



# Making Friends

Wisdom from the Bible on how to win friends and influence people.

Note: The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

**Proverbs 27:6** - Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

## What are the wounds of a friend?

Wounds are things that hurt a person such as criticism.

## How can wounds such as criticism be faithful?

Criticism be faithful if it is constructive. There is a place and time to rebuke our brothers and sisters in Christ if it builds them up and helps them to grow closer to God and other people.

## What is the right time and place to rebuke your brother or sister?

- After you've prayed about it and searched your own self to make sure you don't have a bias that is impacting your ability to see clearly.
- After it is clear that what the other person is doing is harmful to himself, others, or the cause of Christ.
- In private unless it is a doctrinal issue that has already been made public (recall Paul's rebuke of Peter for his eating habits).
- With tact and with the spirit of love.

## Do people like to be criticized? Why?

People don't like to be criticized because it is human nature to think of themselves a good person who is earning favor with God and others.

## What is the best way to receive criticism?

With humility, listening carefully and giving it honest consideration with the spirit of love assuming it is being given with a spirit of love.

## How are the kisses of an enemy deceitful?

Flatteries of someone who is out to get you is deception. It is intended to get you off-guard and mask what is really going on behind the scene.

## How may we discern between the wounds of friends and the kisses of enemies?

- Certainly the Holy Spirit will help you make such a discernment.

Matt 7:15-18

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

- There are certain incongruencies that are you can pick up on, note that even people without the Holy Spirit can recognize subtle clues that reveal another person's hidden thoughts about a matter.
- There are body language clues that psychologists have learned about that give people away such as blinking... most people blink a lot more when they tell a lie.

## What should you do if you perceive another person is either criticizing you with malice or deceiving you with flatteries?

Love them. If they are an enemy, Jesus gave clear instructions how we should respond to them...

Matt 5:44 - But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you

## What should your attitude be about being persecuted?

Recognize that God is in control and has allowed the persecution to serve a purpose...

Matt 5:11 - Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

James says we should rejoice during times of adversity...

James 1:2-4 - My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Often times attacks against you are demonic in nature trying to get you to react in the flesh and thus do damage to the cause of Christ. Recognizing such attacks for what they are can be an encouragement that you are making an impact for Christ, Satan and his minions don't waste their time with Christians who are already ineffective.

**In what circumstances should Christians get even with people who have done them harm? Isn't reparations such as eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth a biblical mandate?**

There are no circumstances for Christians to seek revenge...

Rom 12:19 - Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Jesus addressed this topic in His Sermon on the Mount...

Matt 5:38-42 - You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

### **How do you then reconcile the Old Testament Law which requires a tooth for a tooth?**

Exod 21:22-25 - If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Taken in context, this Law is for the administration of the nation of Israel, it was not for individuals to take the law into their own hands. Note the reference to "*he shall pay as the judges determine*" in verse 22.

### **Well how much abuse should you take before enough is enough?**

Don't keep track of the score.

Matt 18:21-22 - Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

God will settle all accounts in eternity, act like you believe that God will make sure that justice is served.

### **So is being a Christian all about being milk-toast to allow others to walk all over you?**

No, we are not to just lay back and let others have their way with us without response. This is not what turning the other cheek is all about, you have to harmonize that passage with the rest of Scripture.

Rom 12:17-21

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

18 If it is possible, **as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Note that it is not always possible to maintain the peace, there is a time for fighting back but only after we have exhausted all peaceful means. Note also that we are not to be the aggressor but to act in response to aggression. This automatically gives us an advantage, in military strategy the defender always has a tactical advantage.

### **Can you think of any circumstances where it is appropriate to fight back?**

You should take action to protect your body as much as you are able...

1 Cor 6:19 - Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

Christ has saved you for a purpose and you should assume that the purpose continues unless He makes it very clear that you are to lay your life down through circumstances that are beyond your control. Likewise, you should protect your family...

1 Tim 5:8 - But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Protection is a basic form of provision and a clear command in Scripture.

### **What would Jesus have us do as we find ourselves in conflicts with unbelievers?**

Strive to introduce them to Christ.

### **How do we go about getting to introduce people to the Lord?**

Make friends with them. Use our worldly resources to befriend them and thus be in a position to speak to them about the Lord...

Luke 16:9 - And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.

### **Where can we find wisdom about how we should conduct ourselves to cultivate friendships?**

What better place to find wisdom than in Proverbs, let's take a look at some passages...

### **What do the following passages in Proverbs have to say about making friends?**

**Proverbs 17:17** - A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

To be a true friend, you must love the other person. If you love someone, you'll stand with them through adversity as a brother would.

### **What is the distinction between a friend and a brother?**

A true friend is really a brother.

**Proverbs 12:26** - The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Your closest relationships should be born again believers because the influence of the worldly can lure you to a path away from God.

**Proverbs 14:20** - The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor, but the rich has many friends.

- If you want to be rich, seek to have many friends.
- If you are hated by your neighbor you are really poor no matter what your financial condition.
- The way of the world is to equate desirability with wealth so a poor man with a friend is a true friend while a rich man's friend should be suspect...  
Proverbs 19:4 - Wealth makes many friends, but the poor is separated from his friend.

Proverbs 19:6 - Many entreat the favor of the nobility, and every man is a friend to one who gives gifts.

**Proverbs 16:28** - A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.

Gossip is deadly to friendships, don't dabble in it. If you are a gossip, you are numbered among the perverse.

**Proverbs 17:9** - He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.

This verse has more to say on not being a gossip... not only should you not tell about another's failings you should take action to keep them hidden.

**Why should we help another person cover up their sin?**

- Because sin damages relationships between people, we should seek to have peace between people and not be an agent of stirring up conflict.
- You are not God who will insure that justice is served.
- All sin is sin against God who will deal with it in His own time and in His own way to serve His purpose.
- Making sin public which doesn't need to be only serves to make it worse by damaging others including the body of Christ.

**What accusation of sin should be made public?**

- The result of the due process where a person claims to be a Christian but his actions say otherwise per Matthew 18:15-20.
- When the sin is a matter of doctrine and done in public, it should be rebuked in public as Paul did with Peter who was hypocritical in his eating habits (Galatians 2:11-21).

**Proverbs 17:18** - A man devoid of understanding shakes hands in a pledge, and becomes surety for his friend.

Surety is using your credit to insure a loan for someone else, also known as "co-signing" a loan. It is not God's will that a person be in debt since debt is bondage, "the

*borrower is servant to the lender*" (Proverbs 22:7). So then it is doubly wrong to take on another person's debt. In the Old Testament, God permitted loans by His people in certain circumstances but they were to be limited to 7 years...

Deut 15:1 - At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts.

**How can it be wrong to help someone in financial need?**

It depends on how you help them. God often uses a person's financial situation to bring them to the end of themselves so that they will turn to Him... you can be working against the will of God and delaying the inevitable by taking on another person's debt. It is tough love to not offer financial help in many circumstances. Tough love may be a matter of turning someone over to Satan as we discussed in last week's study (see 1 Corinthians 5:5).

**Proverbs 18:24** - A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Friendship is a two way street and it takes effort on your part to sustain it.

**Who is that friend who sticks closer than a brother?**

Our ultimate Friend is God Himself who should be the closest relationship we have. God is a faithful friend even when we are not friendly. Jesus said...

John 15:14-16

14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

15 "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

16 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

How may we have a friend in Jesus?

We may have a friend in Jesus by obeying Him.

**What is the most important act of obedience?**

Respond to His free offer of an eternal relationship with Him...

- Admit to being a sinner
- Believe that His death paid your penalty for sin
- Confess Jesus as your Savior and Lord

**Proverbs 22:11** - He who loves purity of heart and has grace on his lips, the king will be his friend.

Honesty and truth are more valuable than we can imagine and is a prerequisite for friendships with the powerful. If you have a friend with power, you have power. Such friendships are a blessing from God as a reward for your faithfulness and done to serve God's purpose.

**Proverbs 27:9** - Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.

We all need counsel, what better way to get counsel than from a friend. We should seek the counsel of friends and make ourselves available as counsel to our friends.

**Proverbs 27:10** - 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.

- Work to maintain friendships and seek friends nearby rather than run to the security of family. I am reminded of Jesus asking the question, "*who is My mother and My b?*" He said that those who do the will of God are the family of Jesus (Matthew 12:46-50).
- Seeking to be surrounded by Christian friends is more important than family... Blood is thicker than water particularly when that blood is the blood of Christ.

**Proverbs 27:14** - He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it will be counted a curse to him.

Don't take advantage of friends, treat them with the respect that you would anyone else.

**Proverbs 27:17** - As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

For friendships to work, face-time is required. Take time to be a friend, it will build you up along with the other person.

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