

# Friends – Episode 3: The one about a tunnel of chaos

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Glenn Garvin

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### **BIG IDEA – Keeping good friends is harder than making them.**

**scripture focus** - “Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.” **Proverbs 17:9 NLT**

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Last week, we talked about what it takes to make a friend. We understand it's easier for some than others. This week, we're talking about what it takes to keep a great friend. How can we turn casual acquaintances into great friends? How can we get beyond surface talk about the weather or politics? What does it take to go deeper and really invest in someone and have them do the same for you? Let's find out what God's Word says about keeping great friends!

### **There is no better time that now to start!**

It takes time, work, and investment! Why bother? Because, to make a lifelong friend with an unbreakable bond of love, is totally worth it! Keeping good friends is harder than making them, but the rewards are far beyond what it takes to journey through the tunnel of chaos and arrive on the other side with a richer, more fulfilling life.

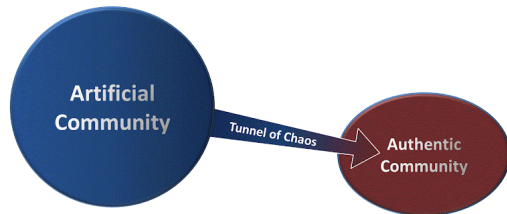
God built us, knows us, and tells us all about how to do life together with friends.

1. **Tunnel of chaos – conflict & crisis can build or bomb a friendship**

“There are “friends” who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother.” Proverbs 18:24 NLT

Wayne Hedlund, writes this about the “tunnel of chaos.”

The Tunnel of Chaos is that tunnel that leads from artificial to authentic relationships.



You enter the tunnel when you choose to engage in crucial confrontations with a solid commitment to hold steady until you've reached a positive resolution and a deeper friendship.

## 2. Reconcile

"Love prospers when a fault is forgiven but dwelling on it separates close friends." **Proverbs 17:9 NLT**

"Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs."  
**Proverbs 10:12 NIV**

**Colossians 3:13 NLT** "Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."

### **Bitter or better, the crossroads of your choice.**

When you've been offended, hurt or disappointed by someone, you will come to the crossroads of bitter or better boulevards. One takes you to the city called Wormwood, the other takes you to the city of Lighter Load. One road yields a foothold for the devil to climb into your heart. The other yields grace extended out to you by God.

### **Hebrews 12:15 NLT**

"Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many."

Bitterness in Greek is pikria, the root word is a pikros: bitter, acrid, malignant. Possibly even sharp, like you swallowed a bag of broken glass.

The biggest reason we cannot keep friends is that we have not handled offenses well. We've been hurt, embarrassed or confronted by someone and we felt our only option was to hold a grudge and pull away **because that will certainly teach them a lesson**. Each grudge was stored away with many others and soon we are just **living a bitter life of recirculated hate**. **How many people are on your "enemy" list? How many people are you punishing by pushing them away?**

The Bible is filled with stories of reconciliation and redemption, but we do not feel that it is fair that someone who has hurt us gets off so easy. We want to be forgiven, we want to be understood and reconciled back to God. But we do not believe that should happen for others.

### 3. **The antidote is humility – wear it often**

"An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars." **Proverbs 18:19 NLT**

One commentator wrote, **"The nearness of the relation greatly heightens the provocation, and love abused frequently turns to extreme hatred."** The better the friendship, the deeper the cut. And an unattended wound gets infected!

**You go first!**

**Remember in friendship, the race to forgiveness means the first one there wins.**

"Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, **humility**, gentleness, and **patience**." Colossians 3:12 NLT

The Apostle Paul says put on this shirt. When you go out to garden, you were a certain set of clothes. When you go for a jog, another. And when you go for a job interview or out to a nice dinner with friends, you wear another. Paul says there are certain kinds of outfits that match well with God's holiness.

When you go to make things right with a friend, what do you wear? May Paul suggest your outfit?

Put on a nice humility shirt first and maybe match it with some patience pants?

We'll talk about it more on Father's Day, but one of the lost phrases of civility that has become difficult to say but opens the door to reconciliation is "I'm sorry."

Please practice that with me right now, let's say it together, "I'm sorry."

#### 4. Space to breath - don't be controlling

"Don't visit your neighbors too often, or you will wear out your welcome." **Proverbs 25:17 NLT**

Too much of a good thing! The Hebrew word for weary or too much is "saba – satiated or surfeited.

I love that Proverbs is straightforward with so many practical principles. In this proverb, the often-translated word is "neighbor," which is humorous. It's funny because it brings to mind that neighbor that just won't leave you alone and it gets to be way too much. Truth is the word just means friend.

I don't know how you are with obsessive friendships, but they are really hard to manage. When I was a teenager, I had a really good friend. We did all kinds of things together. We just hung out, we went to each other's family events like graduation, birthday parties and even family funerals. It was great to have a friend just to be able to

be yourself and not worry about what others thought about you. It was fun until one day he asked me to go somewhere, And I told him I couldn't go because I had a date with my girlfriend (Robin). The phone went silent for a second. Then he awkwardly, sarcastically said, "oh, ok, sorry I bothered you!" What? I was confused. What just happened? Over the next several weeks I started feeling like he was not happy with me spending time with anyone else – my girlfriend or some of my other friends. Sadly, we began to grow distant and eventually, we didn't talk at all. That was a kind of "tunnel of chaos" more for him than it was me. I didn't even know how to fix it.

#### 5. Stir up good

"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works." **Hebrews 10:24 NLT**

Remember the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:33) said that bad company corrupts good morals? Well, the opposite is also true. **Good company encourages good morals.**

Great friends use their words wisely. As we talked about, friends can be truthful to help us see blind spots about ourselves. And, to give us a better self awareness. However, friends can also be the most effective at placing words of encouragement, even prophetic words that spur us to heads towards a destiny we would have never seen without help. I believe under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that God uses us in each others lives to promote good, even greatness in our future.

We have the opportunity to speak life giving, even future, hope-filled projections towards one another!

**Mark Batterson writes of this amazing backstory to Sidney Poitier's success.**

In 1964, Sidney Poitier became the first Black person to win an Academy Award for Best Actor.

When Sidney Poitier was a teenager, he auditioned for an acting role at the prestigious American Negro Theatre in Harlem. He didn't get the part because he couldn't read the script. So, Poitier started working as a dishwasher.

One day an elderly Jewish waiter saw Poitier with a newspaper and asked him, "What's new in the paper?" Poitier said, "I can't tell you what's in the paper, because I can't read very well." After many weeks of this man's patient mentoring, Poitier learned to read well enough to land an apprentice role at the American Negro Theatre.

When he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Film Institute half a century later, he said, "I must also pay thanks to an elderly Jewish waiter who took time to help a young Black dishwasher learn to read." Poitier paid tribute with the ultimate compliment: "A little bit of him is in everything I do."

**How many of you received a word, a compliment, an encouragement that ended up defining not just what you do but also who you've become?**

My neighbor Stan said four words to me while working on my bike in his garage, "you do that well." Those words changed my life.

A complete stranger at Melodyland said something to me and told me that God had directed him to tell me. He said, "one day you're going to be a great preacher." Now, that's debatable, but I never forgot it and it help shape my calling to be a pastor.

Maybe a music teacher saw something in your ability to play an instrument and told you. Maybe a teacher saw your gift of being a teacher long before you saw it in yourself.

I encourage you to not only make friends and be a friend, but **keep your friends** and **be that sticky friend**, so you can benefit from lifelong friendships!

6. **Have their back - don't let gossip get a grip on you**

“A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends.” **Proverbs 16:28 NLT**

**NIV says, A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.**

**Don't let anything or anyone get between you and a good friend - what's worth fighting for is worth keeping!**

The Psalmist writes about Shimei, who hated David and wanted Absalom to be king.

**Psalms 7:14-16 NLT**

**“The wicked conceive evil; they are pregnant with trouble and give birth to lies. They dig a deep pit to trap others, then fall into it themselves.** The trouble they make for others backfires on them. The violence they plan falls on their own heads.”

**Don't fall into the pit of ugly traps filled with lies and gossip. Let your enemies do so, but not you nor your good friends.**

Don't be baited, don't fall for it. Stand by your friend! Defend your friend! **This is exactly the nonsense that destroys families, churches and friendships!** When I hear this kind of awful news about you, I want to know you well enough to say back, “that does not sound like the friend that I know.” I want to shred the lie before it spreads further. **I want to warn the gossip to stop before there are godly consequences of such evil.**

**The dainty morsels mentioned in Proverbs seem tasty, but they are dainty morsels laced with dung!**

“Rumors are dainty morsels that sink deep into one's heart.”

**Proverbs 18:8 & 26:22 NLT**

**This Proverb is written TWICE!** The creepy part is that the wisdom writers make it clear that it's more about our human desire to receive that's almost worse than the gossip, the “whisper” feels compelled

to share it! A commentator writes, “**so greedily do men swallow down and retain them.**”

**After years of making friends, keeping friends, and losing some, I can tell you this: 1. Great friendships do not come without work and some difficulties. They take effort, investment, and sacrifice, 2. The great ones give back far more than I ever expected.**

I am a loyal friend. When I commit to caring, loving and sticking with someone, I tend to do so for a very long time. I'd say it takes a lot to shake me off once I am determined to be a friend. It's so bad that I have “friends,” who rarely if ever reciprocate, or give back. I call them on their birthdays with pure joy and excitement. I send weird memes or Insta-stories never caring if they respond or not. I pray for them when God drops their name into my mind. It's honest and true. **Right now, I only have one enemy and I know God will bring about a moment of reconciliation with that person.** I am NOT looking forward to it at all. I have a couple friends who currently a work in progress on my end. I don't know how it will go, but I'm hoping for the best.

I can tell you that while being here, at Life Center and working with, serving with other staff pastors in the past, they didn't start out as friends. Oh no, it took a lot of head-butting and heated arguments to get to the gold of great friendship. Each difficult one infuriated me to no end. I worked, they worked. I invested and so did they. In the end a lifelong friendship emerged between us and our families.

**I pray that each of us continue to work and invest in great friendships, knowing that most, if not all will go through a “tunnel of chaos,” conflict or some major crisis that forces and forges a bond that cannot be broken!**

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## NOTES

## Scriptures



“There are “friends” who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother.” **Proverbs 18:24 NLT**

“Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.” **Proverbs 17:9 NLT**

“Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.”  
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**Colossians 3:13 NLT** “Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.”

“Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.” **Hebrews 12:15 NLT**

“An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars.” **Proverbs 18:19 NLT**

“Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.” **Colossians 3:12 NLT**

“Don’t visit your neighbors too often, or you will wear out your welcome.”  
**Proverbs 25:17 NLT**

“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.”  
**Hebrews 10:24 NLT**

“A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends.”  
**Proverbs 16:28 NLT**

“Rumors are dainty morsels that sink deep into one’s heart.”  
**Proverbs 18:8 and Proverbs 22:26 NLT**

## Questions

- Q: How would you describe a “tunnel of Chaos”?
- Q: Had you considered chaos, conflict, or crisis as a means to great friendship?
- Q: What would you say is the biggest struggle is in reconciliation?
- Q: Do you have any stories of struggles with your friends?
- Q: Have you been in a controlling friendship situation? Please share.

Q: Have you had a friend positively project or prophecy a good future?

Q: Why is gossip such a tasty morsel? Any tips on dealing with it?

## COMMENTARY REFERENCES

### Elliott's Commentary for English Readers

#### Proverbs 17:9

**He that covereth a transgression seeketh love—i.e., one who does not notice, but rather conceals and excuses, anything done against him;** that man “follows after charity” (1Corinthians 14:1). (Comp. Proverbs 10:12.) **Hate stirs up, love covers.**

**He that repeateth a matter,** who is **always returning to old grievances,** “alienates (even his) chief friend.”

#### Hebrews 12:25

**Any root of bitterness.**—It is clear that **Deuteronomy 29:18**, though not formally quoted, is before the writer's mind. In that chapter Moses had again brought before the people the covenant which, nearly forty years before, had been made and ratified “in Horeb” (see Hebrews 9:18-20). With especial solemnity he sets before them the sin and terrible punishment of idolatry, “Lest there should be among you man or woman . . . whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; **lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood.**” The marginal note on the last words (“poisonful herb”) explains their true meaning—that which springs from the root is **not merely bitter, it is also poisonous.**

**Proverbs 18:19** Their contentions.—Of such as have once been friends, “are like the bars of a castle,” or palace, **forming an almost impassable barrier to reconciliation.** The bitterness of quarrels between friends is proverbial.

### Benson Commentary

**Proverbs 18:24.** A man that hath friends — Hebrew, a man of friends; either, 1st, Who desires the friendship of others; or, 2 Who professes friendship to others; must show himself friendly — **Must perform all kind offices to his friend,** which is the very end of friendship, and the way to preserve it; and there is a friend that sticketh closer — To him that desires and needs his help; who is more **hearty in the performance of all duties of friendship;** than a brother — Than the nearest relation.

**Proverbs 18:19** The nearness of the relation greatly heightens the provocation, and love abused frequently turns to extreme hatred.

## Strong's Concordance

**Proverbs 25:17**

rea: friend, companion, fellow

Saba: to be sated, satisfied or surfeited – too full, too much. Excess, gorged.

## Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

**Proverbs 25:19** Treachery annoys as well as deceives.

## Barnes' Notes on the Bible

**Proverbs 11:13** The man who comes to us with tales about others will reveal our secrets also. Faithfulness is shown, not only in doing what a man has been commissioned to do, but in doing it quietly and without garrulity.

## Gil's Exposition of the Entire Bible

**Proverbs 18:24** A man that hath friends must show himself friendly,.... **Friendship ought to be mutual and reciprocal, as between David and Jonathan**; a man that receives friendship ought to return it, or otherwise he is guilty of great ingratitude. This may be spiritually applied; **a believer is "a man of friends"** (b), as it may be rendered; he has many friends: **God is his friend**, as appears by his early love to him, his choice of him, and provisions of grace for him; by sending his son to save him; by visiting him, not only in a way of providence, but of grace; by disclosing his secrets, showing his covenant to him, and by making him his heir, and a joint heir with Christ. **Christ is his friend**, as is evident from his visiting him at his incarnation; and in a spiritual way, by the communication of his secrets to him; by his hearty counsel and faithful reproofs; by his undertaking and doing for him what he has; and especially by suffering and dying in his room and stead. **The Holy Spirit is his friend**, which he has shown by discovering to him his woeful estate by nature, and the way of salvation by Christ; by working all his works in him; by acting the part of a Comforter to him; by revealing divine things to him, by helping him under all his infirmities; by making intercession for him according to the will of God.

## Benson Commentary

**Proverbs 18:8, 26:22** A *talebearer*. Rather, **whisperer**, R.V., secret calumniator, as in Proverbs 16:28;

*Dainty morsels, R.V.; so greedily do men swallow down and retain them.* This proverb is repeated twice!

## Internet Links

### [Wayne Hedlund – Tunnel of Chaos](#)

The Tunnel of Chaos is that tunnel that **leads from artificial to authentic relationships**. It is a key to building trust with your family, friends, and coworkers. It is a critical component to your leadership team's success and health. **It is a foundational element of fostering and keeping a culture of trust.**

### [Cory Lebovitz – Tunnel of Chaos](#) **Genuine verses pseudo community.**

The nature of relationships – the general pull of momentum is to slide from genuine community to what you could call “pseudo community.” Pseudo community is when you are going through the motions – it looks good on the outside, but inside you know it is hollow.

[Sydney Poitier backstory to success](#) - In 1992, Poitier was given the Life Achievement Award by the American Film Institute, the most prestigious honour after the Oscar, joining recipients such as Bette Davis, Alfred Hitchcock, Fred Astaire, James Cagney and Orson Welles. “I must also pay thanks to an elderly Jewish waiter who took time to help a young Black dishwasher learn to read,” Poitier told the audience. “I cannot tell you his name. I never knew it. But I read pretty good now.”