



Building Godly Friendships

Serious Pressure

Have you ever seen one of those videos of a hydraulic press crushing various objects? It is rather entertaining to see what happens when you bring tremendous force to bear on a tennis ball or a water bottle or a cute little plastic toy. Let's just say that those objects come out of that encounter looking rather different than when they started.

There's no question that pressure like that can do a lot of damage. But there's another kind of pressure we live with on a daily basis that can bring damage in a different way. We call it "peer pressure." Scripture descriptively calls it the "fear of man" and warns us that it brings "a snare" (Proverb 29:25). Like a hydraulic press, friends can have a powerful influence even over the strongest people.

This is Just for Teens, Right?

While we might be tempted to think that teens are the only ones affected by peer pressure or negatively influenced by bad friends, that's just not true. Adults face this kind of pressure too. No one is immune. This is why it is important, *before* you become an adult, to grow in the godly wisdom God provides in Proverbs regarding friendship. Just think about how much the culture around you has changed since you were a young child. New developments in technology and the wide spread use of social media are greatly impacting the way you are learning to relate to the people around you. Without the clarity of God's Word to break through so much confusion, we will not be able to start, grow, or maintain the kind of godly relationships He desires for His children.

Social media has its benefits, but it also changes us in significant ways. And many times we aren't aware of just how much we are being influenced and changed by the technology we use. For example, we love the benefit of connecting to lots of people but don't realize that those relationships can tend to be shallow and superficial. We get the instant gratification of feeling connected, but wide does not equal deep. How many times have you finally put your phone down and felt unsatisfied? Twenty minutes on social media can be so depressing if you are hoping to find acceptance, connection, and belonging there. It is possible that social media even promotes wrong expectations for our friendships.

The Bible gives us the accurate picture we need as a model and guide to building godly friendships and being the right kind of friend. Ultimately, our friendships affect our relationship with God as well. It is in the arena of relating with one another face-to-face that we learn the basic skills for how to relate to God. Wrong thinking about our earthly relationships impacts our heavenly ones too. This isn't a social media rant...simply a caution to evaluate our thinking and bring our current relationships into the light of God's Word. As you work through the following study, allow God to convict, correct, encourage, and inspire you. By God's grace, you can become more like our Savior—the ultimate Friend.

How to Do This Study:

- **Read through the book of Proverbs at your own pace.** Your pace may be a chapter of Proverbs a day, or just a few verses at a time.
- As you read, use a personal journal to **record everything you learn** about friends, friendship, or being a friend. Or, if you want to be more specific, use the supplied pages that follow to categorize what you learn.

- Look for key words like *companion, friend, friendship, company, associate, among*, etc.
- Write down characteristics of both godly and ungodly friends.
- Note the types of companions we are warned to avoid (*do not walk with*) and the types of companions we are encouraged to cultivate (*walk with*).
- What commands are given regarding companions/friends?
- You may also want to record what God says about how to relate to *neighbors*.
- **Make specific, personal application of God's truth to your life.** As you study, perhaps the Lord will show you something you need to change. Thank Him for this gracious conviction! Like the good friend we read about in Proverb 27:6, His “wounds” are faithful. His intention is corrective and redemptive. He wants us to grow and change.
 - Apply the gospel: *repent* of your sin and *believe* the truth. Seek God's forgiveness.
 - By God's grace, what practical action steps should you plan to take in order to say “no” to sin and “yes” to God? Use the application section at the end of this study for help to get specific.
 - Ask a godly adult for help and accountability.
 - And then relish the joy of unhindered fellowship with Christ.

Wise Friends

Characteristics of godly friends:

Commands:

Foolish Friends

Characteristics of ungodly friends:

Commands:

How to be a Good Friend

Neighborly Advice

Application

- Write a simple summary of what you learned about friends from this study. Journal about something that impacted you.
- Is there something from your study you didn't understand and would like to explore further? (Consider asking a godly adult for help.)
- Are you the right kind of friend? Are you the kind of person who might potentially drag someone down spiritually? Or would your vibrant walk with Christ encourage someone else to grow? What qualities do you need to develop in order to be a good friend to others?
- Consider the friendship triangle: two people who share a common goal, interest, or passion grow closer together as they move toward the same thing. This is why like-minded kids at a camp can find each other—even out of hundreds of other campers—and form an instant bond. They draw near to each other because they are passionate about the same things. The strongest friendships are formed by mutual love for Christ. With Christ as the common bond, a friendship will deepen and grow as those two friends continue to pursue Him. But if it is something earthly—like a common hobby or shared stage of life—that friendship will often fade and change with the passing of that interest or stage. In considering your closest friendships, what is the point that draws you closer together? What forms your bond with them? Spiritual or physical things? Temporal or eternal?

