

# The Importance of Friendship

by David Hocking

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*David Hocking emphasizes the vital role of friendship in providing support, enhancing productivity, and fostering a sense of community in our lives.*

**Duration:** 49:39

**Scripture:** Proverbs 18:1, Ecclesiastes 4:8-9, Romans 12:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 10:25

**Topics:** "Christian Friendship", "Biblical Community"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about his son getting stuck in an irrigation ditch and needing help to get out. From this experience, he emphasizes the importance of having a friend who can support and pick us up when we fall. The speaker relates this to the need for friendship and support in all aspects of life, not just physical falls. He also highlights the strength that comes from having a friend, as two can withstand challenges better than one. The sermon references Ecclesiastes 4, which emphasizes the value of companionship and the strength that comes from unity.

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## Transcript

Take your Bibles and turn to Ecclesiastes chapter 4. Ecclesiastes chapter 4. There are two paragraphs that end chapter 4 that really are continuing the thought earlier of that chapter about the tragedy of not having a friend. The tragedy of having your whole life looked at of being alone. Look back at verse 8 just before we read verse 9. There is one alone without companion he has neither son nor brother yet there's no end to all his labors nor is his eye satisfied with riches but he never asks for whom do I toil and deprive myself of good this also is vanity and a grave misfortune.

It is a an emptiness a certain meaninglessness to life when we look about us and realize there's no friends. The older you get the more it becomes a prominent feature to you. You begin to understand that in your hour of need who is going to be there.

How tragic is the person who builds his whole life around himself and one day wakes up to find no one there to minister to him when he has a need. It's important that we understand that Jesus is that friend but I believe if you really understand his relationship to you you're also going to understand your relationship to other people. Let's begin at verse 9 as we have some application here now concerning the importance of friendship.

Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor for if they fall one will lift up his companion but woe to him who is alone when he falls for he has no one to help him up. Again if two lie down together they they will keep warm but how can one be warm alone though one may be overpowered by another two can withstand him and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Better is a poor and youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more for he comes out of prison to be king and although he was born poor in his kingdom I saw all the living who walk unto the sun they were with the second youth who stands in his place there were no there was no end of all the people over whom he was made king yet those who come afterward will not rejoice in him surely this also is vanity and grasping for the win.

Now there's really two thoughts in those paragraph two thoughts that we can immediately identify with one is that friendship is much better than selfish pursuits. Two are better than one friendship is much better than selfish pursuits and then in the second paragraph the simple point is that friendship is better than mere popularity and when you grow up especially as a young person you begin to think that just to be popular and quote have friends that that somehow is it but you soon learn in life as you get older that real friendship is something more than mere popularity which he illustrates by those who often face popularity those in leadership political leadership.

Now let's come back to verses 9 to 12 and take a look at that paragraph what he's saying is that friendship is better than selfish pursuits or going it alone of building your life around yourself of saying hey it's me man I've got a look out for number one and there are several areas that he brings to our attention there really three of them one deals with success look at verse 9 two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor you put two people together and start working and you're going to be more productive that's even true obviously in Christian spiritual ministries two are better than one for many reasons but one sure reason is that they have a greater reward for their efforts I think of how true that is in relationship to a story of a friend of mine what he

experienced God's gifted him in evangelism he just loves to win people to Christ but he's had a certain problem along the way in evangelism and that is that he doesn't really disciple the people that he wins to Christ and as a result his ministry is kind of confused as he looks at it over the years one day we were talking about this I said you know what you really need is somebody who disciples you love to win him to Christ but if you could just ever get a team together of a guy who could work with you and take your converts well the Lord led him to share that with a friend and they the two of them put together a team that now has about five guys in it this guy's very effective in talking to people about Christ and he learned that the results of his ministry were far greater when he had

help in the discipleship process and now the productivity is much greater than it ever was when he was walking alone DL Moody always said I would rather have ten men doing the work than having one man doing the work of ten I think it's important to understand our need of friendship simply from the standpoint of success they have a good reward for their labor and a lot of us want to go it alone you know we do we're kind of self-confident we're centered in our own interests and we don't want anybody to come in and mess it up and if you're a perfectionist inevitably you will not want somebody to help you you will want to do it yourself but God's principle stands two are always better than one because they will have a good reward for their labor so even in terms of success it's a good

principle but I think something that means a lot to us personally is the matter of support in in verses 10 and 11 he deals with that issue as to why friendship is so important well it's important in terms of support

especially in a time of need I look at those two verses again it says for if they fall one will lift up his companion but woe to him who is alone when he falls for he has no one to help him up again on the same point if to lie down together they will keep warm but how can one be warm alone he gives two thoughts related to support there one deals with enabling a person who falls to start over again if there's someone to pick you up great but woe to the one who is alone and I think we need to understand that we need friends when that time comes in our life that we fall there's

someone there to pick us up and we can start all over again I want you to turn please in your Bibles to Proverbs back to Proverbs chapter 25 Solomon gave frequent advice about this even in the book of Proverbs the need of friendship in terms of support to enable one who falls for whatever reason to start over again now there's more to it than simply tripping physically and falling down and having somebody pick you up but that in itself is very important and I have a classic illustration of that you know it's a wonderful how God gives you illustrations of your messages during the week we have an irrigation ditch in back of our house and we have a basketball a backboard right in front of that irrigation ditch we have some trees behind it but sometimes our shots are not that accurate they

not only miss the basket they missed the entire backboard and the ball goes over into the irrigation ditch now my youngest son is alone there's no one there he's shooting baskets he knows there are people in the house but he decides that it's okay to go out into the irrigation ditch and get it himself there's just one problem he didn't figure out how to get back up so he spent kind of a frightening little experience down there trying to get back up he finally comes in I mean there are scratches and bruises all over he is really gone through it just to get out of that irrigation ditch and so in discussing what he learned he learned that he needed a friend there should have been somebody he should have told where he was going what he was doing and he could have been helped out of there what

a classic illustration what a simple fact look if one falls no one's going to pick him up unless there's a friend there that's something a lot of us don't want to think about you say I don't want to think that that's going to happen to me but it may happen to you it isn't just physical problems people the Bible is filled with this concepts concept in terms of spiritual problems what do you do when you fall so many people bomb out on their Christian experience you don't see them anymore simply because they never learned the concept of friends they try to walk it alone then when some pressure or temptation comes and they fall there's no one there and they're isolated they're trying to do it alone and God says woe to the man who tries to do it alone you can't do it alone two are better than

one in terms of support enabling a person who falls to get up and start over again that's friendship by the way your friends aren't really friends if they said they were friends but when you fall they're not there I don't know how many people experience that problem but I know it's frequent somebody says they're a friend to you but when you fall especially if it happens to be morally then it's all over man you can kiss their friendship goodbye they're not there to help when you need it and that's a very important thing for all of us to learn in being a friend it's more important to be one actually than it is to have one in Proverbs 25 look at verse Proverbs 25 verse not 25 chapter 27 thought there was some wrong chapter 27 look at verse 9 chapter 27 verse 9 says ointment and perfume

delight the heart everybody likes a sweet smell and the sweetness of a man's friend does so I look at this next phrase by hearty counsel you know there's there's a certain kind of counsel when you try to lift up a fallen friend that really doesn't minister to the heart it's not counsel of the heart it's not the kind of advice that you need to encourage you and to build you up God says the sweetness of a man's friend is by the

counsel of the heart the hearty counsel look back at verse 5 and 6 it says open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed faithful are the wounds of a friend but the kisses of the enemy are deceitful look down at verse 17 as iron sharpens iron so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend I wonder how often we see that principle sometimes friends cause

friction with each other they cause friction but that friction also is causing that friend to become more effective it kind of rounds off the rough edges it's like the oyster that becomes a pearl through much irritation that's the way often our friends are now we shouldn't be dedicate dedicated to irritating our friend by coming up to them and saying guess what I am God's sandpaper to you hey later I'll take some smoother stuff but if sometimes when you are ministering to your friends there is the time of friction there's a time of iron sharpening iron as a man friend does his countenance and I look at this and I say I wonder how many of us understand our responsibility to help each other in time of need when somebody falls I'd like you to turn to the New Testament to Galatians chapter 6

this has been on my mind lately because of dealing with several people who've experienced this problem and to know the loneliness and ache and heartache of people who may be a fallen and there's no one there to help once you have seen that you'll never forget it friendship means that you are there no matter what and friendship is one who when he sees his friend fall is always anxious to pick him up and to help him start over again by the way in that text in Ecclesiastes where it says if they fall sounds like both of them are following follow falling but in that Hebrew text the they the plural can be translated if either of them falls and there's a point to be said there that I think is very important in ministering it's going to lead us into Galatians here sometimes I find that a friend

who's trying to help a friend who has fallen is not aware that the whole situation could be reversed soon if your attitude when you try to help somebody was fallen and giving them support is not really centered in a proper concept of your need of the Lord's help and your your own need of grace and forgiveness you will give advice you will try to help but it won't really minister to the heart because there's a certain arrogance in you a certain Ferris Ferris a call attitude that that won't happen to me but I am here to help and God has some very strong words about that when the Hebrew text says if either of them falls it's assuming that both of them at some time will so there's certain humility must characterize us even when we help a friend we help them because we know that at some point

in the future something could happen to us also that there go I but for the grace of God I wonder if that really characterizes us an example is Galatians six one speaking about lifting up somebody who has fallen it says brethren if a man is overtaken in any trespass notice the broad aspect of this in any trespass a man's fallen he's overtaken you who are spiritual you say you walk with the Lord that your spirit filled it says restore that's like putting bones back into place that's equipping a person restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness considering yourself lest you also be tempted bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ which obviously is a law of love if we really love each other than the point at which that love is really seen is in the area of burden if a

person cannot share his burden with another person the chances is he's not real confident of the love of that friend for him when you fall you need somebody who comes to you with gentleness with meekness not a desire to get his pound of flesh or to really let you have it that is not what the Bible is teaching there has to be a resistance to to that kind of attitude of laying more on you of of making it a heavy burden of showing how guilty you are no according to the Bible if the brother has fallen then we are to restore them with a proper spirit of gentleness and meekness flavored by a careful calculation in my brain that I can

also fall into the exact same problem that he has it's when we believe it can't happen to us that kind of spirit will not minister to the brother who has fallen

and to lift up his spirits I could turn over to Hebrews 5 just to follow this a step further Hebrews chapter 5 when God chose high priests to serve him he had a very interesting qualification Hebrews chapter 5 verse 1 and for a very definite reason in Hebrews 5 1 it says for every high priest taken from among men he's human to start with is appointed for men in pertaining to God that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins he can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray since he himself is also beset by weakness what causes a person to have compassion what causes a person to lift up a brother who has fallen what causes a person to care about brothers and sisters in Christ are going through hard times it's interesting that God says he can have compassion since he

himself is beset by weakness Paul experienced that from God he experienced physical terrible suffering affliction about which he spoke several times and which became a very serious thorn in the flesh and he asked God to take it away from three times he begged God literally to take it away God did not take it away we do not know all that that thorn in the flesh means we are told it was a message messenger of Satan to buffet him it does seem that it was some sort of physical problem we don't know but God never took it away from him instead God said to him when you are weak then you are strong he said my grace is sufficient for you and my strength is made perfect in your weakness as I evaluated this and thinking of that whole principle of Solomon the two are better in what than one and if

either of them falls one can lift up his companion but woe to him who's alone when he falls I began to understand that the the problem often centers in the one who has not fallen not in the one who has fallen the one who has not fallen if he is spiritual if he has right attitudes he is the one that will go to the brother who has fallen and try to build him up but you know what I see happening what I see happening in the Christian world is the opposite the fallen one usually has to beg somebody to give him a little bit of help instead we ought to see spirit filled believers who the moment learning of anybody in a deep difficulty or trial we ought to be Johnny on the spot if we're true friends wanting to lift that person up I say that that that a lot of needs could be met in the body of

Christ if God's people would have that kind of heart but you gotta go with the sensitivity a tenderness a gentleness a compassion understanding your own weakness and the possibility of your you being tempted you don't go with a critical spirit you don't go with a pride in your heart that you would never do that you go with a sensitivity with a compassion that's rooted in the fact that hey we're not for God's grace that would be me let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need Jesus of course is that friend you need more than anyone else on this earth the tragedy is a lot of us we don't forgive ourselves and we don't deal with our own problems to the point that we don't come to the Savior even we don't even come to him and ask for

his help Hebrews 4:16 says come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need I was talking with a person who had experienced a deep problem in their own life just about two weeks ago and we were talking about why we're so reluctant to come to God and pray at a time when we needed so much and it was interesting what he said in his mind God was going what was kind of with the bat in the hand and was going to really give it to him and he was holding back literally coming to the Lord simply because he thought that well you know what I've done is wrong and I deserve the judgment of God and God you might as well hit me you know why should I talk to you I know I deserve judgment and people when I look at the Bible yes God is a God of judgment but

when he invites us to come it's a throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need there is no one who can pick up the fallen as Jesus there is no one who can relieve the burden of our hearts like the Lord and why is it that we we don't do the most obvious thing of all and that's to come to the Lord is it because we don't really know who he is we don't know that he knows us backwards and forwards there's nothing you've done said or thought that he doesn't know and yet he loves you anyway he's a friend of sinners you know in the New Testament there's a classic example of the wrong attitude and being a friend our Lord Jesus was accused of being a friend of publicans and sinners of the street because he associated with them the people who said that were

Pharisees religious people who had strong standards but they did not have a heart for people unlike themselves I find that in order to really be a friend I've got to somehow stop thinking that that other person has to be exactly what I want them to be that they have to somehow measure up to the standard of what I say a friend should be that is not being a friend that's a great desire to have one and have one on your standards and your expectations but you can't do that we have to be a friend to people even though they don't measure up to our standards of what we might like in a friend when God's compassion gets a hold of our hearts when God really emphasizes to us the whole issue of mercy and grace in the ministry of the believer in helping other believers I believe we set no such

standards if one member of the body is suffering that all the members suffer with it if one member rejoices that we all rejoice with the attitudes of burying one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ it seems to me in some regards it's much more important to be a friend to people that you don't readily identify with it's important to be a friend and a companion to somebody who may be very different from you simply because we all need to understand the principle of burying one another's burdens kids grow up learning about clicks little groups and pockets of people who stay together because they like each other they enjoy doing the same things together I suppose there's nothing really wrong with the fact that we enjoy doing things with certain people and like their company

but ultimately it becomes a problem if that becomes exclusive if we never share with anyone else we never bear the burdens of people who are unlike us I wonder are we friends thank the Lord that Jesus Christ is a friend who cares about all no matter who they are back to Ecclesiastes again when he talks about friendship being better than selfish pursuit is not only in terms of success and but it's also in terms of support support that enables one to start over again to pick him up lift him up and set him on his way but there's a second matter in verse 11 he said again if two lie down together they will keep warm but how can one be warm alone and of course the answer is to turn the thermostat up right well it's not talking about that obviously in ancient times caravans of people who would

be going through Israel or other Middle Eastern countries at night because there were no places to stay for these caravans of people Bedouins still do the same thing today they would often in the fields where they might have been working pile up the grain around in a large circle and inside on that soft grain with that outside grain stack as a barrier they would all lay down there at night and frequently they'd all lay down together so they could keep warm because the nights at certain times a year of course are very cold in the Middle East and when you see this picture of people lying together to keep warm obviously God isn't just talking about that physical scene that was so common in ancient times and still exists among the Bedouins today he's talking about much more there are

spiritual principles here that are far deeper when we talk about support I believe we're also talking about the warmth of encouragement that one gives when he gives to his friend to face the pressures of his

environment in the case of that old scene the environment is the problem the cold air so we lie close together so we can keep warm so in facing the cold and that's also true psychologically and spiritually when we encourage each other we're facing together the pressures of an environment that may be causing a lot of cold the elements of life around us may be causing a lot of problems to our hearts friends often relieve that friends often encourage that I'd like you to take your Bibles and turn to 1st Thessalonians chapter 5 1st Thessalonians chapter 5 I believe it's critical when we

talk about friendship to understand exactly what friends do to each other they don't simply attend events together they don't simply laugh together they don't simply spend time together though those things are all important but what Christian friends do for each other in warming the heart it's very important to understand and maybe it'll explain why a lot of us see our friends as kind of superficial kind of just surface plastic they don't really do anything for us maybe we're not doing anything for anybody else either 1st Thessalonians 5:11 says and this concerns friends who have lost loved ones can you think of any hour of need any greater than that a recent study I saw of the most serious crisis that happened to human beings out of the first ten of them six of them related to the death

of someone number one of which was the death of a marital partner to whom you've been married for many years and I look at things like this and here's a whole book that was written really basically to teach the second coming of Christ as a blessing in a hope and encouragement to people who have lost loved ones 90,000 people are going to die today and leave loved ones that they're everywhere but you have a tendency to forget few weeks few months go by after the funeral and you forget that that person is still experiencing the pain and the agony of that experience when I look at this I see a whole book written to tell people hey comfort those who have lost loved ones and how to how to how do they do it with the good news of Jesus Christ is coming back and the dead are going to be

resurrected praise the Lord I look at the end of chapter 4 verse 18 and it says therefore comfort encourage one another with these words look at verse 11 therefore comfort each other and edify or build up one another just as you also are doing now the word comfort or encourage literally means one called alongside of to help true friendship is one who is alongside of what a beautiful word to describe Solomon's principle if two lie down together they can be warm in facing the elements in the cold weather one called alongside of bringing the warmth of encouragement building up comforting that individual that is essential to the concept of friendship true spiritual friendship comforting one another with the words of scripture and what God says and encouraging our hearts turn over to Hebrews

please chapter 10 Hebrews chapter 10 amazing how often God speaks of this matter of encouraging a building up of comforting our friend Hebrews chapter 10 verse 24 and 25 this is a part of the final exhortations of the book of Hebrews that deal with the person and work of Jesus Christ it starts at verse 19 and continues through the end of chapter 13 practical exhortations you can see them there very clearly verse 22 let us draw near verse 23 let us hold fast now let's look at verse 24 and let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works how do you do that by two ways one not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together now let's stop right there the average interpretation of that is to attend church right actually attending in a meeting where you sit and observe a

speaker and you never have any interrelationships with people would not really full fulfill the dimensions of this passage the Bible is teaching us to spend time with one another don't forsake don't try to isolate yourself don't forsake the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some but look at the second half of that but exhorting at the same word comfort or encourage encourage exhort comfort one

another and so much the more as you see the day approaching now if I understand the person and work of Jesus Christ in the book of Hebrews what practical application should that have in my life if I really understand what it says that I will spend time with other Christians encouraging and comforting them and all the more when I see the day of the Lord's return coming close we

need it we need it and we need one another and I think sometimes when I look at the book of Hebrews I feel that the major problem is a lack of relationship to Christ the whole book of Hebrews talks about our relationship to Christ and then proceeds to tell us about our relationships with each other and could it be that the reason why we don't have the meaningful friendships that that truly exists is because the relationship with Christ is somehow weakened it's not what it should be we haven't seen his heart the friend of all friends and thus we can't minister to each other as friends we have too many conditions too many expectations too many secular viewpoints of what that friendship should be rather than looking at the Lord himself and understanding what his heart would be to our friends

let's go back to Ecclesiastes four again in terms of success two are better than one in terms of support two are better than one not only to enable someone to start over again but also to encourage one who faces the pressures of his environment but there's a third matter and that's a matter of strength strength look please at verse 12 though one may be overpowered by another two can withstand him and a threefold cord is not quickly broken what you talking about let's take first of all that first phrase one may be overpowered by another but two can withstand it in what sense are we talking about a physical fight possibly where we need strength we need strength to avoid possible defeat but isn't that defeat often in the realm of the verbal and the emotional and the criticism and the attack

the friend often is the strength we need ministering to us what God really teaches in his words strengthening us with his principles at a time when it looks like you're going to be overpowered or overwhelmed the other day I called a pastor friend of mine who many of you know and as he answered the phone there was defeat in his voice have you ever talked to somebody just know they're down and he is just absolutely wiped out and he was telling me about all the things that happen and all the things that were said to him and he said I just feel overwhelmed the other day I called a pastor friend of mine who many of you know and as he answered the phone there was defeat in his voice have you ever talked to somebody just know they're down and he is just absolutely wiped out and he was telling me

about all the things that happen and all the things that were said to him and he said I just feel overwhelmed and I said has anybody told you today that that that they love you as anybody said he says no not even my wife I left the house he goes on and on I mean I couldn't believe it he's blowing up on the phone over his wife not telling him that he loved him in the morning I said hey look I love you but more important God loves you here I'm a pastor I'm telling a guy if you knew who he was you say hey wow you see I'm telling him on the phone that God loves him and he just breaks down you know many many times it seems to me we don't pay attention to the principles of God's word we get ourselves in a lot of trouble friends are there for a reason God wants the body to function together to

encourage to build up each other and often we forget it but who knows what you do today to somebody's heart that might encourage them to go on another day I think if we really knew what we all felt we would be astonished at why we isolate ourselves from each other but God knows praises wonderful name our Lord knows and you can cast your care upon him and he sustained you but God also teaches in his word that his people his body he was the head of the church are to minister one to another we sometimes have to stop being dignified straight isolated we have to open up we have to share we have to say something and

it's important I remember a fellow I was talking to about the need of friends several years ago and he he was very disturbed about this he said look pastor the reason I come to your

church is because there's a lot of people there and I can hide he said I don't like it telling us from the pulpit that we ought to minister that means I got to talk to somebody and I like being alone it wasn't more than a year later that that man had a very serious problem physically and I'm I'm telling you did he ever learn his need a friendship he thought it was great being alone man run your own thing I like being alone I don't like people they bother me but boy when he had a need the heart just cried out for friendship but he never spent any time building them so they weren't there when he needed them I think it's time we really understand these principles these principles from God's word are eternal they are not just relegated to one cultural setting they're eternal two are better

than one period that is the truth of God's Word we need friends and the friends give us strength to avoid possible defeat but look at the second phrase of verse 12 it says a threefold cord is not quickly broken everybody knows that if you have three strands in a cord the tendency of it breaking of course is much less than if there were just two now what is the point here if the first one is to avoid possible defeat whether it comes physically or verbally or whatever I think the point here is to accept potential difficulties in your life it's very very possible that the whole issue of the threefold cord is that of stress too much weight on it make sure there are three strands so that it won't bust and I get to thinking about life life is that way it seems like you can hardly go a week and

not read somewhere whether in a Christian or secular magazine about stress everybody seems to be under stress I mean I look at that I say man what's happening to us a threefold cord is not quickly broken now some people have interpreted this as meaning three friends some commentators say it means the man and his wife they're the ones that lie down together and keep warm and then the threefold cord is having a child and that's not easily broken now I don't think that's the point at all I think we're still talking about the principle of verse nine the two are better than one we're talking about friendship and a threefold cord is not easily broken is dealing with the stress on that rope and many many times that's what the friend does he ministers to us in a way that we could not have in

terms of bearing it alone we could have not endured Michael Eaton in his great commentary on Ecclesiastes makes a great statement at the end of this verse he says in some realms progress may be measured by increasing independence but in this realm spiritual stature or maturity is measured by growing interdependence I wonder if we understand that if we are growing in the Lord if our heart is really understanding not only our Lord's heart but his teaching to us as to what we're to do to other people do we understand the interdependence of the body of Christ that we desperately need one another that is taught as you know over and over again in the New Testament to be better than selfish receipt pursuits obviously in terms of success and support and strength in your life but let's look at

the last paragraph it's also true that friendship is better than mere popularity and don't mix the two sometimes a person is popular and there are a lot of people around them but that doesn't mean that they have real friends look at verse 13 again better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king will be admonished no more he comes out of prison or the house of captives to be king although he was born poor in his kingdom I saw all the living who walk under the sun they were with the youth the second one who stands in his place there was no end of all the people over whom he was made king yet those who come afterward will not rejoice in him surely this also is vanity and grasping for the win now why is friendship better than mere popularity I think first of all you recognize

that in the common experiences of political leaders Solomon was a political leader he knew this problem and he said better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who won't be admonished anymore the Bible speaks about friendship admonishing us open rebuke better than love that is concealed Proverbs 27 but Solomon he's not paying attention to it sometimes age causes us no longer to see our need of the friend we get to the point that we're so old and so wise and so experienced no one can tell us anything anymore one writer says it happens in middle age I don't know why it just happens somehow we get to the point oh I have arrived I now know all I need to know and so we can't ever be admonished so often people when they get old they wind up with very few friends and if they

really haven't understood what God says about ministry in the body of Christ they are lonely they don't know what to do and at a time when they really need it Solomon knew what that was all about an old and foolish king he wrote interesting verses about this speaking about what happens to old people who do not see their need of friends interesting in Psalm 119 David said in verse 100 I understand more than the ancient the elderly because I keep your precepts it's possible for a young person to embarrass an old person because they keep the word of the Lord if you don't grow old in the Lord it's going to be a sad day in your upper years in Job Job said that sometimes God takes away the discernment of the elders because they don't walk with God anymore there are dangers in getting old and

Solomon saw it an old and foolish king who can't be admonished anymore no one can encourage him or counsel him he he walks a lonely road and he doesn't want any help but he doesn't want any advice for whatever reason don't ever misunderstand popularity which Solomon had for many of the years of his life for true friendship most writers say that what Solomon is telling us here is out of his own heart that when he got old and wrote Ecclesiastes he was writing alone a man who was lonely and it would look at all the popularity of the past and it was nothing there there was no one to comfort the soul at a time when he really needed it thus he writes two are better than one it's not only demonstrated in an attitude of an old and foolish king it's also demonstrated in the acceptance of people

just like all of us know in political elections it's so easy to forget the guy that was in power and to want to change and to have somebody else in power and look at what Solomon says he says this poor and wise youth came out of prison and he became king he was born poor but look what happened he said then I examined all the people they were with him but there was no end of all the people over whom he was made king look at all of his popularity yet verse 16 says those who come afterward will not rejoice in him passing popularity temporary transitory it doesn't last friendship is so much better so much better Charles Bridges wrote that the love of change is a dominant principle of selfishness insensible to present blessings and craving for some imaginary good the love of change wanting

somebody else Solomon's teaching there's danger in numbers I'd like you to turn back to Proverbs 18 Proverbs 18 and look at verse 24 it's very important to understand that friendship is something more than mere popularity the crowds shouted blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord Hosanna to Jesus on Sunday but later that week they were shouting crucify him crucifying the crowd is fickle the crowd changes quickly the people down at work if you don't develop real friendship they're not friends like you think the people at school who hang around with you because you're popular if it's not based on spiritual principles of friendship it's not what you need and those aren't real friends in a crisis you'll find out this past week I was dealing with a young man who has a very serious

problem in his life very serious and his friends encourage him in the problem that he needs to get victory over and his one concern was what about my friends the truth is that real friends don't continue to waste a

life away real friends don't continue to keep putting it down and defeating you and discouraging you real friends are those who want to help you not hinder you they want to build you up not tear you down but as he looked at it those were all the friends he had he didn't have any friends who truly cared about him and what he was going through but he thought that the friends who were leading him astray were the friends of his life they aren't friends but his popularity as he grew up brought these friends to him but they were not real friends what a principle this is we read so

many times in God's Word about this but one that I really like is this Proverbs 18:24 now depending on your translation if you have a new American standard or new international you ought to compare with the King James is very interesting problem here King James as a man who has friends must make himself friendly but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother but if you got the new American standard it speaks about coming to ruin if you have many friends now wait a minute is it a man who has friends makes himself friendly or is it saying having too many friends you come to ruin but in contrast to that there's a friend who sticks closer than a brother is this an admonition a proverb from God against having too many friends or is it telling us how to have lots of

friends first of all as I examined that Hebrew text over and over again there are really only three words in the first phrase one is the word friends which appears in both texts one is the word many and one is the word ruin or destruction it seems to me on this account that the new American standard and the new international other texts have tried to really grasp the meaning of those Hebrew words many friends ruin but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother you see sometimes we try to scatter our shots with too many people and their superficial friendships it's like the problems of popularity oh I got lots of friends really the truth of the matter the older we get the more we center in on those few friends who are deep and intimate with us who minister to us in times of need

whom God has brought our hearts together oh I think we ought to share with as many people as we possibly can but the Bible's teaching there is a danger in a multitude of friends that drain the heart and drain off the energy and often do not have time to develop anything more meaningful than superficial greetings I think we need to watch it a man with many friends comes to ruin but the last statement is that the encouraging statement there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother obviously that refers to our Lord Jesus Christ where he is that but also there are people who are friends who stick closer than a brother that principle stands and it's true and the more you know about this spiritually the more you understand that the ministry to the heart of a dear spirit-filled friend can

mean more than every relative you ever had in our life in your life the Bible says it better is a friend who is near than a relative who is far away and that is a true statement we learn that sometimes we come to Christ but our whole relative situation is not in the Lord there are true friends who will minister to you but the friend that is the friend of all friends is our Lord Jesus Christ himself interesting back in Ecclesiastes chapter 4 Solomon's concluding remark about this about friendship being more than mere popularity about to being better than one look at his final conclusion we've seen it frequently in the book the end of verse 16 surely this also is vanity emptiness and grasping for the win and I watch people trying to have friends using popularity I watch people try to walk

it alone these things Solomon says our emptiness meaningless grasping for the wind there's nothing there I doubt seriously that we can be friends to one another and love each other the way God wants us to without learning about the friendship of our Lord he is the friend that sticks closer than a brother let's close the father you know our need of friendship and you have so many principles in your word about our

ministry one to another to bear one another's burdens to comfort one another encourage to speak the truth to each other to stop lying to one another you tell us to comfort and console when there are problems like the death of a loved one and to use God's Word in doing that you tell us to encourage somebody who's fallen is overtaken in a fall restore them bearing their burden got

there so many instructions in your word about this and I ask you Lord to do a real work in our hearts even as we relate to our friends that we would be the friend that you want us to be in time of need and God I know that much of that pours out of our relationship with your son Jesus Christ a friend of all friends we remember that Jesus told his disciples that I call you no more servants I call you my friends and you are my friends if you do what I've commanded you God I pray that we'll understand that our obedience to Christ responding to what he wants us to do is developing a personal friendship with him of saying Lord I love you so much I'm going to do what you say and help us to understand father you said if we love you that way that we will love the children of God God help us to

accept it to receive him as our Lord and Savior we pray for Jesus

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