

## Living a Wise Life

Six sessions applying Old Testament Wisdom Literature to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Living

### Week 3: Wisdom about Friendship (*Proverbs 27*)

**ICEBREAKER:** What qualities do you most value in your friends?

Read Proverbs 27:6-17

#### 1. The basis of friendships

**The point:**

- Be cautious (“A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray” 12:26, “Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered” 22:24)
- Be loyal (“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” 17:17, “Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father, and do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you— better a neighbour nearby than a brother far away” 27:10)
- Be gracious (“He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend” 22:11)

**The illustration:** Give a personal example of some good friendships that you have which have been based on loyalty and graciousness to each other.

**The application:** We should not be unthinking in choosing our friends – it is right to apply a degree of caution. However, once we have made a friend we should be loyal and gracious towards them.

**BUZZ GROUPS:** Are you wise in the way you choose your friends? How do you show them loyalty and graciousness?

15 mins

#### 2. The blessing of friendships

**The point:** There are many blessings in friendships including

- Friendships can provide *Counsel* (Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses 27:6, Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel 27:9)
- Friendships can grow our *Character* (As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another 27:17)

Ecclesiastes, which we look at in a few sessions time, also has a great few verses on the blessing of friendship. **Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.**

<sup>9</sup>Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:<sup>10</sup> If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no-one to help him up! <sup>11</sup> Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? <sup>12</sup> Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

- Friendships can be *Productive* (Ecc 4:9)
- Friendships can provide *Support* (Ecc 4:10)
- Friendships can lead to *Romance* (Ecc 4:11-12 – we will think more about this when we look at Song of Songs in the next session)

**The illustration:** Give some examples of how you have benefitted in some of these ways from your friendships

**The application:** We need to think through how we can be a source of counsel, character sharpening, productivity helping and support to our friends.

It may be that it would help to encourage accountability in friendships between people within the pastorate. This might take place in small groups and you could spend some time encouraging these to be set up if they are not already in existence.

**BUZZ GROUPS:** Do you feel that you are experiencing the blessing of friendships at the moment? Are you supported, given counsel, being sharpened by your friends – at pastorate, at HTB, outside of church? Be honest about where you are feeling that your friendships are not providing you with blessing.

### 3. The battle of friendships

30 mins

**The point:** We have to work hard to maintain and nurture our friendships. Friendships can be marred for at least three reasons.

- Difficult people trying to disrupt our friendships (**The perverse stir up dissension, and gossips separate close friends 16:28, Whoever covers over an offence promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends 17:9**)
- The circumstances of life. For example, Proverbs speaks about the advantages and the dangers of wealth (**The poor are shunned even by their neighbours, but the rich have many friends. To despise the poor is to sin, but blessed are those who are kind to the needy 14:20-21**)
- Our idleness and lack of care. We can end up not investing enough time into our friends and not giving them what they need (**Like clouds and wind without rain is the one who boasts of gifts never given 25:14**)

**The illustration:** Give some personal examples of how you have struggled to be a good friend.

**The application:** In the busyness of London life, we can easily neglect some of our close friendships. It is not much use having 1000 friends on Facebook, if we don't give our close friends counsel and help in their time of need.

**BUZZ GROUPS:** How do you bless those who are your close friends? Where have you not been investing the right amount of time/energy in others to encourage and help them?

#### 4. The best friendship

**The point:** No friend will ever perfectly provide us with all that we need. However, Jesus Christ is the perfect friend. Proverbs 18:24 says “**A person of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother**”. Jesus is that perfect friend who sticks closer to us than a brother. We need to invest in, and be blessed by, our friendship with Jesus.

**The illustration:** Victor Hugo once said - “The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved”. No friend can ever provide us with that perfect conviction that we are loved. It is only Jesus Christ who can truly fulfil that need we all have to know we are loved.

**The application:** Whoever we are, whatever our past or our present imperfections, Jesus wants to be a friend of ours (**Read Matthew 11:19, Revelation 3: 20**). Jesus has demonstrated his perfect love for us (**Read John 15:13**), and even though we are called to obey Jesus, we do it as part of being his friends rather than his servants (**Read John 15:14-15**). Indeed, we are such close friends with Jesus, he sees us as his brothers and sisters (**Read Hebrews 2:11**).

45 mins

**MINISTRY TIME:**

Read the words of Jesus in John 15:13-15. Pray for the Spirit to do a work in each person that they might know that they are Jesus' friends.

Then read the words of Jesus in John 15:16-17. Pray for the Spirit to help everyone love each other and go and bear fruit that will last through how they relate to their friends.

Encourage people to pray in their buzz groups and pray into the particulars that have been discussed in their groups