

PROVERBS SERIES NINETEEN
FRIENDS ARE SHELTERING TREES
Dr. Roger Barrier
Proverbs 12:26;13:20;17:17;18:24;27:9-10

In a time of great depression and despair Samuel Coleridge was befriended by William Wordsworth. If you love poetry both names will ring bells. One of Coleridge's best works was a tribute to his friend. The best line is: "Friendship is a sheltering tree."

What a beautiful picture! Think of friends like great trees, leafy limbs that come around us and spread over us and bring shade from the sun, and from the blast of adversity, and from winter's wind of loneliness—a great sheltering tree. That is a friend.

Massive amounts of Proverbs are devoted to the subject of friends and neighbors. The Hebrew word (*ra'a*) can mean "friend" or "neighbor". We'll include both meanings; for what's true of friends ought to be true of neighbors. Friends and neighbors are an overwhelming part of the joy and success and fulfillment of our lives.

FRIENDS ARE ESSENTIAL.

Friends are not optional; there is no substitute for friends who alleviate loneliness, care, listen, feel, comfort, and reprove as needed.

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

Proverb 18:24: There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Genesis 2:18: The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

FRIENDS IMPACT OUR LIVES—SO CHOOSE THEM CAREFULLY.

Proverb 13:20: He who walks with the wise grows wise,
but a companion of fools suffers harm.

Proverb 12:26: A righteous man is cautious in friendship,
but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Proverb 27:9: Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart,
and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.

Proverb 6:16-19: There are [seven] things the LORD hates,
haughty eyes,
a lying tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
a heart that devises wicked schemes,
feet that are quick to rush into evil,
a false witness who pours out lies
and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.

FRIENDS COME IN FOUR CLASSIFICATIONS – NOT ONE.

Proverb 18:24: A man of many companions may come to ruin,
But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

1. Acquaintances (John 2:23-25: "Many people believed because of the miraculous signs He was doing, but He would not entrust Himself to them, for He knew all men . . . He knew what was in the heart of man.")
2. Casual friends (Matthew 11:19: "Jesus Christ is the friend of publicans and sinners.")
3. Close friends (Luke 10: 1-4, 23: Christ sent out seventy-two close friends to reap the harvest before Him. Then He unveiled more information to even closer friends.)
(John 15:15: "I no longer call you servants . . . Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from my father I have made known to you.")
4. Intimate friends (Matthew 17:1-2: "Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, and . . . He was transfigured before them.")

FRIENDS SOMETIMES BETRAY AND/OR LET US DOWN.

Proverb 27:10: Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father,

Proverb 3:28: Do not say to your neighbor,
"Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow" —
when you now have it with you.

Proverb 11:9: With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor,
but through knowledge the righteous escape.

Proverb 26:18-19: Like a madman shooting
firebrands or deadly arrows
is a man who deceives his neighbor
and says, "I was only joking!"

Proverb 18:19: An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city,
and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.

Proverb 24:28-29: Do not testify against your neighbor without cause . . .
Do not say, "I'll do to him as he has done to me;
I'll pay that man back for what he did."

Proverb 17:9: He who covers over an offense promotes love.

FRIENDS MUST BE CAREFULLY CULTIVATED.

Proverbs 18:24: A man who has friends must show himself friendly.

Friends are often just for a season.

WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS!

John 15:13: "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."