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What Is A Friend?

JOB 2:11-13

Introduction

1. Our friends have an enormous influence on our lives, for either good or bad.
2. Our peers may be used, by either God or Satan, to build us up or tear us down.
3. As in Job's case, our companions may be precision tools used by the devil with ingenious skill to pry open our hearts for despair and despondency.
4. This truth is taught throughout the Scripture.

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5. Solomon wrote, "A man of too many friends may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24, NASB95)
6. One must choose his or her friends wisely because in the day of adversity, they will either lift us up or pull us down.
7. A true friend will stand with us in times of trouble and will be used by the Lord for our good.
8. Proverbs 17:17 reminds us, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."
9. When we find ourselves in the furnace of affliction, a genuine friend will provide much relief and strength.
10. At the same time, "Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Cor. 15:33).
11. May God surround us with true friends who, unlike Job's "friends", will genuinely love us and help us in our times of adversity.

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I. The Arrival of Job's Friends

A. WHO WERE THEY?

1. At the end of chapter two we are introduced to three men who are Job's friends.
2. These are apparently prominent men who are wealthy enough to leave their homes and be away from their businesses in order to visit Job.
3. They may have been men with whom Job had done business before his loss.
4. From what we read later in this book, they were close to Job's age, perhaps even older than him.
5. We don't know how they learned of Job's adversity, just that they did.
6. They are identified by their names and the place from which they hailed.
 - a. Eliphaz ("God is fine gold" or "God conquers")
 - 1) From the city of Teman in northern Edom, about half-way between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba (Ezekiel 25:13; Genesis 36:34).
 - 3) Teman was known for its wisdom (**Jeremiah 49:7**)

"Concerning Edom. Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Is there no longer any wisdom in Teman? Has good counsel been lost to the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed?" (Jeremiah 49:7, NASB95)
 - 4) Esau had a son named Eliphaz
 - 5) In turn, Eliphaz had a son named Teman
 - b. Bildad ("son of Hadad")
 - 1) He is said to be a Shuhite which could mean that he is a descendant of Shuah, Abraham's youngest son by Keturah (Genesis 25:2)
 - 2) Or it could mean that he is a resident of the town of Suhu along the middle Euphrates.
 - c. Zophar ("young bird")
 - 1) Zophar is a Naamathite.
 - 2) Some have suggested that Naamah, a Canaanite town inherited by

Judah (*Joshua 15:41*) was his hometown.

- d. A fourth person, Elihu, was also present though he is not mentioned until later (*Job 32*)

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B. THEIR PURPOSE IN COMING

“... they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him” (*Job 2:11b*).

1. These friends apparently knew each other as well as they knew Job.
2. Their purpose in going to Job was “to sympathize with [Job] and comfort him” (v. 10b).

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C. WHAT THEY FOUND

“When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.” (*Job 2:12–13*, NASB95)

1. Job had become so disfigured by the disease that when they saw him from a distance, they “did not recognize him” (11a).
2. According to *Job 7:3*, it had been a number of months since tragedy struck.
3. These men remembered Job as he had been well dressed, well kept, in good health.
4. Now, he is perhaps a shell of his former self.
5. The three men expressed their grief and despair over Job’s circumstances in three ways:
 - a. They wept aloud (emotional shock and sorrow).
 - b. They tore their robes (in brokenheartedness).

- c. They threw dust on their heads (in deep grief; cf. 1 Samuel 4:12; 2 Samuel 1:2; Nehemiah 9:1).
- 6. “They sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights” (13a).
 - a. Job’s suffering was so great that no one said a word to him.
 - b. Whether their silence was an act of sympathy and comfort, mourning over his condition, or a reaction of horror, they allowed him to grieve and express himself first.
 - ❑ Their silence was the wisest thing they did.

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II. Characteristics of Friends

A. FRIENDS COME WITHOUT BEING ASKED

1. There is no indication that anyone sent a message to Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar asking them to come and comfort Job.
2. They came without being asked because someone for whom they cared was hurting.
3. When Lazarus was sick, Martha and Mary, his sisters sent Jesus word, “He whom you love is sick.”
4. They didn’t ask Him to come. They simply made Jesus aware of their brother’s condition.
5. They knew that He would come.
6. I have seen it more times than I can count — a person is in the Emergency Room at a local hospital and friends suddenly start filling the waiting room out of concern.
7. I have never heard of an invitation to a funeral.
8. People go because they want to show their respect for the individual who has passed.

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B. FRIENDS RESPOND WITH SYMPATHY AND COMFORT

1. The word "sympathy" literally means to "feel with" someone, to enter into their pain.
2. This is what Job's friends did when they saw him:
 - a. "They raised their voices and wept" (v. 12a).
 - b. "Each of them tore his robe" and threw dust over his head into the sky (v. 12b).
 - c. "Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights" (v. 13a).
3. The apostle Paul instructed the Christians in Rome to "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15b, NASB95).
4. Later, we find Job saying, "Have I not wept for the one whose life is hard? Was not my soul grieved for the needy?" (Job 30:25, NASB95)
5. Not only do friends seek to enter into the pain of their friends, they also try to bring comfort.
6. We comfort our friends when we attempt to ease their pain.
7. Many of you had done this for others in this congregation and in our community.
 - a. You run errands for them.
 - b. You cook meals and take them to their home.
 - c. You render assistance in whatever way you can to make their burden a bit lighter.
8. In Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica, he sought to comfort those Christians whose loved ones had died in Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
 - a. He informed them that when our Lord returns, "the dead in Christ will rise first" (v. 16).
 - b. "Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the

Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17, NASB95)

- c. His last words to them on this topic were, “comfort one another with these words” (v. 18).

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C. FRIENDS OPENLY EXPRESS THE DEPTH OF THEIR FEELINGS

1. This is what Job’s friends did when they saw him:
 - a. “They raised their voices and wept” (v. 12a).
 - b. “Each of them tore his robe” and threw dust over his head into the sky (v. 12b).
2. This is what Jesus did in Bethany on the way to Lazarus’ tomb:
 - a. “Jesus wept” (John 11:35).
 - b. “So the Jews were saying, ‘See how He loved him!’” (John 11:36).
3. This is what David did when he learned of the deaths of Saul and his son, Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:11-12).

“Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so also did all the men who were with him. They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the people of the Lord and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.” (2 Samuel 1:11–12, NASB95)

4. I imagine there are many in this room tonight who have fought back tears while standing by a friend’s hospital bed.
5. Casual acquaintances don’t usually do this, but genuine friends do.

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D. FRIENDS OVERLOOK THE UNPLEASANT

1. When Job’s friends found him, he was a shell of his former self.
2. The sight of him “sitting among the ashes” (v. 8), scraping himself with a broken piece of pottery was not something they expected to see.

3. Not doubt, the smell would have been offensive to others, but this was their friend.
4. They chose to overlook the unpleasant and to sit “down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights” (v. 13).
5. That is what friends do — they ignore the unpleasant sights and smells in order to be close.

Slide 10**E. FRIENDS KNOW JUST TO BE PRESENT**

“Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.” (Job 2:13, NASB95)

1. Notice that while Job’s three friends sat with him those seven days and nights, no one spoke a word because “they saw that his pain was very great.”
2. I want to share with you something which Warren Wiersbe said concerning this verse:

“The best way to help people who are hurting is just to be with them saying little or nothing, and letting them know you care. Don’t try to explain everything; explanations never heal a broken heart.”¹

3. Over the years I have found that it is not always what you say that comforts and strengthens a friend, but the fact that you are present.

Conclusion

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1. As we conclude our lesson tonight, I want to take you back to two verses with which we began, both from the pen of Solomon:

“... there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24b, NASB95)

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Patient*. “Be” Commentary Series. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996.

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” (Proverbs 17:17, NASB95)

2. All of us need friends who love us in the good and bad of our lives.
3. The question we must each consider is this, “Am I a true friend to others in my life? Am I a friend who sticks closer to them than their own physical brother?”

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4. Jesus once said, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you.” (John 15:13–14, NASB95)
5. Jesus laid down His life for us, are we His friends?

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6. We sometimes sing the hymn with these words in it:

To all who need a Savior,
My Friend I'll recommend;
Because He brought salvation,
Is why I am His friend.

Chorus

I'll be a friend to Jesus,
My life for Him I'll spend;
I'll be a friend to Jesus,
Until my years shall end.

“I'll Be A Friend To Jesus”

Johnson Oatman

7. Will you become a friend to Jesus tonight?