



# MONDAY 03 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & FRIENDSHIP

## Read: Proverbs 3:27-29

### **Plug In...**

We've looked at Proverbs regarding our heart, and then how the heart goes on to inform our words. Now, one final perspective on the Proverbs: friendship. Words control much of the direction our friendships will go in. Our relationships are never static. They either improve or dissolve, usually by one phrase at a time.

In our English Bible, Proverbs uses two words: 'neighbour' and 'friend'. The Hebrew of Proverbs only has the one word for both. As Proverbs 3:29 defines, a neighbour/friend are those *close* to you. Maybe translating 'friend' leans towards an emotional bond, whereas, translating 'neighbour' tilts towards being close in terms of space.

### **Chew It Over...**

In the age of Facebook where the term 'friend' has been trivialised, it is easy to theoretically have a social network going into the hundreds. Does this water-down what we mean by 'friend' and how we might invest in them? It is impossible to focus on that many friends; to show sustained love and have energy to work hard at the relationship. We can get ourselves into a predicament where we

are shooing away those close by (Proverbs 3:28). We have spread ourselves relationally too thin and cannot spatially get close nor emotionally get close.

How do we make sure we are there for the ones God has placed us within proximity of?

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Pray that God will help you spend your energy in building up quality relationships with those close by. Ask that they may be relationships that come close together as you both look to Christ.



# TUESDAY 04 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & FRIENDSHIP

## Read: Proverbs 11:12

### **Plug In...**

Friendships live and die by the words we inject into them. The person who understands this will choose their words carefully in order to build up the friendship rather than tear down.

### **Chew It Over...**

Some statements, some comments, can quickly set up a power imbalance within a friendship. Friendships need mutual love. Have you said words lately that has left a friend feeling inferior? In friendships, these usually are little words, little comments. What phrase did you drop to make yourself superior?

The next proverb (11:13) speaks not of the thoughtlessness that comes from many words, but of the time when we've deliberately shared information our friend would like kept private. It may be impossible to revive the friendship after this. Is there someone you now need to do all you can to restore the friendship with? How can you set up today an opportunity to ask for forgiveness?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Lord. We see that the integrity of our friendships depend on the resources of your grace, a spirit of forgiveness, humility, pro-activeness. All these we ask that you will give us. Provide it for our counterparts. May you, by your mercy, restore the relationships that we have marred.



## WEDNESDAY 05 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & FRIENDSHIP

### Read: Proverbs 18:24

#### **Plug In...**

This declares that with many friends there is a danger. Some further proverbs spell out the danger. If you have many friends it is likely they are probably after something other than you (see: Proverbs 19:4,6-7 – What's popular: You or your money?).

#### **Chew It Over...**

Superficial relationships are exposed when one party hits trouble. If the friendship exists because one can connect to a cash-cow, then the friendship is over once the fortune topples. The proverb implies that the expectation blood-is-thicker-than-water can turn foul. Such a detail suggests that friendship is more than mere proximity (spatial or genetic) but captures something of emotional intensity.

Are your friends in Christ true family in the best sense of the term? (Proverbs 17:17).

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Help us Lord to not just take from our relationships. Make use like Jesus, make us one who lays down his life for his friends. (John 15:13).



## THURSDAY 06 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & FRIENDSHIP

### Read: Proverbs 22:24-25

#### **Plug In...**

The proverb suggests the man in question is always angry and characterised by hot-headedness. Spending serious time with such a person means these negative characteristics will rub off on you.

#### **Chew It Over...**

Given friendships need time and energy placed into them, here we are counselled to choose our friends wisely. There may be friendships that for the sake of our life direction, our godliness, we need to let the friendship fade. If you can identify an unhelpful friendship, ask yourself what is it that keeps you in it? What are you seeking and trying to get out of it? This may reveal we are chasing things in our friendships that we think provide us more security and satisfaction than Christ does. The proverb warns this a path that will entrap. Don't believe the lie of such a friendship. Escape it now.

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Lord we desire to be included. Help us to find love and security, deep friendships that keeps one another accountable to you. Help us to wisely disengage from friendships that lead away from you and how you would have us represent you in the world.



## FRIDAY 07 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & FRIENDSHIP

### Read: Proverbs 27:5-6 (27:17)

#### **Plug In...**

Refraining from speaking to your friend when they wander off the wise path is to suppress your love for them (*cf.* 29:5).

The NIV hasn't captured the 'friend' word which is original well-known proverb, Proverb 27:17. Literally, "*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens the face of his friend*". This shows correction is not one-way, but a mutual exercise for a loving friendship.

#### **Chew It Over...**

We've seen a true friend keeps silent (11:12), but here they also speak up. The wise person doesn't apply proverbs mechanically, but they observe the circumstances and ask, does this apply here? Is this the right time, the right way? The wise person learns to read people, to read circumstances.

We have to figure out what is going on for us when we don't speak up when we should. Are we attempting to build the friendship on something other than God's order, God's wisdom? Are we trying to find inclusion and acceptance by another path? Are we drawing

more on the person in the friendship than Christ who forms the friendship? Getting this about-face can lead us to actions that may look 'nice' but are essentially damaging apathy towards our friend.

In the context of friendships with non-Christians, it has been said we can work hard at building bridges (i.e., friendships) to non-Christians in order to share the gospel, but then become so afraid of losing the relationship that we never walk across the bridge.

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask the Lord to be able to read the circumstances, read your friends. To know when a humble loving word is needed. Ask for ability to give those words well. Ask that you are grounded in the wisdom of Christ. Pray that you will not fear losing the relationship and will even share those kinds correcting words of the gospel – the right path – to our non-Christian friends.





## WEEKEND 08-09 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & FRIENDSHIP

### Read: Proverbs 13:14 & Matthew 6:9-13

#### **Plug In...**

Next week *The Lakes* again continues in Matthew's Gospel. We'll recommence half-way through the Sermon on the Mount. This section of the Sermon feels a lot like the Book of Proverbs. Jesus gives plenty of observations about life as we know it as he teaches (e.g., Matthew 6:26). The Book of Proverbs has observed life at street-level. It sees a fixed order to the universe; one path leads one way, another the other. One action causes this effect, the opposite, a polar yet equal response. Proverbs acknowledges that the fixed order comes from the Creator God, and therefore urges one to reflect on their world with the fear of the LORD (Proverbs 1:7).

The fixed order in Proverbs sees sin also follows a predictable order. Sin has consequences that flow (Proverbs 5:22-23). Sin will be judged. The wicked exist, the wicked are headed to destruction (Proverbs 16:4). A wise person will observe that despite whatever pattern of wisdom they've perceived, they fail to apply this wisdom consistently. Whatever one might be able to say about the order of things, one finds they can't travel unswervingly on the good path mapped. They recognise the path is hard, the path is narrow (Proverbs 14:12, *cf.* Matthew 7:13)

The wise person doesn't trust their own heart (Proverbs 14:12). The wise person within Israel understands that wisdom comes from a heart that loves the LORD (Deuteronomy 6). The wise person sees that Israel has spent their existence straying. The wise person within Israel would recognise this and would wisely call upon God to help them (Proverbs 15:29).

The wise person would pray like Jesus directed in Matthew 6:9-13. They would pray for God's rule to overrule their wayward hearts, that they might exist in the Kingdom where everything is rightly ordered. They would pray that God in His justice finds a way to remove their debts. The foolish person would not pray such a prayer.

Wisdom is not just helpful life-hacks! It is instruction over how to get onto the road that leads to life. Jesus came as God's wise man to give instruction on the Kingdom of Heaven and how to enter it (Matthew 7:13-27). Wise observation of our life, the realities of our world, should humble us and cause us to call out to God in repentance.

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Pray the Lord's Prayer today.