

Proverbs on Friendship

When I was 24, already had had at least 22 homes around the world. During the next 34 years we moved 7 times. One more since then to here. I had 3 hen parties with different groups 5 years ago, I have 207 friends on Facebook. I get 30-40 birthday cards and I send 100 Christmas cards on my own behalf with another 100 from both Michael and myself. . You would think I have vast multitudes of friends.

According to research, it is calculated that we each have about 150 casual friends, 50 close but not intimate friends, 15 intimate friends and 5 best friends. Yet again research confirms the Bible as through the whole Bible there are 4 words for "friend indicating different levels of relationship. So because I was allotted this topic I have dug deep and considered who are my friends. I have re-assessed and re-evaluated those friendships. It's been an emotional experience. I spoke to those I considered close friends,

When I asked my friends how we came to be friends, it was something shared - history or interests; but there was something about those particular people in those particular situations that drew us together because there were others who shared the same time, place and interests with us but they fell away; something else was going on. It wasn't simply shared stuff. We are in contact with thousands of people during a lifetime, but with most there is no connection, no communication at any meaningful level.

Philip read from the NIV. I've looked there, in Message, Amplified, The Living Bible, and Passion translations to really get to the heart of God. Only 17 proverbs that use the words friend or friendship and that's what I'm sticking with, but also plenty about relationships generally.

2 words used in Proverbs for friend: ahab = one for whom there is affection
or love
rea = associate/friend/neighbour

Turning to Proverbs we see these proverbs are divided into 4 groups; mostly about what friendship isn't.

The things that harm relationships are bad temper, gossip, greed, lack of sensitivity.

Let's start with temper !n 22.24-25

Do not make friends with a hot tempered man; do not associate with one

easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared

I include everything from moodiness, grouchiness to white hot losing the plot anger because it's only a matter of degree of bad temperedness. It's self evident that these are not attractive qualities. Who wants to hang around with a grouch, a whinger and moaner, an unpredictable loose cannon? If there's anger in the air, it's like walking on eggshells

The proverb gives a reason we shouldn't be around huffy people. It's catching. When someone gets mumps they are isolated until no longer contagious, and so with grumps. If I'm in the presence of anger I just want to get away, and if I'm the one who is angry I prefer to get alone and work my way through it.

I've discovered that I get angry when I'm thwarted somehow. Things aren't as I want them to be. A hot tempered person wants things their own way, but God wants things Yahweh.

The best thing to counter an angry spirit whether your own or another person is with the opposite spirit of praise and thanksgiving and I go into a secret place, and just focus on God. He doesn't want us to be up tight, but to know peace and trust in him. We have so much to be thankful for. God wants us to be joyful people. In everything give thanks. Rejoice and again I say rejoice. Love, peace and joy are the fruit of the holy spirit. The number of joyful scriptures is in excess of 500! But relationships are damaged by irritability, touchiness, anger and negativity. Finding pleasure in one another's company strengthens friendships by making them rewarding. We are to edify (build one another up) with patience, kindness, fun.

Anger doesn't solve anything and usually makes things worse, but how about blessing them. That must be good for friendships. Well, there's a warning here too, believe it or not. **Prov 27:14**

If a man loudly blesses his neighbour early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse.

One version interprets this one as "If you shout "Wakey wakey, rise and shine" to a friend early in the morning, he will count it a curse".

When I was a teenager, my mother would come in bright and breezy, fling open up the curtains, Good morning, time to get up, beautiful day etc etc. Like being woken up by Chris Evans on speed!. Some people express love and caring by

encouraging others and I suppose she was encouraging me to get up but there's a way of doing it! you've got to be sensitive to others, or they won't thank you for it

Being sensitive would include reading body language and really listening, generally supporting people in who they are and towards all they could be. Friends ask how you are and wait to hear the answer ; or when you say I'm fine, and you're actually falling apart inside, they spot it and show they are there for you. It's called compassionate listening. Interesting because listening cropped up with every friend I discussed this with. Intimacy between friends increases when one feels safe to disclose more and more about oneself. Ie The more you feel someone is sensitive to you, the more you can trust and open up to them.

On the other hand 16:28 **A perverse man stirs up dissension and a gossip separates close friends**

A perverse man is a Contrary Mary, as my mother used to say, and is plain irritating. He is determined to be different, so you can't have common ground. But a gossip separates close friends.

3 preachers are adrift in a boat, think they will die out in the ocean, no sign of help. They decide to confess their sins before dying.

One says, "Well, I have a problem with alcohol. I fall under the influence and I'm out of control."

The second says "I have a problem with lust. I just have to look at a woman and my heart begins to pound and I want her."

The third says "my problem is gossip, and I'm really excited because I think I can see land."

A gossip has a keen sense of rumour.

Gossips seldom simply repeats things. More often they improve on it.

One version puts it like this. **Criticism** devastates (destroys) friendships/relationships. Jesus had strong words to say about speaking negatively about others- plank in own eye. He who is without sin, cast the first stone. Judge not lest you be judged. As you judge so you will be judged. James talks about the tongue being capable of starting a forest fire, doing untold damage. It is summed up in the wartime poster "**Careless** talk costs lives". Talk without caring about others is destructive. There's a whole sermon in that. It's said it takes at least 6 positive things to recover the

ground lost by 1 negative thing. Really destructive to speak negatively about others. Feeling censored means you will censor what you share. If you censor what you share you can't close the gap. You might share good times but it's in the bad times you find out who your friends are. **27:6 The kisses of an enemy may be profuse but faithful are the wounds of a friend** Judas betraying Jesus with a kiss springs to mind, but Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, Jesus showed his love for his friends when he said Greater love has no man than to give his life for his friends. Because of the terrible wounds at the crucifixion, we are healed, spiritually, emotionally and physically. A friend will stand with you and fight your corner. Will cover your back.

17:17 A true friend is always loyal no matter what.

Trust makes for close friendships. The more trust, the closer the friendship. Amongst the varying answers to my question "why are we friends?" came through one thing - we are committed to the welfare of each other; We trust one another. The way we showed it was that we felt free to speak of anything knowing it would be received without judgement and with unconditional acceptance.

When you throw money and wealth into the picture though, Solomon was cynical. I guess he learnt the hard way. There are more proverbs on this side of "friendship" than any other. A person who professes friendship just for what they can get out of it, is no friend, but a parasite or controller.

14:20 The poor are shunned even by their neighbours, but the rich have many friends. Recently when the death of Caroline Aherne was announced, the clip of Mrs Merton interviewing Debbie McGee was shown over and over again. "What was it about the millionaire Paul Daniels that made you want to marry him" Human nature hasn't changed since Solomon's time and before.

Wealthy acquire hangers on. **14:20 The rich have many friends**, in the Passion translation, is interpreted **If you have many friends, you are rich.** Yes indeed. Friends are valuable. They enrich your life, and make it full, and fun. We treat things that are valuable with care and appreciate them and look after them. How much more so, should we treat our friendships with care and appreciation and nurture them. Interpreting this proverb this way puts a whole different slant on others.

19:4, Wealth brings many friends but a poor man's friend deserts him.

vs 7A poor man is shunned by all his relatives - how much more do his

friends avoid him. Though he pursues them with pleading, they are nowhere to be found.

Why is the poor man poor? Why is he shunned? Maybe his bad temper, or his gossiping has put people off him, or maybe he is a parasite simply feeding off the good nature of others. **Vs 6 Everyone is the friend of a man who gives gifts**

We are aware that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. George shared statistics of global differences between the have's and have not's, some weeks ago. Money can have such a divisive effect yet it could do so much good.

14:21 Blessed are those who help the poor

It is said that our income tends to be the average of our 5 closest friends. My school friend is a multimillionaire and quite a few friends are on state pension only now. So I guess for me this works out. I'm somewhere in the middle. There are plenty of poor around, and not just financially poor. There is always someone worse off than ones self.

Generosity of some sort has to figure in friendship. Some people express love by giving, whether gifts or time, or help. There has to be give and take. The law of reciprocity says you get back when you give. Cast your bread upon the waters and in due time it will return. It's a great feeling to be able to give. I used to visit the elderly in care homes thinking I was doing them a favour, a different face to talk to, to liven up their day, but I always got a real buzz myself from hearing their stories. All I gave was a bit of time, but what a return I received.

One of my friends is on benefits and her washing machine died one time and I bought her a new one. There's no way she can return the favour in any way financially but she upholds me and supports me in so many other ways, it was my privilege and pleasure to do what I could for her in that instance. Money is just metal and paper, and yes it's true we need it, but the value of true friendship does not have a price. Friends share a generosity of spirit .

Which is what 17:9 is about..... **love overlooks mistakes.** That's generosity of spirit.

Got to go outside of Proverbs for the seminal definition of love.

1 Cor 13 We know it well. The Living Bible puts it this way:...

Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud,

never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy....That tells you bad temper isn't loving

It does not hold grudges, and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice,....That puts gossip and criticism in its place..... but rejoices when the truth wins out.

If you love someone you will be loyal no matter what the cost. You will always believe and expects the best, and always stands your ground in defending him, ...that's trust, loyalty and sensitivity and selflessness.

So there we have it. Love is the thing that makes and binds friends together. It's love, through trust, loyalty, sensitivity and selflessness. It's love that changes a real associate into an ahab friend.

I have a friend who I love very much. I can tell him anything and he never passes it on. He's always pleased to have my company, and never holds a grudge even if it's been hours since I took any notice of him. He never judges or condemns me .Just thinking about him makes me joyful and he's there for me when I'm sad. He's completely loyal.....except when it comes to food. Then he's anybody's. Yes, man's best friend is a dog. Dennis. He's 13 now, getting old .

18:24The Passion version **Some friendships don't last for long**

But there is one loving Friend who is joined to your heart, closer than any other!

Some friendships are for a season. They may be real friendships but eventually like our school friends we go our separate ways, Very few travel through life with us. But I have one friend who has known me all my life.

A close friend. A forever friend. My best friend. His name is Jesus/ Yeshua.
He guides me When I'm feeling lost,
He counsels me When I need help,
He paid a debt I couldn't pay before I even knew I was in debt
He's always there when I'm lonely and he's promised never to leave me
He's given me His Spirit of power, love and peace of mind when I'm afraid.
He never condemns me when I make mistakes
He provides me with all I need and all my heart's desires
He values me highly - he thought I was worth dying for.
He understands me even when I don't understand myself.

He loves me unconditionally. I don't have to do a thing to win, earn or keep his love.

He's called the friend of sinners

What would you give for a friend like this?

Would you commit your life to him? I did.

I won't renege on such a friendship

He's my life support system and I can't live without him.

He is the air I breathe.

There will come a time when I won't breathe any more; my earthly life will end and I will be with him forever. I know I will because he told me so and he's truthful.

You are my church friends, and my dog loving friends.

I invite you to celebrate it with me. I can't give you a time or date yet but it's going to be a fun , friends sharing a good time together. The hearse has instructions to go at a regular speed, and to overtake if necessary, _ I know you'll be keen to get to the food - Then there will be a jazz band and maybe a black gospel choir singing "When the Saints Come Marching In", because that's what I'll be doing.

I'm going out to - Just a closer walk with thee. It speaks of the intimacy of my friendship with Jesus and it's my prayer for you too. - We are going to sing it now, karaoke style, along with a country singer called Anne Murray. In the middle, she sings a verse we don't know and don't have the words for, but listen to them. If you would like to know Jesus as your forever friend, let these words become a silent prayer in your heart.

PROVERBS

14:20 The poor are shunned even by their neighbours, but the rich have many friends.

16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissension and a gossip separates close friends

17:9 He who covers over an offence promotes love but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

17:17 A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity.

18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother

19:4 Wealth brings many friends but a poor man's friend deserts him.

19:6 Everyone is the friend of a man who gives gifts

19:7 A poor man is shunned by all his relatives - how much more do his friends avoid him. Though he pursues them with pleading, they are nowhere to be found.

22:11 He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend.

22:24-25 Do not make friends with a hot tempered man; do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared

27:6 The kisses of an enemy may be profuse but faithful are the wounds of a friend are faithful

27:9 Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel

27:14 If a man loudly blesses his neighbour early in the morning, it will be