

Flourishing in Relationships

July 5, 2026

Main Passage: Proverbs 17:17; 27:6,17

Theological Theme

Sincere friends help us learn and grow and show up better for those around us.

Introduction

- ① What distinguishes between surface level friendships and true and lasting friendships?
- ② Why do you think we hesitate to have genuine, hard conversations? Why are these important for true relationships?

1. The Wounds of a Friend (Proverbs 27:6)

The “wounds” in view here are constructive criticism, delivered by a friend with a sincere heart. Have you ever been in a situation where you received “wounds” from a friend? It can be painful and hard to hear, but when delivered by a friend with a sincere heart, we can trust something we might need to hear and that our friend’s heart is in the right place.

- ① What counts as “the wounds of a friend” and why are they trustworthy?
- ② What do you think the writer means by “kisses of an enemy”? Why would they be “excessive”?
- ③ What are some ways to receive loving truth well? What are some ways we might not receive these words well?

2. A Brother is Born (Proverbs 17:17)

In the first section, we considered being a godly and sincere friend. This verse in Proverbs 17 reiterates the same idea. A true, sincere friend “loves at all times” (v. 17). It is easy for us to love someone at their best. When it is fun or comfortable to be around someone, it’s easy to be a friend. But what happens when the road gets hard? What happens when the diagnosis comes? When divorce is on the horizon? When they are walking through a season of such thick grief that they can’t show up for you like they once did? What happens when their spouse is dying and they are a complete wreck? Or when they are dying and need someone to take them to their appointments? What about when they lash out because you are a safe space when it feels like life is falling apart around them? In these moments, a fake friend withdraws. But a true friend “loves at all times.”

- ❓ What does this verse tell us about how we should conduct our friendships?
- ❓ What does it tell us about the importance of friendships during hard times?
- ❓ When have you had a friend love you in one of your worst moments? How did that impact you?

3. Iron Sharpens Iron (Proverbs 27:17)

Have you ever seen the process of a knife being sharpened before? Today, we do this by grinding the edge of the blade at a particular angle to create a sharp edge again. This type of “grinding” in friendship isn’t always comfortable. Hard conversations aren’t easy. Walking with a friend down a challenging road can be exhausting. But the more we encourage, the more we stand by and walk alongside, and the more we wade into the hard moments with love, the more we sharpen each other. We help each other show up better. We learn and grow as a person. And we all flourish for it.

- ❓ What do you think it means to “sharpen” another person?
- ❓ Why is this needed in our lives and relationships?
- ❓ How have you been sharpened by other believers in the church?

Conclusion

- ❓ Think about the friendships in your life. Are they positioned for the type of “truth in love” conversations we talked about today? How could we better promote this in Christian friendships?
- ❓ What have you learned from others about how to show up for friends when they really need it?
- ❓ How have friends in your life “sharpened” you? How could you do the same for others?