

Got Wisdom? – Week 8... Friendship

This month we are reading through the book of Ecclesiastes. We encourage you to read it twice as it only has 12 chapters. It is a book that is negative at times and looks at the futility of life. It helps us to have perspective and to avoid getting stressed out by everything that the world chases after. It also has some real gems of truth to help us keep focussed and realistic. Reading and applying the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes will keep you out of so much trouble, and will help you build a solid life.

Ecclesiastes 4:7-16 NIV

⁷ Again I saw something meaningless under the sun:

⁸ There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. “For whom am I toiling,” he asked, “and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?” This too is meaningless— a miserable business!

⁹ ***Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:*** ¹⁰ If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. ¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? ¹² Though one may be overpowered, ***two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.***

Advancement Is Meaningless

¹³ Better a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer knows how to heed a warning.

¹⁴ The youth may have come from prison to the kingship, or he may have been born in poverty within his kingdom. ¹⁵ I saw that all who lived and walked under the sun followed the youth, the king’s successor.

¹⁶ There was no end to all the people who were before them. But those who came later were not pleased with the successor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

1. Two are Better than One:

Perhaps relationships offer real meaning in work. The Teacher extols the value of friendships at work. “**Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their *toil*” (Eccl. 4:9).**

<https://vimeo.com/66351541>

David Bowden and Miles Corbett launched their business knowing they needed each other. They own Transition Associates based in the United Kingdom which delivers e-learning programs for some of the world’s leading corporations. How many people find their closest friendships in the workplace? Even if we didn’t need the pay, even if the work didn’t interest us, ***we might find deep meaning in our work relationships.*** That’s one reason that many people find retirement disappointing. We miss our workplace friends after we leave, and we find it difficult to form deep, new friendships without the common goals that brought us together with colleagues at work.

Building good relationships at work ***requires openness and a desire to learn from others.*** “Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king, who will no longer take advice” (Eccl. 4:13). Arrogance and power are often barriers to developing the relationships on which effective work depends (Eccl. 4:14–16), a truth explored in the Harvard Business School article, *How Strength Becomes a Weakness*. We become friends at work partly because it takes teamwork to do the work well. This is one reason many people are better at forming friendships at work than in social settings in which there is no shared goal.

The Teacher’s exploration of friendship is more upbeat than his earlier explorations. Yet even so, work friendships are necessarily temporary. Job assignments change, teams are formed and dissolve, colleagues quit, retire and get fired, and new workers join whom we may not like. The teacher likens it to a new, young king whose subjects receive him gladly at first, but whose popularity drops as a new generation of youth

comes to regard him as just another old king. In the end, neither career advancement nor fame offers satisfaction. “Surely this also is vanity and a chasing after wind” (**Eccl. 4:16**).

2. Pursuing Friendship:

Proverbs 12:26 NIV

²⁶ The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Proverbs 17:9 NIV

⁹ Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

Proverbs 18:24 NIV

²⁴ One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

- Be willing to give more than you receive. Friendship is about loving others.
- Be careful of loneliness in your life. It can drive you to choosing poor friends/spouse.
- Loyalty is at the heart... Mel Mullen – “Loyalty or lose them!”
 - Watching out for your friend – protecting them is loyalty in action...
 - Someone says, “Did you hear about so and so?... you step in and say “that doesn’t sound like them!”

3. Don’t Do Dat...

Proverbs 18:1 NIV

18 An unfriendly person pursues selfish ends and against all sound judgment starts quarrels.

Proverbs 14:20 NIV

²⁰ The poor are shunned even by their neighbors, but the rich have many friends.

Proverbs 16:28 NIV

²⁸ A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.

Proverbs 22 NIV

Saying 3

²⁴ Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered,

²⁵ or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.

- Developing your own character will produce the environment for great friends.
- Bill Hybels on Leadership (it also applies to friendship) **Character** (are they loyal, honest & trustworthy?) – **Chemistry** (Do we mesh well together and get along) – **Competence** (Are they good/talented at something or successful?) and in that order.

Amy Grant, Michael W Smith sing Friends at 34th Dove Awards 2003

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIOOQIk2LBQ>

- Although from a human perspective things in life are “meaningless” and a “chasing after the wind”, the eternal perspective on friends is that Christian friendship lasts forever.
- You and I pouring effort into being a good friend can make an eternal difference to someone as the light of Jesus Christ shines through us.