

PROVERBS SERIES NINETEEN
FRIENDS ARE SHELTERING TREES
Dr. Roger Barrier
Proverbs 12:26;13:20;17:17;18:24;27:9-10

Introduce Sketch: Talk about proverbs and friends: funny, choose friends wisely, sometimes they choose us.
We all have friends like these.

•SLIDE: Proverb 25:17: Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house —
Lest he become weary of you and hate you.

•SLIDE: Samuel Coleridge was a British poet of great magnitude. Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner: “Dead men...”

Wife died young of cancer. Lonely. Victimized by rheumatism. Tried to solve it with opium and became addicted. Unable to settle the voices raging inside. He found a friend named William Wordsworth. If you love poetry both names should ring bells.

One of his best works was a tribute to his friend, William Wordsworth.

1389•SLIDE #11: The best line is: “Friendship is a sheltering tree.”

What a beautiful picture! Think of friends like great trees, leafy limbs that come around us and spread over us and bring shade from the sun, and from the blast of adversity, and from winter’s wind of loneliness—a great sheltering tree. That is a friend.

Massive amounts of Proverbs are devoted to the subject of friends and neighbors.

OVERHEAD: The Hebrew word (*ra’a*) can mean “friend” or “neighbor”.

We’ll include both meanings; for what’s true of friends ought to be true of neighbors. Friends and neighbors are an overwhelming part of the joy and success and fulfillment of our lives.

Let Me Share Some Overflow Thoughts From Proverbs Regarding Friends.

•SLIDE: 1. FRIENDS ARE ESSENTIAL.

Friends are not optional; there is no substitute for friends who alleviate loneliness, care, listen, feel, comfort, and reprove as needed.

•SLIDE: Proverb 17:17: A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity.

•SLIDE: Proverb 18:24: A man of many companions may come to ruin,
but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

•SLIDE #24: Remember the first Crocodile Dundee Movie about the bushman from Australia who came to New York?

He was at a party with the woman newspaper reporter who brought him to the States. They meet a girl with all sorts of problems and the reporter mentioned that she has just changed Shrinks.

“Shrink, what’s a shrink?”

“That is a person you go to to tell your problems to.

“Doesn’t she have any mates?”

“Mates?”

•SLIDE: “Yeah, you know, friends. That’s what mates are for. Back home we tell our problems to Wally and Wally tells everyone else and that takes care of all our problems.”

DFW: Man’s wife told him he did not have enough friends. Needed to get more friends.

•SLIDE #: “So I went out and bought a dog. Man’s best friend.”

God and Adam alone in the Garden and it is “Not Good.”

•SLIDE: GENESIS 2:18: The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

How did God know it was not good to be alone? He did not like it at all.

God and Adam are not enough. Adam needed significant others.

Conference last week and the leader told of a woman who lost her husband to a drunken driver. Three small children. Grieved.

Year later began to tell others, “I’m lonely.” Christian friends said, “Well, you have God. If you have God that is enough.”

“I’m lonely!” “Well, you have God,” they told her. Needed comfort and received condemnation. She attempted suicide.

OVERHEAD: “Helper suitable:” Interlocking fingers: incomplete becomes complete.
Primary reason for marriage is companionship.

OVERHEAD: If we are to subsist well in life we need God and other people:

Marriage

Family

Church

Friends

1389•SLIDE #26: 2. FRIENDS IMPACT OUR LIVES—SO CHOOSE THEM CAREFULLY.

•SLIDE #: Proverb 13:20: He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.

They aren’t neutral. If you run with good friends, you become a better person. If you run with poor friends, you become worse.

This is why parents are so concerned about their children’s friends. Talk to teenagers here.

•SLIDE #: Proverb 28:7: He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father.

•SLIDE #: Proverb 12:26: A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Choose friends carefully...wisely. If you are a gossip, you usually run with gossips. If you are a rebel, you pick rebels and run with rebels. Or, if you run with rebels, you become one. If you want to be wise, run with wise people and you become wise. It’s amazing how it rubs off.

When we choose correctly, it is like perfume to the heart.

•SLIDE #: Proverb 27:9: Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.

•BUILD SLIDE #A: Jesus chose carefully.

•BUILD SLIDE #B: John 11:16: "Then Thomas said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

SLIDE: 3. FRIENDS COME IN FOUR CLASSIFICATIONS – NOT ONE.

Proverb 18:24: A man of many companions may come to ruin,
But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

SLIDE: 1. Acquaintances – That's what most of us are in church. Acquaintances are those with whom we have spasmodic contact and superficial interaction, and we don't ask hard questions: "I'm really not but I can't tell you."

•SLIDE #: John 2:23-25- "Many people believed because of the miraculous signs He was doing, but He would not entrust Himself to them, for He knew all men, . . . He knew what was in the heart of man."

SLIDE: 2. Casual friends – This is the next level. More contact. Common interests. Free to ask more specific questions. Maybe even ask an opinion of a casual friend. Little closer but not close. Still keep a safe distance.

•SLIDE #: (Matthew 11:19: "Jesus Christ is the friend of publicans and sinners.")

SLIDE: 3. Close friends – Similar life goals. Free to ask hard questions. These are people you play handball and tennis with. Folks you do things with. Much closer – but not as close as fourth class.

•SLIDE #: (Luke 10: 1-4, 23: Christ sent out seventy-two close friends to reap the harvest before Him. Then He unveiled more information to even closer friends.)

•SLIDE #: (John 15:15: "I no longer call you servants . . . Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from my father I have made known to you.")

SLIDE: 4. Intimate friends – Regular contact, deep commitment in mutual character development. Not only very open but anxiously awaits their counsel and reproof. Free to criticize, correct, embrace and encourage because there is a built in mutual understanding.

Jesus had twelve close friends: But he had three intimate friends.

•SLIDE #: (Matthew 17:1-2: "Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, and . . . He was transfigured before them.)

SLIDE: Illustrate with an inverted "V". Make "V" look like a rooftop in snow country. Sharp peak. Put over it the word "open." You are less open with acquaintances, little more open with casual friends; good deal more open with close friends, totally open with your intimate friends.

SLIDE: Turn the "V" right side up– "Numbers" become less and less the more you become intimate with an individual. Have many, many acquaintances, number of casual friendships. Some close friends; very,

very few intimate friends. Very, very few – maybe only one, two or three intimate friends with whom you can absolutely unveil the truth of your life. Ideally if you're married, one of these is your mate; but sometimes it's not.

Go through life and have 3 or 4 intimate friends you are most fortunate. Most people go through life and never have one.

Now let me tell you the tragedy. Some of you have no intimate friends. You're the loneliest people here today. There is no one with whom you can open up. That's why life is so tough!

Our constant prayer should be: "God give me a few. I'll settle for one that will love me and help me and encourage me."

OVERHEAD: Three categories

Neutrals

Drainers

Energizers

Jesus had all three groups.

1389•SLIDE #34: 4. FRIENDS SOMETIMES BETRAY US AND/OR LET US DOWN.

David had his Ahithophel.

Caesar had his Brutus.

Jesus had his Judas.

And you had your _____. We all have had friends who turned their backs and hurt us.

•SLIDE #: G.K. Chesterson: "God commanded us to love both our enemies and our neighbors because usually they were the same people."

Proverbs acknowledges that betrayal occurs among friends.

•SLIDE #: Proverb 27:10: *Do not forsake your friend* and the friend of your father,

Julie and I were leading a conference for pastor's and wives recently. During a testimony time, one woman, with tears in her eyes, shared a childhood experience with her parents. Dad wanted to go somewhere and mom did not want to go. Mom was angry. Daughter was sent to the neighbors to be cared for while mom and dad were away. While at the neighbors, she was attacked by the neighbor's dog.

She said, "I remember awakening with blood all over my face and chest, my heart racing in terror.

"When mom came home, she was angry." Now she began to sob. "She wasn't angry at the neighbors, she was angry with me. How could I let this happen?"

I am so sorry. Children are not well equipped emotionally to handle their parent's anger. Hard to process anger from the one who is supposed to love and care for you.

"But, that's not all. The dog had not been vaccinated. I remember my parents talking about what to do.

Rabies has no symptoms until it is too late. If they took me for shots the neighbors would get upset and they might put down the dog. So they decided not to get me shots. (weeping) I learned that the neighbor's dog meant more to my mom and dad than I did."

Talk about rejection, betrayal, disappointment, and hurt.

Even those closest to us may betray and hurt us the most. With parents like that who needs enemies?

Here are some of the ways we betray our friends.

•SLIDE #: Proverb 3:28: Do not say to your neighbor,
"Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow" —
when you now have it with you.

•SLIDE #: Proverb 11:9: With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor,
but through knowledge the righteous escape.

•SLIDE #: Proverb 26:18-19: Like a madman shooting
firebrands or deadly arrows
19 is a man who deceives his neighbor
and says, "I was only joking!"

It is hard to restore a wounded friendship. It's strange but true that some of God's people will forgive offenses from unbelievers that they would never forgive if a Christian friend committed them.

•SLIDE #: Proverb 18:19: An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city,
and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.

How do we respond when we have been wounded by a friend.

•SLIDE #: Proverb 24:28-29: Do not testify against your neighbor without cause,
or use your lips to deceive.
29 Do not say, "I'll do to him as he has done to me;
I'll pay that man back for what he did."

•SLIDE #: Proverb 17:9: He who covers over an offense promotes love.

Don't be so hard on those who hurt you. You probably have done the same thing yourself.

•SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 7:21-22: Do not pay attention to every word people say,
or you may hear your servant cursing you-
22 for you know in your heart
that many times you yourself have cursed others.

•SLIDE: 5. "FRIENDS MUST BE CAREFULLY CULTIVATED.

They don't come automatically.

•SLIDE #: Proverbs 18:24: "A man who has friends must show himself friendly."

Luke 19:5: "Zacchaeus, come down from that tree; I am having lunch at your house today."

•SLIDE: Samuel Johnson: "If a man does not make new acquaintances as he advances through life he will soon find himself left alone. One should keep his friendships in constant repair."

Whether or not we have friends depends a great deal on us.

•SLIDE: One day a wagon comes to Farmer Jones' gate. Folks in the wagon ask, "We're moving from Jamestown to Virginia City. Can you tell us what kind of neighbors we'll find in Virginia City?" Farmer Jones replied: "What kind of neighbors did you find in Jamestown?"

“The worst. They were gossipy, unkind, and indifferent. We’re glad to move away.”
Jones: You will find the same in Virginia City.”

•SLIDE: The next day another mover’s wagon passed – similar conversation took place: “Can you tell us what kind of neighbors we’ll find in Virginia City?”

Farmer Jones asked: “What kind of neighbors did you find in Jamestown?”

“The very best. So kind and considerate! It almost broke our hearts to move away.”

Jones replied: “You’ll find exactly the same kind in Virginia City!”

•SLIDE #: FRIENDS ARE FOR A SEASON.

You noticed that David’s best friend of all time was not on the list. He was dead. High school friends don’t last forever. Gary Courtney lives in Oklahoma. Mike and Ernie are gone.

•SLIDE: WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS!

We find the Savior developing not only a sheltering tree, he had developed a grove of trees.

Our Lord Jesus Christ had a lot of friends.

Jesus loved His friends. He wants the same relationship with us.

Jesus wants to be your friend. Relationship with you.

•SLIDE: John 15:13: “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends”

•SLIDE: He wants to be your friend.

We all know the hymn, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus!”

It was written by a young Irishman, Joseph Scriven, who emigrated to Canada in 1845. Was engaged to a young girl. Very happy courtship! On the eve of their wedding date she was accidentally drowned. Her death brought him indescribable grief. Shortly afterward he sat down to write:

•SLIDE: “What a friend we have in Jesus

All our sins and griefs to bear

What a privilege to carry

Everything to God in prayer.”

•SLIDE: “Do thy friends despise, forsake thee

Take it to the Lord in prayer.”

In His arms He’ll take and shield thee.

Thou wilt find a solace there.

Let’s sing it.