**Get Wise about Your Friendships**

**Choose Friends Wisely! – Prov 13:20**

*“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”*

Introduction - high profile unraveling - Can you name a few?

Have you ever had a friend who went off the rails? There are low profile destructions happening all around us all the time.

* It’s the husband who leaves it all behind to pursue the greener pastures of adultery.
* It the young man in a good job who suddenly crashed and burns because of an addiction takes control.
* It the young person who cracks under pressure and become overtaken by self-injury or an eating disorder.

Proverbs is a book about wisdom. . . it gives wisdom about friendships and really all sorts of common scenarios in life. The authors of Proverbs are trying to instruct us about the way that life works under God’s rule. They are laying it out for us. . . if you embrace wisdom, this is the result. If you embrace foolishness, this is the result.

Proverbs 19:8

* He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good. KJV
* Whoever gets sense loves his own soul, he who keeps understanding will discover good. ESV
* The one who gets wisdom loves life, the one who cherishes understanding will soon prosper. NIV

**What is wisdom? – Wisdom is understanding how God designed life to work and choosing to live accordingly – Read Psalm 1**

**How do I get wisdom?** – From God and His Word

From Experience

From others – wise counsel

Let’s look at what the authors of Proverbs had to say about friendships. . . we are going to learn how to get wisdom about friendships.

When you come alongside those whose life is starting to unravel, you realize that there is most often one major common denominator – they were living an isolated life.  They had no wise friends who knew the choices they were about to make and no one was there to stop them.  In Proverbs, we see that living without healthy friendships is not a place where we thrive.  It is not wise to live life in isolation apart from the input of wise friends.

One of the questions that I ask most often in working with people going through difficulty is “What do your wise friends say you should do?”

**I get three common responses:**

I don’t have any wise friends.

I don’t agree with my wise friends.

I think I should probably do what they suggest.

How can we be a part of a community where we all can experience deep friendship? We are called both to be a friend and to have a friend…the kind of friend that sharpens iron, the kind that calls each other out when necessary, the kind that helps you up when you fall down.

**Why do we need friends? 4 Principles and 1 Warning**

**Wise friends increase your chances of success**

Proverbs 20:18 – Plans are established by counsel, by wise guidance wage war.

We don’t have to look any further back than the last ten years to realize that having incomplete or inaccurate data about going to war is a costly mistake.

* Churches thrive best when teams of people work together – Why? Increase the chance of getting the right input.
* Marriage work best when both spouses work together - Why? Increase the chances of getting the right input.
* Children work best when they seek input from their parents - Why? Increase the chances of getting the right input.
* Bosses work best when they seek the input of their employees. Why?

We are fools when we go into major decisions in life alone. Wise people seek the input of trusted friends.

**Wise friends increase our perspectives.**

Proverbs 20:29 – The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair.

Is the church a place where those with wisdom are accessible to those who need it?

If you have gray hair and maturity. . . are you sharing it? Are you friends with young people who need wisdom?

Wisdom from those of other ethnic origins…

Wisdom from those of other life stages – young and old learn from each other

Wisdom from those who survived: the cancer survivor, marital restoration, addictions

**Wise friends protect us from suffering harm**

Proverbs 13:20 - Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

I was talking to a recent graduate from a well-known Christian college. After a stressful week, he devised a plan to drink away his stress while working from home on a Friday. By the time his wife came home, he was passed out in their bedroom too intoxicated to interact with her.

He was an executive at his company – he was smart enough!

He was active in his local church – he thought he was spiritual enough!

But he had no wise friends that he talked to on a regular basis….

Wouldn’t golfing or fishing or catching a ball game be a better way to blow off steam on a Friday afternoon after a stressful week? He needed a good friend to help him stay balanced.

* However, what about the young person sitting in your living room who thinks that she can tame her hot-head boyfriend?
* Or the friend who is constantly seeking to make a quick buck on get-rich-quick schemes?
* Or the young person who thinks she can party all the time and it won’t affect her?

**Wise friends are committed to our good.**

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

Companions – not deep friendship. . . lots of buddies. . . A man of many Facebook friends may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer like a kindred spirit.

That friend is the one who speaks for God into our life…. the one who represents Christ to us... the one who reminds us of the need for the Cross. It is the one who reminds us of the good news of the gospel when we are down. It is the friend who corrects us when we are thinking incorrectly. It is the friend who will push into our stubbornness to help get us moving again.

Facebook friends are not enough. . . friends that are closer than a brother are necessary.

**Warning! If we reject the need for wise friends…**

**Proverbs 18:1 – Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.**

Living in isolation will eventually make you look foolish. . . will you embrace the wisdom of having friends and being a friend?

**How can the church be a place where wise friendships are found and kept and thrive?**

**Choose to be friendly!** Proverbs 17:1 – Are you friendly at church to all the people? Are you a friendly person in youth group? If you are grumpy, realize again the good news of the gospel. . . take joy in it once again. Live that out in your friendships.

**Choose to be forgiving!** Proverbs 17:9 – There are no lasting friendship without forgiveness. You will never forgive more than God has forgiven you. Take the risk and forgive.

**Choose to be frank!** Proverbs 27:6 – Open and honest in an age of political correctness….it is so very important to be wise with our words.  What, when and how we speak the truth does matter. So be careful not to go too far with harsh words that you fail to sharpen or challenge one another.  Being frank is about boldness.  It's about risking the relationship to speak truth in love and kindness.  Invite people to be frank with you.  Provide your friends with immunity so you can learn from them.  Mutual frankness - don't make others have to walk on eggshells!

**Choose to be family!** Proverbs 27:10 – Friends like family! If you have family nearby, they would help.  Sometimes family is not enough, we need friends.  In a transient culture, church becomes a family to those whose families are far away. Hospitality is a vital ministry opportunity, more than ever.

**Choose to be faithful!**  Proverbs 17:17 – Friends will often come and go. . . however deep friendship take a commitment over the long haul. You can’t always go to the next stage of life with everyone in your current stage, but do we value friendship enough? In our American culture, we tend to value individualism very highly. We don’t want to be dependent on anyone and we don’t want anyone to be dependent on us. That might work economically but it doesn’t work spiritually. You will be the strongest as “you, God and others.” You need others to grow.

**Conclusion:**

Evaluate your friendships – Do I have wise friends?

Expand your friendships – Do others need my wisdom and support?

Do I need the wisdom and support of others?

**We all need wise friends. . . do you have one? . . . are you willing to be one?**

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