 943)

E. Proverbs 18:19 = causing a brother to be offended

F. Proverbs 18:24 = having too many associations

"If a person has many companions, or numerous friends chosen indiscriminately, he may find himself in trouble (lit., "be broken in pieces"). A wordplay is intended here, for the Hebrew word for 'companion' is 're'eh' and the word for 'break in pieces' (come to ruin) is 'ra'a.' It is better to have a true friend (lit. "one who loves" cf. 17:17) than many less reliable companions."
(Book of Proverbs, Sid S. Buzzell, in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, page 945)

Conclusion: Solomon emphasizes the importance of friends and challenges us in our relationship to others.