

WISDOM FOR EVERYDAY LIFE | Session 3: Forging Great Friendships

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling, and doing.

MAIN IDEA: The most significant thing about your life may not be an achievement you attain but a friendship you forge.

Head Change: To know that you become who you befriend.

Heart Change: To celebrate that spending time with wise people will make you wiser too.

Life Change: To forge great friendships by being the friend you long for others to be for you.

OPEN

Who was the first friend you made at school? Are you still friends?

In this session, Stephen walks us through the wisdom of Proverbs as it relates to our friendships, which are never neutral but influence the direction and the quality of our lives. Thus, how we navigate friendship is crucial to how we live for God in this world.

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Stephen answers these questions.

What happens to us if we hang around with unwise people?

How does friendship affect us, emotionally and physically?

According to Stephen, why do friendship circles these days tend to be 'a mile wide and an inch deep'?

Why is feedback from our friends vital for our growth?

What makes Jesus the greatest friend?

Show SESSION #3: *Forging Great Friendships* (10 minutes)

REVIEW

Stephen opens the session by asking, 'What if the most significant thing you did with your life wasn't an achievement you attained, but a friendship you forged?' **Does this seem farfetched to you? Why, or why not?**

Finding and keeping great friends is an indispensable life skill too often taken for granted. In a world which feels evermore transitory, dislocated, and in need of deeper connection, we need to build friendships which will help us to become more like Jesus. **When it comes to your ability to make friends, where would you place yourself on the sliding scale of rubbish to excellent? Do you have friends who encourage you to be more like Jesus? Do you think the world is more or less connected than it was, say, fifty years ago, and how has that affected the ways we form and maintain friendships?**

Stephen points out that friends multiply joys and divide sorrows. They are shock absorbers for our difficult days, and they enhance our best days. **Share about a time when a friend helped you regain perspective after failure or cheered you on when you succeeded. Do you agree that friendships give meaning to life? Why, or why not?**

Research reveals that men in particular struggle to form close friendships and many live with perpetual loneliness. The number of people who report having no one in whom to confide has tripled over the past two decades. Stephen says, 'In our polarised, complex, and challenging cultural moment, friendship has never been more needed, and yet it seems it's harder for people to find than ever.' **Is this true, in your experience? Do you agree with Stephen that your friends can shape your destiny?**

Proverbs 13:20 says, 'Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.' That means, friendship isn't neutral, but influential. The quality of your friendships significantly impacts your resilience, coping mechanisms, and ability to absorb the pressures of life. Physiologically, friendship impacts your life on a cellular level such that it should be viewed on a par with smoking or drinking and can even increase your protection against stress and disease. **How have your friends influenced you? How have you influenced them? Have you ever wanted to trade in some of your friends for new ones? If so, why, and did you? Are the elderly people in your life surrounded by friends? If not, what's your next step?**

Stephen says, 'The company you keep crafts your character... Show me your friends and I'll show you your future.' **Who are the five people with whom you spend the most time? Are you becoming more or less like them? What do you admire most about them? Which of their lifestyle choices would you do well to avoid? Who are your wisest friends? How much time are you spending with them? Have you ever realised, as Stephen did, that you were hanging around with the wrong people entirely? What did you do about it? What practical examples could you use to explain to a seven-year-old or a seventeen-year-old that if they want to *have* great friends they need to *be* a great friend?**

Proverbs 18:24 reads, 'A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.' The Dunbar principle suggests our potential for connection is limited at 150 people. Jesus had twelve close friends, and only three very close friends. **Do you agree that social media and global movement make the early stages of friendship easy, but deeper connections more challenging? Why, or why not? Would you say your friendships are 1) wide and deep, 2) wide and shallow, 3) narrow and shallow, or 4) narrow and deep?**

To forge meaningful friendships that sustain and strengthen us, we need to choose our friends wisely and commit to side-by-side time spent, as well as the sharing of passions, interests, or experiences. **What do you have in common with your friends?**

People generally want to be around you when things are going well. Success gives us many companions. When hard times hit, you find out who your true friends are. **If you feel comfortable to talk about it, share about a time when you realised who your real friends were (or weren't).**

Proverbs 27:6 says, 'Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.' This refers to the power of friendship to call out the gold in people, as well as to offer honest, helpful feedback. **Do you think your friends feel free to point out your blind spots? Have they done so? If so, how did you respond? Were you grateful or offended? Have you ever been willing to risk a friendship to tell someone the truth? How did things turn out? Are there some people in your life who probably just tell you what they think you want to hear?**

Proverbs 17:9 says, 'Whoever would foster love covers over an offence, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.' Even in fantastic friendships, misunderstandings and miscommunications happen, and we need God's grace and wisdom not to pick up an offence but to forgive. **How have your friendships been affected by offence and unforgiveness? Do you think it's wise, in friendships, to pick your battles and only major on the majors? What might that look like in one of your friendships, this week? Share about a time when a friend forgave you.**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Read Proverbs 22:24–25 and Proverbs 27:9. **Point out the differences between these two kinds of friends.**

Job 6:14 reads, 'He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty.' **Are you withholding kindness from a friend? If so, why? What is God asking you to do?**

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9–12. **List some of the advantages of strong friendships.**

Paul writes to the Thessalonians, 'Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.' (1 Thessalonians 5:11) **Whose encouragement are you most grateful for in this season of your life? Have you thanked them?**

LAST WORD

Jesus says, 'Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.' (John 15:13) May you move through these days acutely aware of the wondrous truth that Jesus calls you His friend. He treated you as a friend when you were His enemy, even giving up His life for you so that you could be empowered to find and forge great friendships. You weren't just saved *from* something; you were saved *for* something: friendship with God and others.

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: In 1 Corinthians 15:33, Paul writes, "Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." Spend some meditating on this scripture. Are you being deceived? If so, by whom (a friend, or yourself)? Which people in your life would fall into the category of 'bad company'? Are your good morals being in any way ruined, or even subtly compromised? What's your next step?

Write: Write a letter of thanks to the friend who has stood by you through the most difficult moments of your life.

Pray: If you're not part of a regular prayer meeting, start one. Find a time that suits a bunch of your friends and get going. Meet in person or online. Commit to keeping up the momentum of the meetings, to strengthen and encourage your friends the way you would love them to strengthen and encourage you.