



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Selected passages from Proverbs

KEY POINT: Wisdom teaches us to be the kind of friend that we ourselves need,

FOR LEADERS

- *Theology Thursday: This week on Theology Thursday, pastors Alex & Doug will be continuing their 3-week miniseries on "How to Study the Bible"!*

GETTING STARTED

[1] Communities Video: Watch this week’s community extras video!

[2] Icebreaker: Where’s the best ice cream place in NJ?

[3] Opener: What was one takeaway you had from the sermon this week?

A LOVE OVERLOOKED

In the sermon this week, Ryan focused our attention in on one of the most overlooked aspects of love – friendship. He identified three buckets that our acquaintances can fall into: 1.) Companions, who may become friends with more time and attention 2.) People we pour ourselves into but don’t do the same to us 3.) True friends, where blessing goes both ways.

- [1]** Do you feel that your friendships are as important to you as they should be? Is there anything that you feel should change about that?
- [2]** What has been the most rewarding friendship in your life, and why?
- [3]** If we were to poll your closest friends, what do you think they’d say is the biggest way you need to grow as a friend?
- [4]** Of the three relationships that Ryan identified (*see above*), people often have so many of the first two that they don’t have the time or emotional energy for the third. Why do you think it is so easy to fall into this trap, and what can you do to make sure that you don’t?

FRIENDS OF BURDEN

Ryan mentioned seven kinds of friends that are a burden to us. Let’s look at each one of these individually. As we do, don’t just think of people in your life whom you suspect of being one of these, but ask yourself, “*Am I this type of burden to my friends?*”

The Gossip (Proverbs 16:28) - Someone who betrays trust by talking behind another’s back.

- [5]** Why is gossip such a temptation for us, and how can we make sure we’re not doing it?

The Insecure Friend-Accumulator (Proverbs 19:4) – Those who want people around them because they are insecure and feel it brings them something. In this verse, it’s money, but it can also be things like status, popularity, or power.

- [6]** How can a strong relationship with God help us to not be this kind of friend?



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The Interrogator (Proverbs 17:9) – The person who constantly points out our faults, becoming more of a police officer to us than a true friend. Good friends are able to confront us when we do wrong. But true friendship is more than this.

[7] We all have faults, and we all need people in our lives to help us overcome them. At what point does a person cross the line from good friend to being an interrogator?

The Leech (Proverbs 25:17) – The person who lacks the emotional intelligence to understand appropriate boundaries. As a result, he or she tends to pursue intense levels of friendship that have not been earned—“too much, too soon, too fast,” as Ryan said.

[8] What are the results of this kind of friendship, and how can we set up healthy boundaries with people who have such tendencies?

The Brawler (Proverbs 22:24–25). The person with an appetite for fighting, whether physical or mental. Often very harmful to their friends by drawing them into their unnecessary (and usually sinful) conflicts.

[9] Is it possible to help a friend who is a brawler, and if so, how?

The Sing-songer (Proverbs 25:20). This is someone whose own discomfort with pain and vulnerability makes them unable to weep alongside us. As a result, they run to quick and shallow solutions to try to fix our problems and put us in a mood that is more in line with their own comfort zone.

[10] Why is this kind of friendship burdensome? Isn't the sing-songer just trying to make us feel better?

The Fair-weather Friend (Proverbs 25:19). Like the sing-songer, the fair-weather friend lacks the capacity to endure hardship, and splits when you need him or her the most.

[11] Think of a time in your life when someone stuck by your side through extremely difficult times. How was that helpful for you, and what did that do to your friendship with that individual?

FRIENDS OF BLESSING

In contrast to the burdensome friends listed above, Ryan gave us three things that we should practice in order to be better friends:

Be there when things go wrong (Proverbs 18:24). The tendency is to feel that we have nothing to offer if we can't fix our friends' problems. However, good friends understand that their mere presence in times of trouble brings healing.

[12] Why do you think this is?

Be willing to speak hard truth (Proverbs 27:6). True friends have enough trust, credibility, love, and respect to point out your blind spots in order to help you and not harm you.

[13] How can you respond when your good friend breaches hard topics with you?

Be available to give counsel (Proverbs 27:9). Friendship is about mutual giving and receiving.

[14] What are some of the characteristics of good counsel?



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ULTIMATE HOPE IN FRIENDSHIP

Ask for a volunteer to read John 15:15.

[15] Why might some Christians have difficulty thinking about Jesus as a friend?

[16] Ryan closed the sermon by suggesting that the gospel is an invitation into friendship with Jesus, who is gives us his Spirit for counsel, is himself the perfect model of friendship, and shows us grace when we fail as his friends. How can you show this kind of Christ-like friendship to someone in your life?

PRAYER

[1] Pray that the Lord would reveal ways that you can be a better friend to people in your life.

[2] Pray for God to continue to bring true friends into your life.