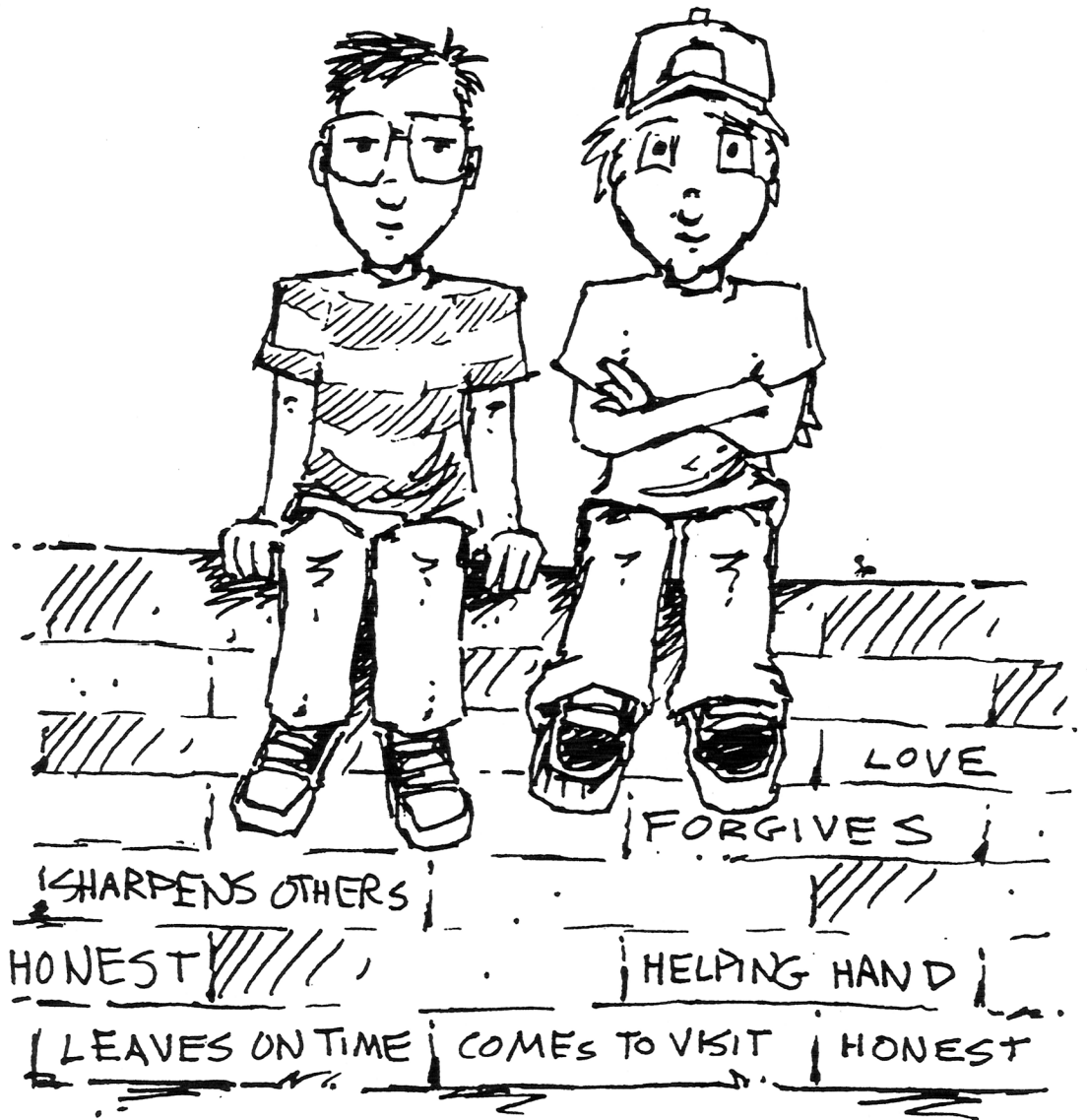


HEAR, MY SON, ABOUT DEVELOPING QUALITY FRIENDSHIPS



**"IRON SHARPENETH IRON; SO A MAN SHARPENETH
THE COUNTENANCE OF HIS FRIEND."**

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*PROVERBS 27:17 "IRON SHARPENETH IRON; SO A MAN SHARPENETH
THE COUNTENANCE OF HIS FRIEND."*

Everyone needs friends! Just as the father counseled his son about avoiding evil companions, he also counseled his son about how to develop quality friendships—by interacting properly with one another. He warned his son against destroying good friendships by inappropriate actions or attitudes. Then he wisely instructed his son on the qualities that build true and lasting friendships.

The translators of Proverbs recognized different levels of friendship. Generally the same word used in the Hebrew language was translated as "friend" or as "neighbor," depending upon the context or upon the particular meaning of the Proverb. Usually "friend" was used to identify a close or intimate relationship, whereas "neighbor" was used to identify a casual relationship or acquaintance. For example, in Proverbs 26:18,19, the word was translated "neighbor" because a bad practical joke is inappropriate to close and intimate friendships. In Proverbs 17:17, the word was translated "friend" because casual acquaintances don't love at all times. In some verses, the word could be translated interchangeably without altering the meaning.

In his book about special friendships, Guy Greenfield observed eight levels of relationships: avoidance, greeting, separate-interests, common interests, social interaction, caring, sharing, and intimacy. As the relationship level deepens, the number of people with whom we relate grows smaller. For example, we may say hello to hundreds, share in a common interest group with thirty, care about twelve, share with only five or six, and be intimate with three, two, one, or none. The deeper the level of friendship, the more time is required to nurture it. Thus, Proverbs 18:24 tells us that the man who has many friends must take the time to show himself as a friend. But he may have only "a friend" that sticks closer than a brother, an intimate friend with whom he can develop a "Jonathan-David" relationship (I Samuel 20:17).

The father in Proverbs desired to help his son avoid the pitfalls that destroy friendships. Though it takes time and effort to develop good friendships, it seems all too easy to destroy them. Proverbs 18:19 declares that once we have wounded a close friendship, it is very difficult to restore. The wise son will learn to build, not destroy, as he develops deeper levels of friendships that are pleasant to both and will "sharpen each other" (27:17).



I. AVOID THESE CHARACTERISTICS THAT DESTROY FRIENDSHIPS

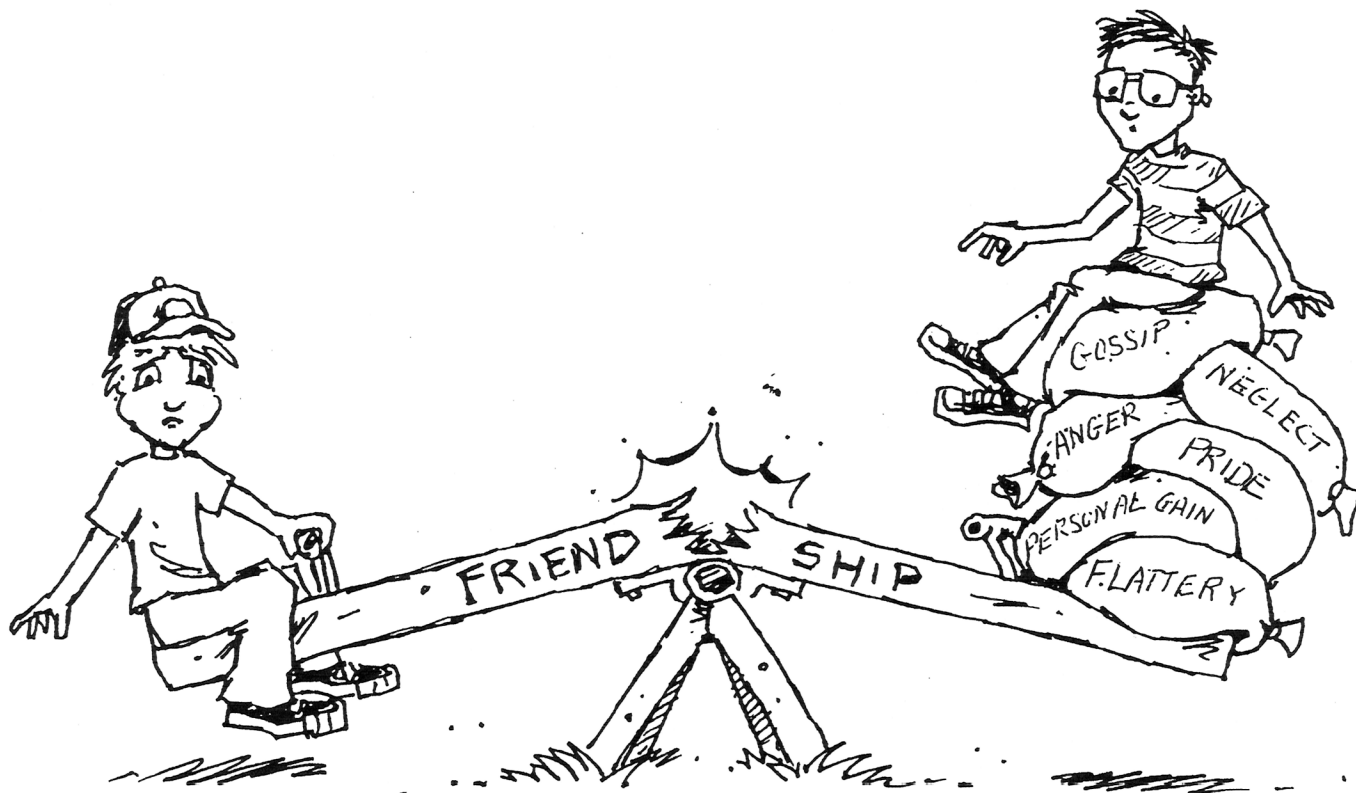
There are many actions and attitudes that hinder relationships with others. The wise son will take note of these and examine his own friendships.

A. Seeking friendships because of _____ (19:6).

Proverbs 19:6a says, "Many will entreat the favour of the prince." The prince was an influential person in government, causing many to desire his "friendship" for the gain that it brought to themselves. The young prince was being warned that some would desire his friendship only for what they could get. Perhaps they just enjoyed "dropping names" to build up themselves in the eyes of others. "My friend, the prince, said or did thus." Or perhaps, "My father knows the prince!" Usually a friendship based on the **influence** of the other brought expectations or special favors. To have an influential friend seems to make a person feel important in some way. Yet how empty that relationship must feel, both to the person being used and to the one who takes advantage of the other!

B. Seeking friendships for _____ (19:6b).

Proverbs 19:6b continues, "every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts." Proverbs 14:20 warned, "...the rich hath many friends." These verses imply that **personal gain** is a wrong motive behind true friendship. Again we see a desire to "get" rather than to give. To be taken advantage of because of wealth destroys true friendship.



C. Seeking friendships by using _____ (29:5).

Proverbs 29:5 says that the man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net in which either one or both may be caught. **Flattery** will not enhance a friendship! The man who flatters will eventually be caught by his own words of deceit. His dishonesty builds a trap that destroys the possibility of a true friendship developing. The wise son will be alert to the trap of another's flattery and will avoid building a friendship upon this dishonest foundation.

D. Other characteristics that destroy friendships:

The father gave his son several other Proverbs that warned him against characteristics that would destroy his friendships. A wise son will examine himself to be sure these characteristics are not found in his own life.

Look up these verses and list the inappropriate actions that destroy friendship.

REFERENCES	NEGATIVE ACTION
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3:29

17:9

21:10

22:24

25:9,10

25:20

26:18,19

27:6b

27:14

II. BUILD THESE CHARACTERISTICS THAT DEVELOP FRIENDSHIPS

The father recognized that his son must not only avoid negative character traits, but that he must build positive qualities into his friendships. Solomon must have heard stories of his father's intimate friend, Jonathan, who saved David's life even at the risk of his own (I Samuel 19:1-20:42). Jonathan and David had a love and friendship (I Samuel 18:3,4) that surely served as a role model for Solomon, and then for some of his sons. Theirs was a wholesome, intimate friendship between two men that was mutually beneficial.

A. A true friend _____ (27:10).

A friend, or even an older friend of the family, was not to be neglected by the sons, because a friend nearby would be more available to **help in times of trouble** than a brother who lived far away. Mutual help is implied as two families lived near each other and often helped each other. Quite naturally their mutual friendship would grow, perhaps finally reaching the ideal of friends sticking closer than brothers (18:24). This type of friend should be cherished. In fact, it is sin not to love him (14:21).

B. A true friend _____ (17:17).

The friend in this verse is probably in contrast with the brother in the second part. This would mean that the friend **loves at all times** and is born for adversity as well, and that the brother loves at all times and is born for adversity. Both are equal sources of strength and encouragement in times of trouble. The true friend and the brother will both love and be willing to help at all times, whatever the circumstances, in good times and in hard times. The wise son not only desires to have this kind of friend, but is also willing to be this kind of friend.

C. A true friend _____ (27:9).

It seems that everyone will give counsel, but not everyone **gives wise, godly counsel**. This man's friend did just that, and it led to a sweet or pleasant result. Hearty counsel is paralleled in this passage to "perfume and ointment," with "joy and rejoicing in one's heart" resulting from the counsel.

Some sons fail to use their parents as a primary source of wise counsel. Most parents stand ready to counsel their children into wise decisions. Parental counsel is often handed down from other godly people to the parents. Parents often learn from trial and error in their own lives. These experiences over many years makes them better

prepared to give good advice than a son's peers. Sons may find that the counsel of their peers agrees more with their own desires, yet may lead to heartache and more problems. A wise son won't get caught following the poor counsel of peers as Rehoboam did after rejecting the wise counsel of the older men. (I Kings 12:1-17).

D. A true friend_____ (17:9).

To "cover over" means to be silent about a matter rather than to repeat it. When one **covers a transgression** he is silent about an offense and is practicing forgiveness. He that is not silent separates close friendships. To practice forgiveness means to keep silent in three areas:

1. He will be silent to the offending party by not bringing up the offense to him again.
2. He will be silent to others, not repeating the offense to others not involved.
3. He will keep silent to himself, not reviewing the offense in his own mind.

To apply these principles promotes love between the two parties involved in an offense. Love "covers" all sins (10:12). It is to a man's glory to forgive rather than to become angry over an offense (19:11).



E. A true friend _____ (27:6).

The ability to take personal criticism that causes pain depends to a large degree upon the relationship one has with the criticizer. A faithful friend tells you your fault because he is committed to you and desires to help rather than hurt you. He is just like a parent whose discipline inflicts hurt for a time but ultimately reaps positive results (20:30; 19:18). The Hebrew word describes this friend as one who "loves," one who is motivated to help his intimate friend to strengthen his character. His openness and honesty which may cause a wound for now is intended to produce positive rather than negative responses. In a healthy, growing friendship, each friend "sharpens" the countenance of the other by strengthening the inner character and emotions that shine out through the face, even as iron smooths out rough spots in another piece of iron (27:17). Proverbs 28:23 says that in the end this friend will be appreciated more than the one who flatters and says the fault is really okay.



F. A true friend _____ (25:17).

A friend knows when enough is enough. He knows when to come to your house, but he also knows when to leave. He knows when he's been there long enough. He certainly doesn't want his friend to get sick of him. Compare verse 16 to verse 17.

What is enough?

What is the result of too much?

G. A true friend _____(6:1-5).

This young man got caught in the snare of co-signing for his friend's debt. His father gave him wise counsel to get out of the agreement. He told him that he **should never be a guarantee for another's financial debt.**

1. What phrases show how serious the father thought this problem really was?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

2. What attitude did the father tell the son he must have toward his friend? (6:3)

3. What would make sure, or "guarantee," the son's friendship? (6:5)

4. If the friend refused to let him out of the deal, what do you think would happen to the friendship? _____

5. What are some of the complications of the practice of co-signing when the first party cannot pay his debt?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

FATHER-SON INTERACTION ACTIVITY

1. Review the negative characteristics that destroy friendships. Privately, not in a group, discuss examples from your experience or your Dad's experience where those you know have displayed these characteristics and how it affected their friendships. Be sure not to allow gossip, breaking confidences, or spreading rumors (17:9; 25:9,10) be one of your characteristics during this assignment!

2. Review the positive qualities that build friendships. Discuss examples from your experience or your Dad's experience where those you know have displayed these qualities.

- a. How did it affect their ability to make and keep friends?
- b. How did you feel about each?
- c. How did they feel about you?
- d. Why is/is not each still your friend?

FATHER-SON INTERACTION ACTIVITY

Work together with your father to develop a project that would eliminate one negative quality you manifest in your friendships. It must be replaced by the positive quality related to it. (PUT OFF, PUT ON PRINCIPLE FROM EPHESIANS 4:22-24 WITH EXAMPLES IN 4:25-32.) Below is an example of a project, but you may choose any area in which you have a problem. Choose a friend to focus on as you develop the positive quality of friendship.

EXAMPLE: PUT OFF: UNCONTROLLED ANGER (PROVERBS 22:24).

PUT ON: CONTROLLED ANGER (PROVERBS 19:11).

Keep a daily log (journal) of every time you become angry. Write down how you handled the situation, and how you should have handled the situation to please the Lord. Devise a plan to report daily to your father about how you did and to seek his counsel in tough situations. Set up a system of rewards and losses.

FATHER-SON INTERACTION ACTIVITY

MEMORIZE PROVERBS 18:24 QUIZ EACH OTHER ON IT. CHECK HERE WHEN COMPLETED.

FATHER _____ SON _____