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Awaken 365 Friendship and Formation

By Revd Steve Burston

### ***Friendship in Formation Groups: Wisdom and Friendship (Proverbs)***

#### ***Scripture Readings***

*"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Prov 18:24)*

*"Seldom set foot in your neighbour's house—too much of you, and he will hate you." (Prov 25:17)*

*"Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart." (Prov 25:20)*

*"Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows is a man who deceives his neighbour and says, 'I was only joking.'" (Prov 26:18–19)*

*"Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." (Prov 27:5–6)*

*"Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel." (Prov 27:9)*

*"If a man loudly blesses his neighbour early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse." (Prov 27:14)*

*"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." (Prov 27:17)*

*"He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favour than he who has a flattering tongue." (Prov 28:23)*

*"Whoever flatters his neighbour is spreading a net for his feet." (Prov 29:5)*

## Introduction

*The Bible says wisdom is not less than being moral and good—but it is much more. Wisdom is being so in touch with reality that you know the right thing to do in the situations where moral rules don't directly apply.*

*The Book of Proverbs insists: you cannot live a wise life unless you learn to choose, forge, and keep terrific friendships. You will not make it in life without real friends.*

We'll look at four headings:

- 1. The uniqueness of friendship**
- 2. The discovery of friendship**
- 3. The forging of friendship**
- 4. The power for friendship**

### 1. The Uniqueness of Friendship

*"There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Prov 18:24)*

- Family love, romantic love, civic duty — all are necessary, but Proverbs says friendship can surpass them.
- Family is there in adversity, but they may not always enjoy you. A friend chooses you.
- The Hebrew word "sticks" = *cleaves* (a covenantal commitment of love).
- Friendship is irreplaceable — yet every culture sidelines it:
  - Individualistic: Romance first.
  - Traditional: Family first.
  - Communitarian: Civic ties first.

C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*:

*"Friendship is the least instinctive, organic, biological, the least necessary of all our loves... It has the least commerce with our physical system... If it were not for erotic love, none of us would*

have been begotten, and without affection, none of us would have been reared. But we can live without friends."

**Yet Proverbs says: you cannot flourish without friends.**

## 2. The Discovery of Friendship

"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Prov 18:24)

- Companions: many. Friends: rare.
- Friendship begins with discovery: seeing the same truth.  
Lewis again:  
"Friendship arises when one person says to another: 'What! You too? I thought I was the only one.'"
- You cannot force a friendship. It must be discovered in shared loves, shared vision, shared truth.
- Those who have nothing can share nothing. Those who are going nowhere can have no fellow travellers.

## 3. The Forging of Friendship

Friendship must be discovered, but then it must be forged.  
Proverbs gives us four building blocks:

1. **Constancy – "A friend loves at all times." (Prov 17:17)**
  - a. Faithful presence in good times and bad.
  - b. "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Prov 18:24)
  - c. A true friend makes you an end, not a means.
2. **Carefulness – Emotional connection and sensitivity.**
  - a. Not joking that wounds (Prov 26:18–19).
  - b. Not singing happy songs to a heavy heart (Prov 25:20).
  - c. A friend voluntarily binds their happiness to yours.
3. **Candor – Truth-telling, even when painful.**

- a. "Better is open rebuke than hidden love." (Prov 27:5)
- b. "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." (Prov 27:6)
- c. Flattery is betrayal (Prov 29:5).
- d. A friend loves you enough to hurt you for your good.

#### **4. Counsel – Honest, vulnerable advice.**

- a. "The pleasantness of a friend springs from his earnest counsel." (Prov 27:9)
- b. "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." (Prov 27:17)
- c. A friend counsels both with comfort *and* challenge.

**Summary: A true friend always lets you in (candor + counsel), and never lets you down (constancy + carefulness).**

#### **4. The Power for Friendship**

When we read Proverbs' portrait of the perfect friend, we feel two things:

- Longing – because modern life is mobile, fast, and isolating. Our hearts crave such friends.
- Conviction – because we realize the reason we lack such friends is that we fail to be such friends.

Where do we find the power?

On the night before He died, Jesus said:

"I no longer call you servants... I have called you friends." (John 15:15)

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13)

Jesus is the ultimate friend:

- He let us all the way in: "A servant does not know his master's business, but I have made it known to you."



- He never let us down: He went to the cross, losing the friendship of the Father, to secure our friendship with God.
- His wounds — unlike ours — were received, not inflicted, for our healing.

Lewis again, in *The Four Loves*:

“Christ, who said to the disciples, ‘You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,’ can also say to every group of Christian friends, ‘You have not chosen one another, but I have chosen you for one another.’ At the feast of friendship, it is God who has spread the board, and it is God who has chosen the guests.”

## Conclusion

- Proverbs teaches: fools perish for lack of friends or the wrong friends.
- You are shaped by your friends: in early life by your family, and for the rest of your life by your community.
- Friendship is unique, rare, forged through constancy, carefulness, candor, and counsel.
- And friendship is possible because of Jesus, the ultimate friend who sticks closer than a brother.

**Make Him the friend your heart desires, and you will have all the friends your heart needs.**

## Further Reading or Listening

**Four Loves (C. Lewis Signature Classic): A captivating journey through the different forms of love (C. S. Lewis Signature Classic)**

**Friendship by Ralph Waldo Emerson**

<https://emersoncentral.com/texts/essays-first-series/friendship/>

**Tim Keller Sermon Friendship May 2005**

<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/friendship-2/>

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