

The Power of Relationships in God's Word

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.”
– Proverbs 27:17, NLT

King Solomon's writings are filled with illustrations meant to enlighten us about the power of meaningful relationships. He believed good friends could sharpen one another—that “metal to metal” relationships would result in an improved life (see Prov. 27:17).

He also believed that poor relationships would wound us. Ultimately, he claimed, we are the product of our friendships, whether good or bad.

The king clearly understood that human beings were never made to “go it alone.” He taught us that God often uses the influences of others to shape and prepare our destinies. We can never be all God intended for us to be without significant people in our lives.

Solomon also taught that true friends correct one another. “Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy” (27:6). Pity the person who has no healthy “wounding” from a friend!

Solomon's words tell us that a quality friend will offer valuable counsel: “The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense” (27:9). Literally, this means a real friend will give “fit”—that is, timely and appropriate—advice (see 15:23).

Another characteristic of friendships is that friends offer mutual support and encouragement. We each need someone who will hold us accountable.

For this reason, we must work hard at developing friendships with those more stalwart than ourselves—colleagues who aren't afraid to "level with us," who are more impressed with character than accomplishment.

What about behaviors that spoil friendships? Solomon gives us a list that includes gossip, excessive talking (see 16:28; 17:9), the improper handling of money (see 19:4), anger and self-control issues (see 22:24), and odious and obnoxious behavior (see 27:14).

Finally, we need to understand that going to the next level in God will always require us to discover and develop new relationships. However, we should never discard time-honored, meaningful relationships. Benjamin Franklin once said: "Be slow in choosing a friend, slower in changing."

So who needs friends, right? After all, this is America—the great bastion of independence and self-sufficiency.

Think again! Maybe it's time once more for you and me to hear the sound of grinding metal in our lives. Iron to iron—friend sharpening friend. Lord, give us good friends!

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