

is to be your best friend, best companion, best counsellor and the best one to turn to during a calamity.

b. This is a general statement.

- 1) If you do have a very close intimate relationship with a sibling or relative, this statement may not apply to you.
- 2) However, often it is true that relatives do not make the best counsellors or comforters.

4. Better is a near neighbour than a distant brother.

a. The words “near” and “far off” govern our interpretation of this statement.

- 1) These terms may be geographical. If so, *near* is close to where you live and *far off* is a great distance from where you live.
- 2) However, these terms may be emotional. If so, *near* is one with whom you freely share your heart, and *far off* is one with whom you seldom confide and share your heart.
- 3) While either of these interpretations may fit, the second seems to fit the context better.

b. Nearness is better

- 1) During a calamity, a near neighbour or friend is far better than a relative who is far off.
- 2) During a calamity, an intimate friend is far better than a relative with whom you share little closeness.
- 3) Truly, these verses urge us to develop close friendships with worthy people who will share sweet soul counsel with us in times of calamity.

Conclusion: God wants you to develop wise friendships with those who will give you godly soul counsel, but such friendships take work (2.a.4. above). This is true even of your friendship with the Lord.

As a friend, you must seek to live godly so that you can give godly soul counsel to your friends during their calamities.

If you have a friendship that does not edify your character and strengthen your walk with God, it is an unhealthy friendship. If that friendship is with your spouse, you must remain faithful while seeking to edify. If it is with someone other than your spouse, the friendship may need to end.

Song: Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord - 337

Better Choice – Close Friend

11 October 2020 PM – Proverbs 27:9-10 – BC20 – Scott Childs

Introduction: Two travelers were on the road together, when a bear suddenly appeared on the scene. Before he observed them, one [man] made for a tree, and climbed up into the branches and hid there. The other could not escape, so he threw himself on the ground and pretended to be dead. The bear came up and sniffed all around him, but he kept perfectly still and held his breath; for they say that a bear will not touch a dead body. The bear took him for a corpse, and went away. When the coast was clear, the traveler in the tree came down, and asked the other what it was the bear had whispered to him when he put his mouth to his ear. The other replied, “He told me to never again travel with a friend who deserts you at the first sign of danger.” (*The Book of Virtues* by Wm. J. Bennett)

Transition: As we examine Proverbs 27:9-10, I want to point out four words of wisdom that, if heeded, will help us in troubled times.

1. A friend’s counsel will rejoice your heart (v.9).

a. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart.

- 1) In the hot dry climate of Palestine, these two substances were very important.
- 2) Ointment refers to oil that was used to moisten dried skin after bathing and to refresh a friend who visits your home.
 - a) Naomi said to Ruth, (Ruth 3:3) "*Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.*"
 - b) When Jesus and a meal with Simon, a repentant sinful woman anointed his feet with oil. To Simon Jesus said, (Luke 7:46) "*My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.*"
- 3) Because deodorant was unknown in Bible days, body odour was often a problem. Thus, perfume was very helpful. This word is often translated incense, which gave

off a sweet smell when burned. Whether here it refers to a fragrant liquid rubbed on the skin or a sweet incense burning in the room, both rejoice the heart.

b. A friend's sweet hearty counsel rejoices the heart.

- 1) Let us take a closer look at the words used here.
 - a) *Hearty counsel* literally refers to soul counsel. It is advice that comes from the inner soul of one who truly cares for the other. The idea seems to indicate that this counsel comes from a personal yearning to help. It refers to a strong desire to give good advice. This is counsel that comes from a caring empathetic friend.
 - b) *A man's friend* is his companion (19 x translated "neighbour"). It is one with whom he share an intimate bond. These friends share their hearts. *If married*, your closest friend ought to be your spouse. We need to develop close friendships with godly people. Perhaps friendship with the Lord is implied here as well. (Proverbs 18:24) "*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*"
 - c) Such hearty counsel from a true friend is *sweet*.
- 2) Just as ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so does a friend's sweet soul counsel in time of trouble.

2. Do not forsake your friends (v.10).

a. What does it mean to forsake a friend?

- 1) The Hebrew word means a) to depart from, leave behind, leave, let alone. b) to leave, abandon, forsake, neglect.
- 2) A true friend will remain loyal. A true friend does not overlook a sin in his friend; rather he lovingly confronts the issue. Good friends work to improve each other. (Proverbs 27:17) "*Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*"
- 3) Just as ointment becomes dry and perfume loses its smell, we can forget the sweet soul counsel of a friend.
- 4) Thus, we must cultivate a friendship (*especially with our spouse*) and keep it healthy by fellowship, sharing hearts,

transparency, discussing plans, truthfulness, building trust, showing kindness, unconditional forgiveness, being unselfish, sacrifice, and by *agape* love.

b. Do not forsake a friend.

- 1) Do not forsake your *own friend*.
 - a) *If married*, this applies first to your spouse. If your friendship is not what it once was or what it ought to be, then cultivate it as we just discussed.
 - b) Your friend is not perfect. He or she will make mistakes. Learn to forgive and to build up your friend.
 - c) If you have friends who are not godly in their conduct and biblical in their doctrine, those friendships may need to decline or even end. (Proverbs 13:20) "*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*" (Proverbs 22:24) "*Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go.*"
 - d) If we choose friends carefully, with prayer and much wisdom, we will never need to forsake them.
- 2) Do not forsake your *father's friend*. This is a person who has befriended your father and now befriends you. If it was a good friendship, cultivate it and do not forsake it.

3. Relatives are not always the best counsellors.

a. It is not always best to turn to a relative during a calamity.

- 1) The term "*brother*" can be literal or it may refer to a relative in general.
- 2) Sometimes siblings are very close and remain close all through life. However, often the relationship with a relative is friendly but not very close.
- 3) A *calamity* is a distress or burden. The root word refers to a heap of rubble left after a fire or calamity.
- 4) A brother or relative is not necessarily the best person to call on during a calamity in your life.
- 5) I do not believe that the brother/relative in this verse refers to your *spouse*. Though closely related, *your spouse*