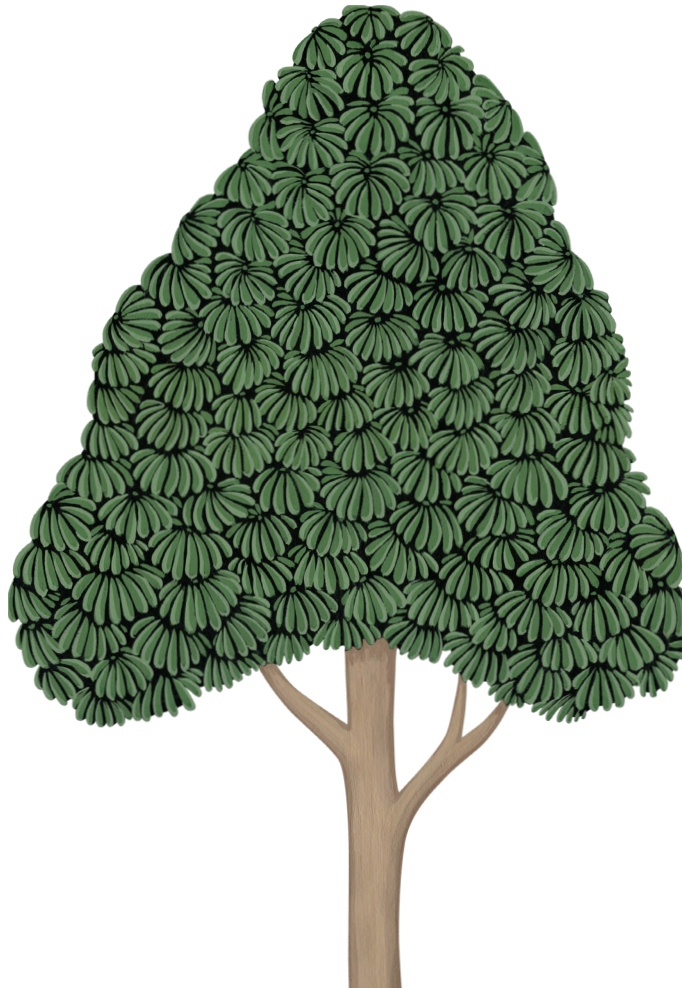
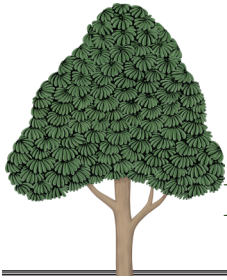


Becoming a Woman of Proverbs

HER RELATIONSHIPS
To Her Friends & Neighbors





Proverbs

HER RELATIONSHIPS: *To Her Friends & Neighbors*

Her relationships to her friends:

She values them (27:10)

She is constant to them (17:17; 18:24)

She gives them counsel (27:9,17; cf. 27:6, 28:23)

Her relationships to her neighbors:

She fulfills her obligations (3:27-28)

She strives for peace (3:29-30)

She does not outstay her welcome (25:17)

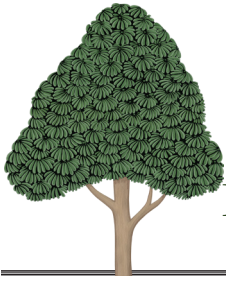
She does not deceive or mislead them (16:29; 26:18-19)

When I was in grade school, our family moved from Southern California to Northern California. Shortly after we moved into our new home, I was greeted by my new best friend and next-door neighbor. We played together, walked to school together, went to the creeks, lakes, and outings together, played sports together, and attended church functions together—we were the best of friends. As we grew up and went to high school and college, we physically moved apart even though we both remained in the same area. We both married and had families of our own; sometimes, we wouldn't see or hear from each other for several years, but when we did, it was as if the distance in time stood still; our friendship was just as fun and remained close and strong as ever—we picked up our conversations where we left off.

Many years later, and during a particular season in both of our lives, our circumstances changed. We both experienced the loss of our parents, we both went through painful divorces, and we both were single again, working and living on our own. One of each of our children was married and blessed us with grandchildren; the others attended college, moved away, and began their careers. In this season, God put us together as neighbors once again—she moved into her parent's home, and she asked me if I would consider renting her guesthouse right next door. I felt privileged to have had the opportunity to have my special friend as my close neighbor. She was experiencing health problems, and I was happy to live close by to be able to help in ways that I could. We also experienced fun times of making more memories.

Then one day, my friend fell in love with an amazing man. I wasn't sure how I felt about this. I dealt with some strange emotions that I hadn't experienced before—I felt as if I were losing my best friend. I experienced disappointment, loss, and grief—yet, on the other hand, I was filled with excitement and happiness for her. God shared with me that I didn't lose a friend—I gained a new one. Out of respect for our close friendship, her boyfriend approached me with the mention that they were going to marry and asked my permission to live next door (not that he needed my permission, but he felt it was the right thing to do). This gesture spoke volumes to me, which revealed his true character, and I was pleased to have them both living next door. They were married, and I was their witness—the two became one—and now I had two of the greatest friends and neighbors a gal could ever have. God is good—He loves to surprise us out of our socks!

One night, the three of us were forced to leave our homes because of the horrendous Carr Fire. We were able to take a few things, and God led us out safely, and we went in different directions to escape from this



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fire. The next day we found out that both of our homes and belongings were destroyed. We experienced great devastation from this; however, this experience brought us even closer together. We made the best of our circumstances and allowed the Lord to heal us from this trauma day by day, and purposed to move forward. It wasn't and isn't easy, but easier with our Lord by our side. To this day, when we hear of a fire anywhere, we all feel anxious (as many of us do in our surrounding area), and the memories return; but God is good to care for us and heal us little by little and day by day.

We remained in the same area of Northern California and are still the best of friends. We talk, text, and get together frequently. Just the other day, I was invited over to their home for dinner...during our dinner conversation, my friend looked at me and made this statement: "Can you believe we've been friends for sixty years?"

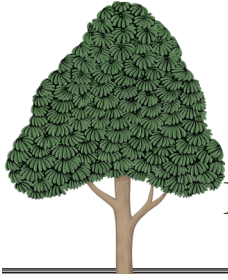
"Wow," I exclaimed, "sixty years is pretty amazing!" I would have to say that we remain respectful of each other, listen to each other, comfort one another as well as encourage one another. We confide with one another and continue to honor the other's advice, thoughts, and/or suggestions regarding situations or challenges that we face in our lives—we know each other so well that we can finish each other's sentences. We are usually sensitive to each other's feelings as well as thought processes and know that we will be honest with each other.

Since we were chatting about the length of our friendship, I mentioned to her that I was writing for our Bible study and asked her permission to write about when we met and the continued years of our friendship. She said, "Of course." I also asked her what she valued most in our friendship, and she answered, "I know that no matter what time in my life, I know that you will be there for me." I, too, feel the same about her. Interesting to note that our children and grandchildren all recognize the value of our friendship and have been involved in many of our life's journeys.

You've probably heard the saying or shared with your children or grandchildren, "If you want a friend, you have to be a friend." As we read the first part of the verse from Proverbs 18:24, "A man who has friends, must himself be friendly..." we see that the saying we've heard is biblical truth. God is a God who values friendship. This is what my friend did sixty years ago...she wanted a friend, and she got a friend in me. That simple act of going to my house that day made us friends for life.

Jesus, my best friend above all others, puts friends and neighbors in our paths sometimes for a lifetime, sometimes for a short minute, and sometimes for a season—it is He that continues to grow us spiritually when we put Him first above all else in our lives. He desires an intimate relationship with us, and when we honor His friendship, we will continue to experience good relationships with our friends and neighbors.

As we dive into our scripture verses for this week, we will be focusing on our relationship with Jesus and our relationships with our friends and neighbors. I pray that you will come to a new appreciation of the true value of relationships that the wisdom of Solomon imparts to us when he wrote these proverbs and why this is so important to the heart of God.



Proverbs

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Read Proverbs 27:10 (NKJV)

“Do not forsake your own friend or your father’s friend, nor go to your brother’s house in the day of your calamity; better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.”

Friend and **neighbor** in this passage are the exact same word in Hebrew. At that time in the world, people didn’t get out and about much. Therefore, their neighbors were their friends. Many times, we refer to “blood is thicker than water” in reference to family; however, in this verse, we read that it is better to seek out our friend or neighbor in our day of calamity. Family may tend to feel obligated to support us, and then that could possibly result in putting wedges in family relationships. I’m learning that when I practice treating my family as friends and respect them, I can avoid conflicts and prevent wedges or unnecessary burdens that might likely occur. I’m reminded of the verse in Romans 12:18 NKJV: *“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”* When we make a conscious effort to live at peace with everyone, and accept others’ opinions or lifestyles, even when we don’t agree, we can then avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Write out Proverbs 27:10.

1. What new insights did you gain from writing out this verse?

2. Fill in the blanks.

“Do not _____ your _____ _____ or your _____ _____, nor go to your _____ house in the _____ of your _____; better is a _____ than a _____.”

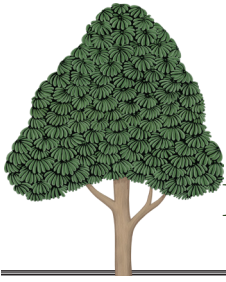
3. Write out the definition of each word listed below using the dictionary and/or Bible dictionary. What are the similarities? What are the contrasts?

Friend:

Neighbor:

Relative:

Relationship:



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I remember the day when I had an auto accident in which I needed emergency hospital care. The first person I called was my friend. I left a message on her phone and proceeded to call a business associate friend that was close in proximity—they came to my rescue and took me to the emergency room. I notified my co-leader friend for prayer (in Her Ministry) as well as other friends and family members. My friend, whom I called first, came and met me at the E.R. and stayed with me the entire time while I was being taken care of. She took me home and also stayed the night and cared for me, and cared for me throughout my healing process. A few close friends, many other friends, as well as a few colleague friends, came to visit, phoned, or assisted me during my lengthy recovery, and I am forever grateful!

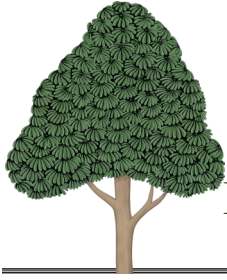
4. Write out a time in your life when you contacted your friend or neighbor when you encountered a disaster or an emergency situation.

“We should hold the bonds of friendship as dear and obligating, even beyond generations. Friends should not be forsaken.” David Guzik

5. Think of a friend. What do you value most in your relationship with them? Write your thoughts down. Take time to ask them this week what they value in your friendship, and write down their response.

6. What is your part in giving to this relationship? Is there something that you feel you need to change or resolve to make this friendship even more valuable?

“There is a great deal of sweetness in conversing and consulting with a cordial friend. It is like ointment and perfume, which are very grateful to the smell, and exhilarate the spirits. It rejoices the heart; the burden of care is made lighter by unbosoming ourselves to our friend, and it is a great satisfaction to us to have his sentiments concerning our affairs. The sweetness of friendship lies not in hearty mirth and hearty laughter but in hearty counsel, faithful advice, sincerely given and without flattery, by counsel of the souls (so the word is), counsel which reaches the case and comes to the heart, counsel about soul-concerns.” (Matthew Henry).



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Read Proverbs 17:17 and 18:24 (NKJV)

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

“A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

7. What does “a brother born for adversity” mean to you?

8. Have you ever been in a small group and felt that the people in that group didn’t seem very friendly, or you felt invisible? What was your experience? What was your solution?

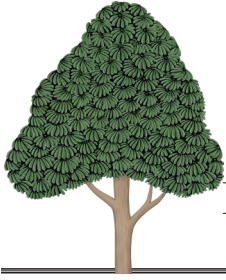
9. What does “there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” mean to you? Who is your friend who sticks closer to you than a brother?

“Friends must be constant to each other at all times.” (Matthew Henry)

10. The word **constant** derives from the Latin verb meaning *to stand with*, so something **constant** is *continually standing with you and not wavering*. Can you share an example of what constant means to you with the friend that comes to mind as you read this right now?

Read 1 Samuel 18:3, 19:2-3, 20:17, and 23:16-18.

11. Write out what you observe from David and Jonathan’s friendship. How does their relationship compare to Proverbs 17:17 and 18:24?



Proverbs

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12. Reread Proverbs 17:17 and 18:24, then read John 15:13-17 and John 13:34-35. Do you see any comparisons? If so, write down what you observe. Jesus no longer calls us servants but friends. Can you say that Jesus is your friend? Can you say that you love Him? He loves us and values our friendship. Spend some time in prayer, and ask Jesus what He values in you. Then tell Jesus what you value in Him. Share what you value with a friend or neighbor in your friendship with Jesus.

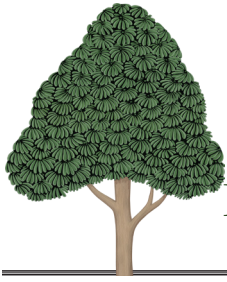
“A friend that loves at all times is born (that is, becomes) a brother in adversity, and is so to be valued.... In our troubles, we expect comfort and relief from our relations, but sometimes there is a friend that is nothing akin to us, the bonds of whose esteem and love prove stronger than those of nature, and, when it comes to the trial, will do more for us than a brother will.” (Matthew Henry).

Read Proverbs 27:9 and 17 and cross reference Proverbs 27:6, and 28:23. Write out these scriptures.

13. Can you share a time when you received welcome counsel from a friend? What was your response? Did you pray about their counsel? Also, share a time that you offered counsel to a friend. Did you pray first before providing your counsel? How was your counsel received from them?

A true friend's value is knowing the right timing to offer loving correction. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend.” This correction may not be fun to hear at the time, but we know it's genuine. The bond of true friendship appreciates the loving words of correction over the empty words of flattery.

14. Are you able to discern between a sincere compliment and flattery? Write down an example.



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“The gladdening oil and incense is a simile for the agreeable and delightful counsel of a friend that originates in his very being. The outward fragrances and the wholesome counsel produce a sense of wellbeing.” (Waltke).

Read Proverbs 3:27-28 (NKJV)

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,’ when you have it with you.”

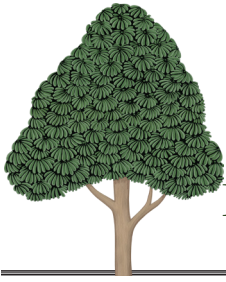
15. Fill in the blanks.

“Do not _____ good from _____ to whom it is _____, when it is in the _____ of your _____ to _____ so. Do you not say to your _____, ‘Go, and come _____, and _____ I will _____ it,’ when you have _____ with you.”

16. What important insight did you gain from reading these two verses?

I love visiting my neighbor who lives on the right side of me. She was friends with my parents (both in heaven with our Lord) and is now a friend of mine. I love to sit and listen to her life stories, and she often mentions my parents in them. I glean from her knowledge and wisdom, and we often laugh and share stories. She’s in her nineties and lives alone, so I will sometimes take her some dinner or go to the grocery store for her and run an errand. I enjoy my visits with her and value our friendship very much.

I don’t know my neighbor who lives on my left side very well. Her husband used to be in their yard frequently (before he passed away), and we would have short conversations over the fence. Many of our conversations would be about the weather, how he was feeling that day, when they were going to take a short trip in their RV, or often about their dogs jumping their fence (they are the best escape artists). Frequently he would repair the wall, only to find that they would jump or dig out again, or they would figure out another way to escape—one of their dogs is more aggressive than the other, so neither one of us wanted any harm to come to anyone. After her husband passed, and a few days later, she was in her yard, and I took the opportunity to offer my condolences. We had a nice short conversation. Very seldom do I see her in her yard, but we chat on the phone briefly, mainly to warn each other about a bear passing through during the day or fire nearby. She still has the challenge of their dogs escaping from the yard at times, which we’ve offered several times to help her solve the problem, but she said she would have it repaired and thanked us. A friend of ours who does some of our yard work helped her with hers and fixed areas in her fence to help keep the dogs contained.



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I look forward to the day when we can sit and visit. Until then, I remain available to help her when and if needed, as I pray and wait for God's timing on this relationship.

17. What type of relationships do you have with your neighbors? Do you know your neighbors? Do you have a close relationship? Distant relationship? Share one thing that comes to your mind as you read these questions. Then seek God in prayer and ask Him for the next step.

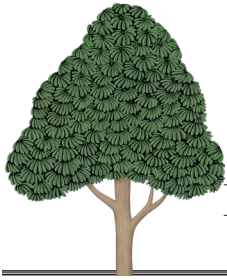
18. Read Proverbs 3:27-28 (NKJV), then write it out.

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go, and come back, And tomorrow I will give it,’ when you have it with you.”

Solomon shares God's wisdom and lessons so we can learn to live neighborly and be conscious of their needs. He gives us practical examples to follow. The gesture of a smile, wave, or phone call may do wonders for their day. Even on our busiest days, we should pray for our neighbors and be willing to lend a helping hand at any moment, and be open to interruptions for their needs. This scripture tells us that we need to be ready at all times to love our neighbors through our actions and with an attitude of cheerfulness. Solomon shares that we are not to withhold good from them or refuse kindness because they may have an immediate need that is pressing at that moment, and therefore he alerts us to not wait until tomorrow because possibly tomorrow could be too late.

16a. List ways in which you can lend a helping hand and do good to your neighbor.

16b. Have you had the opportunity to be neighborly this week? Share your experience. What would you like to do for your neighbor if you haven't had the chance?



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Read Proverbs 3:29-30 (NKJV)

“Do not devise evil against your neighbor, For he dwells by you for safety’s sake. Do not strive with a man without cause, If he has done you no harm.”

17. Fill in the blanks.

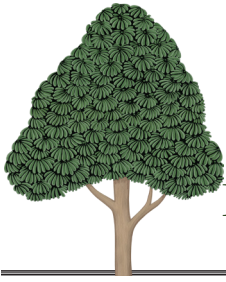
“Do not devise _____ against your _____, for he _____ by you for _____ sake. Do not _____ with a man _____ cause, if he has done _____ no _____.”

18. Draw a line from the following phrases that best describe the scripture verses using the New Living Translation (NLT). You may find it helpful to write out each verse.

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| a. Speak truth | 1 Peter 3:8 |
| b. Live in peace | 1 Peter 3:12 |
| c. Be kind | 1 Corinthians 10:24 |
| d. Live in harmony | Ephesians 4:15 |
| e. Seek good | Romans 12:16 |
| f. Do right | Colossians 3:15 |
| g. Sympathize | Mark 12:31 |
| h. Be humble | 1 Thessalonians 5:11 |
| i. Love your neighbor | Philippians 2:3 |
| j. Encourage | Ephesians 4:32 |

The above list of phrases and scripture verses gives us instructions on how we are to conduct ourselves in our relationships with our neighbors. These are strong words of instruction from Solomon.

These two verses tell us that we should never hurt or harm anyone by our words, actions, or deeds. We are also not to entertain striving, jealousy, or suspicion of any kind on our part. “It is the most base ungrateful thing, if our neighbors have a good opinion of us, that we will do them no harm, and we thence take advantage to cheat and injure them.” (Matthew Henry)



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19. After reading these strong words of instruction from Solomon in Proverbs 3:29-30, let's refer to Romans 12:18 again (to strive for peace). Read the following scripture verses: Proverbs 12:20, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Ephesians 2:14, and Colossians 3:15. It may be helpful to write these verses down.

20. List how we can choose to live in peace with our neighbors.

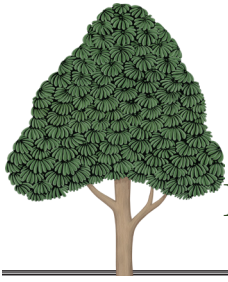
21. Have you had to ask God to help you keep peace with your neighbors?

22. Read Proverbs 25:17 and then write it out.

"Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house, lest he becomes weary of you and hate you."

23. In your own words, describe what this verse means to you.

24. Do you have (what you consider) an "over-needy" friend or neighbor? Do you think yourself being an "over-needy" friend or neighbor? Do you avoid their phone calls, or do others avoid your phone calls or make excuses to shorten their calls or visits with you? If you've answered yes to either of these questions, what is the Lord's instruction, direction, comfort, or encouragement for you today on this matter?



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25. Can you discern when it's time to end your visit with your neighbor for that day or "give them space" for that season? This question can also include close friends, acquaintances, family members whom you consider friends, clients, customers, business associates, etc. We are instructed to be considerate of them and value their privacy, and therefore not take their friendship, which is meant to be beautiful and intimate, for granted. Isn't it glorious that we can never "outstay our welcome" with Jesus?

"The wise man or woman will be sensitive to the sense that a neighbor may become weary of their presence. Since good neighborly relationships improve life, this is an important principle of wisdom." (David Guzik)

26. Read Proverbs 16:29 and Proverbs 26:18-19 NKJV

"A violent man entices his neighbor, and leads him in a way that is not good."

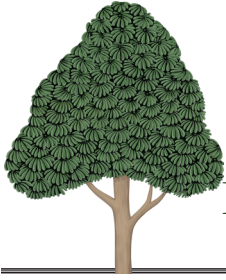
"Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, 'I was only joking!'"

27. If you have access to other versions of the Bible, write the interpretation of the verses in that version or versions...or you can write them out as written above in the NKJV. For example: "Violent people mislead their companions, leading them down a harmful path" (Proverbs 16:29 NLT). "People who shrug off deliberate deceptions, saying, 'I didn't mean it, I was only joking,' are worse than careless campers who walk away from smoldering campfires" (Proverbs 26:18-19 MSG).

28. What is your interpretation of Proverbs 16:29 and Proverbs 26:18-19?

29. What do you observe in the behavior that Solomon is describing in these verses?

30. How can you apply these verses to your life today?



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Solomon warns us of people like this; therefore, we should not voluntarily side with them or get entrapped with people of this cunning nature. We could be misled easily, or worse yet, we could deceive and mislead others.

“The man who plays tricks on others, deceiving them, and covering it by saying, ‘I was only joking!’ is a danger to others—and a very unwelcome companion.” (David Guzik)

31. Let’s take time today to review God’s jewels of wisdom in the Proverbs verses we read for this week. Pray first, then write a list of what God shared with you on how or what you can do to achieve a more loving relationship with your friends and neighbors. How do you plan to apply this list to your lifestyle?