

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. ***Enjoy discovering more about Him!***

"RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS" | PROVERBS | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

- **What do you enjoy doing with a friend?**

"Walk with the Wise" Proverbs 13:20

Proverbs shows that who we are close to impacts the destination and experience of our lives.

- **How can people find wise people to be with in today's culture?**

"What Real Friendship Looks Like" Proverbs 17:17

A Biblical friendship isn't seasonal or convenient but always committed.

- **What does faithful friendship look like today?**

"Iron Sharpens Iron and the Danger of Shallow Connection" Proverbs 27:17, Proverbs 18:14

Proverbs shows lots of connection isn't the same as close community. It shows vulnerability and accountability lead to growth.

- **Why do many people struggle with seeking popularity instead of close friends?**
- **Who in your life can correct or challenge you?**

"Christ Connection to Wisdom: The Word Who Gives Life" John 15:15

God's son Jesus came to earth to be a true friend who shared meals, deep discussions and sacrificed for them.

- **How does knowing Jesus chose us to be His friend and walk with us impact how we respond to Him?**

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

God designed people for relationship, but because of this broken world people must choose their friends carefully because those closest to them will shape their lives. Jesus is our best and closest friend who we can trust at all times.

- **How faithful of a friend have you been lately?**
- **Have your friends been moving you towards wisdom or away from it lately?**
- **Pray that God would give you wisdom in your friendships and for those closest to you.**

4 - Relationships and Friendships

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those watching online.
- B. **Slide1-5 Lar:** Fellowship. Classes. Church Campout. Missions Prayer. Office Closed.
- C. **Slide6** Pray 4 Rohingya Prayer Guide - Link to the guides available on: QR code, a tab on our church app, on web the Missions page. [Rohingya but for all muslims]
- D. **Slide7** Ramadan: starts **this Wed.** - Ramadan is one of **the most spiritually focused seasons** in the Muslim world. For 30 days, millions fast, pray, give generously, and seek closeness to God with *unusual intentionality*. It is a time when hearts are softened, eternity is considered, and spiritual questions rise closer to the surface. Here's what I'm asking you to pray for: the Lord **to reveal Himself in truth, grace, and love**. God who draws near to seekers delights **to make Himself known**.
- E. **Slide8 Prayer:** Lord, remind us to pray these **next 30 days**. Also we pray specifically for the Rohingya. For Ryan/Julie Bible Trans! For the few brand new bel's in Nepal. There is power in prayer! *This morning* as we talk about **relationships**, so often many of our relationships are *so transactional*, help us to make **true friendships** that are **covenantal**.

II. Slide9 Intro:

- A. **Week 4 - Relationships and Friendships** - *You Become Who You're Around*.
- B. *After Words and the Tongue* we now move from what we say to **Who Shapes Us!**
 1. You don't drift into wisdom, you drift toward **whoever you're walking with**.
- C. Think about it - Jesus' mission was **a network of friends** that he sent out to do ministry. The 12, the 72, and He still sends **us** all out to our friend networks.
- D. He was **the friend of sinners**. He didn't start a **program**, He didn't start a **school**. He **ate** with people. **And** he turned the world upside down.
 1. You could say he got himself crucified because of **who** He ate with.
Friendship is an important matter!

2. Friendships are important for you and for your children. Joey just made a friend in Thailand (it's harder in another culture). Most of our conversations with with Tyler and Cal are around who they are befriending, **and** who is befriending them.

E. God in His *Triune Nature*, exists in perfect fellowship Father/Son/HS. And He's created **us** to be like Him. We were made for relationships. That's why it's written all over our culture.

1. We were made to have relationship with **God** vertically, **and** with **people** horizontally.
2. Ex.3 - in revealing **Himself** to Moses. *I Am, I exist, I'm self-sufficient.* (I don't need air or sleep, I don't need anything).
3. He also promised Moses "*I will be with you*". Later on, Moses writes about his relationship with God, "*Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses, face-to-face, as* what? *a man speaks to his friend.*" - God has entered into **friendship** with His people! (pause) **so unusual, unfamiliar, unconventional.**

III. Slide10a 1 WALK WITH THE WISE

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

1. Notice: It doesn't say **thinks with the wise**. It says **walks with the wise**.
2. **Walking implies:** Proximity, Pace, Direction. Traveling together. Unfamiliar path/guide.

B. Slide10b *You don't have to choose someone's destination to end up there - you just have to **walk beside them**.

C. Let's go practical: think of your **Friend** group. **Dating** relationships. **Business** partnerships. **Online** voices.

D. **Who** has regular access to your thinking?

IV. Slide11a 2 WHAT REAL FRIENDSHIP LOOKS LIKE

A. Proverbs 17:17 *A friend loves at all times ...*

B. Real friendship is: Consistent. Loyal. Steady.

1. Contrast: **Acquaintances** celebrate you. **Real friends** stay with you.

C. Biblical friendship isn't seasonal - it's **covenantal**.

1. I don't mean every relationship lasts forever. Some friendships are naturally tied to seasons of life. **But Proverbs** is pointing to something deeper than convenience.

D. Seasonal friendship says, "*I'm with you while this works*". Covenantal friendship says, "*I'm with you - period.*"

1. Slide11b Prov.17:17 says, **A friend loves at all times**. (Not when it's easy. Not when it's mutual. Not when it benefits them). **At all times**. [that's covenant language]

2. In Scripture, **covenant** means: loyal commitment; faithfulness over time; staying power.

a) You see it clearly in the friendship between **David and Jonathan**.

Jonathan knew David would one day take his place as king - and instead of competing with him, he **protected** him. He bound himself to him.

(1) That's not chemistry. That's commitment. 1Sam.18:1 **his soul knit to** (Qashar - to tie; join together; a permanent bonding; a deep unbreakable union)

3. Our culture tends to treat friendship like a **subscription**: If it stops serving me, cancel it. If it gets difficult, replace it. If it confronts me, avoid it.

a) But **Proverbs** gives us a sturdier vision. Covenantal friendship says:

I will sharpen you, even when it's uncomfortable. I will stay when things get awkward. I will forgive when it would be easier to drift.

b) Now, that doesn't mean *enabling abuse*. It doesn't mean *ignoring boundaries*. It doesn't mean *every relationship* survives every season.

(1) But it does mean we don't leave just because it's inconvenient.

E. And here's the deeper truth: We can only be covenant friends because we have a **covenant Savior**. Jesus says, *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

1. **He** didn't love us when it was convenient. **He** didn't walk away when we were difficult. **He** bound Himself to us.
2. **And** when you've been loved like that, **you start loving like that**.

F. So here's the question: Who are you covenantally committed to? **And** who is covenantally committed to you?

G. Because Proverbs isn't just asking, "*Do you have friends?*" It's asking, "*Do you have faithful ones?*" **And** are you one?

H. You don't need **many** friends, you need **faithful** friends.

V. Slide12a 3 IRON SHARPENS IRON

- A. Proverbs 27:17 *Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.*
- B. Friends are **shaping** and **sharpening** you. When we're young it's **our family** that shapes us. As we grow up it's **our friends** that end up shaping us. [3 definitions ...]
- C. Slide12b **A friend is** one who **works for** and **rejoices in** your achievements.
- D. Slide12c **Commonality** and **transparency**, are what friends are made of.
 1. Many people **fear** vulnerability. **But** the cross set us free to be vulnerable. Look around, we all know, we're all messed up - just in different ways.
- E. Slide12d **Friends always let you in** and **never let you down**.
 1. Iron sharpens iron is why we need friends.
 2. **So remember:** *Sharpening creates friction. Friction isn't failure. And Growth requires discomfort.*
 3. **If no one ever disagrees with you, you're probably not being sharpened.**
- F. Ask: Who can correct you? Who can challenge you? Who can tell you no?

VI. Slide13a 4 THE DANGER OF SHALLOW CONNECTION

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

1. Right before there is **a friend that sticks closer than a brother** it talks about **a man of many companions** (picture acquaintances).
2. In a **social media world** you *may have many followers/acquaintances - but* only a few **true friends**.
 - a) **Slide13b Connectivity** is not the same thing as **community**.
- B. **We know today ... Loneliness** is high. **Depth** is rare. **But Wisdom** chooses depth over volume.
- C. **Slide14** Back in the mid-1960s, **Paul Simon** wrote a song called **I Am a Rock**.
 1. In it he sings, '*I am a rock, I am an island*'. **And** ends with "**And a rock feels no pain, And an island never cries**".
 2. It sounds **Strong. Independent. Untouchable**. **But** if you listen closely - it's **not confidence**. It's **self-protection**. '*If I don't need anyone, I can't be hurt.*'
 a) It was about **isolation** and **detachment**.
 b) **And that's a temptation for all of us**. When friendship gets messy, when people disappoint us, we start building walls. We convince ourselves we don't need anyone.
 3. **But Proverbs** says the opposite: '*Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise*.' - '*Iron sharpens iron*.'
 4. See, **Rocks don't grow. Islands don't sharpen**.
- D. **God didn't design you to be an island** - He designed you to be **shaped** through **covenant** friendships.

VII. **Slide15a 5 CHRIST CONNECTION: THE FRIEND WHO SHAPES US**

- A. We began w/the Proverb that said, **walk with the wise and you become wise**.
 Q: So what happens when you walk with Jesus? A: *you become wise!* [why? **5 reasons**]
 1. **Slide15b Jesus Rewrites the Definition of Friendship**
 - a) Yes, He calls them friends (John 15:15) **but** look at what kind of friend **He** is!
 (1) He **initiates** the relationship. He **chooses** them before they deserve it. He **binds** Himself to them.

- (a) Jesus doesn't just **model** friendship - **He defines it!**
- b) In the ancient world, rabbis had students, masters had servants, and Jesus had **friends**. [that's radical] i.e. Revolutionary.
 - (1) **Other religions** may describe **closeness** to God. **But** in **Christianity**, God doesn't just **accept devotion**, **He invites friendship**.

2. Slide15c Jesus Walked With Them

- a) **Proverbs** says *walk with the wise*. Jesus literally walked with them: On dusty roads, through storms, into conflict, toward Jerusalem.
 - (1) **He didn't just give lectures. He gave proximity.**
- b) Wisdom isn't *downloaded*, it's absorbed through *walking*.
- c) *And if you walk with Jesus long enough, *you start to look like Him!*
- d) That's Proverbs 13:20 embodied (*Whoever walks with the wise becomes ? wise*).

3. Slide15d Jesus Corrected Them (*Iron Sharpens Iron*)

- a) **He walked** with them. **He corrected** them. **He didn't flatter** them. **He rebuked** Peter. **He corrected** their pride. **He exposed** their fear.
- b) But notice this: **He corrected** them *without* **rejecting** them.
- c) Biblical friendship tells the truth - **but never** withdraws love. That's covenantal sharpening.

4. Slide15e Jesus Restored Them

- a) After Peter denies Him, **Jesus** doesn't **replace** him, **He restores** him.
- b) That's Proverbs 17:17 *A friend loves at all times*.
- c) **Jesus** doesn't **cancel** His friends when they fail.

5. Slide15f Jesus Shapes Us

- a) Now let's take it from **example** to **formation**.
- b) The people you walk with shape you. So if you walk with **Jesus**, uhh what **happens?** (Your speech softens. Your pride shrinks. Your love deepens. Your courage grows).

- c) You don't become wise by *trying harder*. You become wise by **walking closer**.
 - (1) **Proverbs** tells us to choose wise friends. **The gospel** tells us the wisest **Friend has already chosen us :)**
- d) If you don't have many covenant friends yet, start here - **walk with Jesus!** - He will **shape you** into the kind of friend Proverbs describes.

VIII.Slide16 6 APPLICATION: AUDIT YOUR INNER CIRCLE

A. Here are 3 direct questions:

1. **Who** is influencing me most right now?
2. **Are they moving me** toward wisdom - or away from it?
3. **Who** am I influencing?

B. Encourage: Seek one wise voice. Be one steady friend. **And** Allow sharpening.

C. **Closing:** Proverbs doesn't say, *Choose your friends carefully' because God wants to limit you*. It says it *because your friendships are shaping you every day*.

D. **Next Week:** We'll build on **Relationships - Wisdom at Home** (family and parenting)

E. **Prayer:** Lord, give us wise companions **and** make us wise companions.

F. Keywords: Friendships, relationships,