



DISCIPLESHIP WITH THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

Discussion Questions:

Proverbs 13:20 teaches that walking with the wise leads to wisdom while associating with fools leads to trouble -- in what practical ways have you seen the people closest to you shape your character, either for better or worse?

The sermon draws a distinction between being friendly to everyone and allowing certain people to become close friends -- how do you currently apply wisdom when deciding who you let into your inner circle, and what criteria do you use?

The pastor describes godly friends as those who make us wiser, stronger, and more like Christ -- by that standard, how would you honestly evaluate the quality of your closest friendships right now?

Proverbs 27:17 compares the sharpening effect of friendship to iron sharpening iron, which can involve friction and sparks -- have you experienced a friendship that challenged or corrected you in a way that ultimately made you better, and how did you respond to that friction?

The sermon points out that foolish people repeat their mistakes like a dog returning to its vomit, as referenced in Proverbs 26:11 -- what patterns or habits in your own life might indicate areas where you are not yet receiving or applying the wisdom available to you?

Romans 5:8-11 describes how God restored friendship with humanity through Christ even while we were still his enemies -- how does the reality of being called a friend of God change the way you understand your worth and your relationships with others?

The pastor argues that all the wisdom about godly friendships is ultimately impossible to live out apart from a genuine friendship with Jesus -- do you agree with that claim, and what does your own experience tell you about the connection between your walk with God and the quality of your human relationships?

The sermon emphasizes that wise friends welcome discipline and instruction while foolish friends despise it -- in what areas of your life are you most resistant to correction, and what does that resistance reveal about your heart?

Charles Spurgeon's question is posed directly in the sermon: is Jesus Christ your friend, and have you experienced his love in a personal way? -- what would it mean for you to move from knowing about Jesus intellectually to genuinely walking in friendship with him?

The pastor challenges listeners to consider not only who their friends are but what kind of friend they themselves are to others -- based on the qualities of a wise friend described in this sermon, where do you fall short, and what is one specific step you could take to grow in that area?



DISCIPLESHIP WITH THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

Small Group Guide: The Wisdom of Friendship

Series: Gleaning Wisdom from Proverbs

Overview

This week's sermon focused on the profound impact that friendships have on the direction of our lives. Drawing from the book of Proverbs, we explored the contrast between foolish friends and wise friends, and ultimately arrived at the most important friendship of all -- the one we have with Jesus Christ.

Key Takeaways

- 1. Wisdom is learning how to live right in God's world.** Proverbs 4:7 establishes that pursuing wisdom is the wisest pursuit a person can undertake.
- 2. Who you spend time with shapes who you become.** Proverbs 13:20 reminds us that walking with the wise produces wisdom, while associating with fools leads to trouble. As the sermon noted, we are essentially the average of the people we spend the most time with.
- 3. Christians should be friendly to everyone, but use wisdom in choosing close friends.** There is a meaningful difference between being kind and neighborly toward all people and allowing someone deep access into your life as a close companion.
- 4. Godly friends do not just make life more enjoyable -- they make us wiser, stronger, and more like Christ.** This is the standard by which we should evaluate our closest relationships.
- 5. The most important friendship is the one we have with Jesus.** Romans 5:8-11 makes clear that while we were still enemies of God, Christ died for us and restored our friendship with God. Every other godly friendship flows from this one.

Comparing Foolish and Wise Friends

Use this summary as a reference point during your discussion:

| Foolish Friends | Wise Friends | |---|---| | Do not fear the Lord | Fear and honor the Lord | | Hate discipline and instruction | Welcome discipline and instruction | | Are lazy and sleep through opportunity | Are diligent in their work | | Tear down people and situations | Build up people and situations | | Refuse to receive good advice | Seek wisdom from others | | Repeat the same mistakes | Are teachable and grow | | Use words to cause division | Use words to bring healing |

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Go around the group and share one word that describes your best friendship growing up. What made that friendship stand out?

Section 1: The Friends We Choose

1. The sermon stated that "who you hang out with determines the direction of your life." Do you agree with that? Can you think of a time in your own life when a friendship either positively or negatively shaped the direction you were heading?
2. There is a distinction made between being friendly to everyone and being selective about who becomes a close friend. How do you personally navigate that balance? Where do you find it most difficult?
3. Proverbs 13:20 and 1 Corinthians 15:33 both warn about the influence of the company we keep. In what areas of life do you think you are most susceptible to being shaped by the people around you -- your habits, your attitude, your faith, your finances?

Section 2: The Foolish Friend vs. The Wise Friend

1. Of the characteristics of a foolish friend listed in the sermon -- not fearing the Lord, hating discipline, laziness, tearing others down, refusing advice, repeating mistakes, and causing division with words -- which one do you think is most overlooked or underestimated when people choose friends? Why?
2. The sermon pointed out that foolish people often "sit around solving all the world's problems while doing absolutely nothing." How do you guard against that pattern in your own life? How does a wise friend help hold you accountable to it?
3. Proverbs 27:5-6 addresses the idea that a true friend is willing to offer honest, loving correction even when it is uncomfortable. Have you ever had someone speak that kind of truth into your life? What was that experience like, and how did it affect you?

Section 3: Deep and Meaningful Friendships

1. The sermon described deep and meaningful friendships as being marked by grace, forgiveness, loyalty, honest feedback, and mutual sharpening. Which of those qualities do you feel is most present in your current friendships? Which one is most lacking?
2. Proverbs 17:17 says a friend is always loyal and a brother is born to help in time of need. Have you ever experienced a "fair weather friend" -- someone who disappeared when things got hard? What did that teach you about what you want to be as a friend to others?
3. Proverbs 27:17 describes the sharpening that happens between friends, noting that it may involve friction and sparks. How do you respond to friction in close relationships? Do you tend to avoid it, or are you willing to lean into it for the sake of growth?

Section 4: The Most Important Friendship

1. The sermon closed with a quote from Charles Spurgeon asking, "Is Jesus Christ your friend?" How would you honestly answer that question right now? What does your friendship with Jesus look like on a day-to-day basis?
2. Romans 5:8-11 describes how God restored our friendship with him through Christ while we were still his enemies. How does understanding that you were once an enemy of God -- and that Christ died for you anyway -- change the way you think about extending grace and loyalty to the people in your life?
3. The sermon made the point that "it is impossible to have any sort of godly friendship if you are

not first walking with Jesus." Do you find that to be true in your own experience? How has your relationship with God affected the quality of your human relationships?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again:

- **Evaluate your inner circle.** Prayerfully consider the five people you spend the most time with. In what ways are those relationships making you wiser, stronger, and more like Christ? In what ways might they be pulling you in the opposite direction?
- **Be the wise friend.** Identify one person in your life who could use encouragement, honest feedback, or loyal support this week. Take a concrete step to offer that to them.
- **Pursue a deeper friendship.** If you do not currently have a deep, meaningful friendship marked by honesty, loyalty, and grace, ask God to bring that person into your life -- and ask yourself whether you are being the kind of friend that would attract that kind of relationship.
- **Strengthen your friendship with Jesus.** Set aside intentional time this week to simply be with God -- not just asking for things, but cultivating the relationship. Read through Romans 5:1-11 slowly and reflect on what it means to be called a friend of God.
- **Have the honest conversation.** If there is someone in your life who has earned the right to speak truth to you, give them permission this week. Let them know you want honest feedback and that you are committed to receiving it with grace.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your time together by praying over these three areas:

1. That God would give each person in the group wisdom and discernment in choosing and cultivating friendships.
2. That God would make each person in the group the kind of wise, loyal, grace-filled friend that others need.
3. That each person's friendship with Jesus would deepen and become the foundation from which all other relationships flow.