

Counting Friends

“As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” (Prov. 27:17)

Counting Friends

- “False friendship, like the ivy, decays and ruins the walls it embraces; but true friendship gives new life and animation to the object it supports.” (Richard Burton)
- Most people do not choose friends; they simply allow friendship to happen.
- Sometimes we chose a friend for no particular quality in them, but merely from circumstance or proximity.

Counting Friends

- 1Kings 4:29-34 - “And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. 30 Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all men ... and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. 33 Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. 34 And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.”
- The word “friend” (Hebrew “rea”) is found 30 times in Proverbs.

Guidance In Choosing Friends

- Prov. 12:26 - “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.”
- Prov. 1:10-16 - “My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. 11 If they say, Come with us, Let us lie in wait to shed blood; Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause; 12 Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, And whole, like those who go down to the Pit; 13 We shall find all kinds of precious possessions, We shall fill our houses with spoil; 14 Cast in your lot among us, Let us all have one purse - 15 My son, do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path; 16 For their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed blood.”

Guidance In Choosing Friends

- Prov. 1:17-18 - “Surely, in vain the net is spread In the sight of any bird; 18 But they lie in wait for their own blood, They lurk secretly for their own lives.”
- Prov. 1:7 - “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Harmful Relationships

- Prov. 2:11-12, 16 - “Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, 12 To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things... 16 To deliver you from the immoral woman, From the seductress who flatters with her words”
- The rebels who dismiss authority
- The heedless hedonists whose entire focus is on physical pleasures

Harmful Relationships

- How can we see through the false promises in these relationships?
- Start by ridding yourself of your own mythology.
 - You do not know better than God
 - You are not too strong to fall; it can happen to you

Harmful Relationships

- Prov. 6:12-15 - “A worthless person, a wicked man, Walks with a perverse mouth; 13 He winks with his eyes, He shuffles his feet, He points with his fingers; 14 Perversity is in his heart, He devises evil continually, He sows discord. 15 Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly; Suddenly he shall be broken without remedy.”
- Prov. 4:14-16 - “Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on. 16 For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall.”

Solomon's Warnings

- The talkers
 - Prov. 11:13 - “A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter”
- The beautiful people
 - Prov. 11:22 - “As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, So is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.”

Solomon's Warnings

- The fortunate
 - Prov. 17:5 - “He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.”
- “Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.”
(Oprah Winfrey)

Solomon's Warnings

- The tough guys
 - Prov. 12:10 - “A righteous man regards the life of his animal, But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel”
- The angry person
 - Prov. 22:24-25 - “Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go, 25 Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul.”

Solomon's Warnings

- Respect God's wisdom more than your own myths, and you will avoid a great deal of sorrow and pain.
 - Prov. 7:4-5 - "Say to wisdom, You are my sister,"
And call understanding your nearest kin, 5 That they may keep you from the immoral woman,
From the seductress who flatters with her words."

Solomon's Counsel

- Is it worth the risk and effort to cultivate friendships?
- Solomon praises healthy friendships and the blessings that come from them.
- A healthy friend is someone who stays with you when everyone else leaves.
 - Prov. 17:17 - “A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.”

Solomon's Counsel

- A healthy friend will be honest with us, even if it risks the relationship. They are honest because they love us.
 - Prov. 27:5-6 - “Open rebuke is better Than love carefully concealed. 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”
- We are made better by being with others who are working to be better.
 - Prov. 27:17 - “As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.”

Solomon's Counsel

- Healthy friendships give us joy in a good relationship rather than filling a void with an unhealthy one.
 - Prov. 27:9 - “Ointment and perfume delight the heart, And the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.”
- Healthy friendships enable us to form bonds of esteem and love that often prove stronger than those of kinfolk.
 - Prov. 18:24 - “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”
- Healthy friendships are to be carefully nurtured and highly treasured.
 - Prov. 27:10 - “Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend, Nor go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity; Better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.”

Using Solomon's Friendship Wisdom

- Our fall from unhealthy friendships will probably not be sudden, but as a gradual erosion of morals and values.
 - Prov. 13:20 - “He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.”
 - Jehoshaphat was a good king, but he chose bad friends and allies

Using Solomon's Friendship Wisdom

- Wisdom must be exercised if it is to be effective
 - 1Kings 11:4-6 - “For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David.”

Using Solomon's Friendship Wisdom

- Getting wisdom is not an easy or quick task. It requires humility, patience, and a willingness to be reproved.
- It requires that we acknowledge God as the Sovereign Teacher
 - John 15:13-15 - “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

Using Solomon's Friendship Wisdom

- Ecc. 4:9-10 - "Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken."
- "The wicked have only accomplices, the voluptuous have only companions in debauchery; self-seekers have only associates; politicians have only their factions; the generality of idle men has only connections; princes have only courtiers; virtuous men alone possess friends." (Voltaire)