

Week 8 Day 6 | *Promises in the Bible: Iron Sharpens Iron*

My wife and I belong to a wonderful church with a senior pastor who is passionate about protecting and empowering families. When delivering a message regarding our children, he's fond of saying, "Show me their friends and I'll show you their future." Powerful and quite true. The companions our children choose will have no small impact on what kind of people they become.

The same can be said of us. According to personal development guru Jim Rohn, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." Look at your five closest friends. There's a good chance you all share similarities, including wealth, faith, politics, and sports alliances. Even your fitness.

Before there was Jim Rohn, there was King Solomon. As we learned from Week 2, he was one wise dude. One of Solomon's most quoted verses is Proverbs 27:17:

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." (NIV)

Friends can push you, challenge you, build into you, and shape who you are. Yet there are two facets about this verse that often go unexamined.

First, when a blade of iron is sharpened, it comes at the expense of iron shavings. Small fragments of the blade are scraped, ground, and lost. There's a cost for that iron and it may not feel so great. The same goes with your friendships. To be sharpened, you have to be open to a little pain at times. You have to be humble enough to acknowledge that parts of you must go. Making you into something stronger and more effective hurts a little.

The opposite of that verse also holds true: "As iron can dull iron, so one person can dull another." If the blade doing the "sharpening" is held at the wrong angle, it won't help. In fact, if the sharpening blade is rough and ridden with burs or laden with impurities, it will do more harm than good. The sharpening blade will shape the blade all right, just not in a way that will produce quality. The same will be true of you if you're not careful in your selection of friends.

That's why the right kind of accountability is so important when working on your fitness and making lifestyle changes. You need to be surrounded by people you respect and people who respect you. You need people in your life who are willing to say the hard things, but say them in love. You need people who want the best for you, people you wouldn't mind being like.

What kind of people are like that? Let's ask our buddy, Solomon. A friend loves at all times (Proverbs 17:17). A friend is reliably close (Proverbs 18:24). A friend's words have good intentions behind them (Proverbs 27:6). A friend's wisdom is sincere (Proverbs 27:9).

If that doesn't describe your friends, you must first ask, does it describe you? You attract what you

exude. If you do have a friend like that, there's one more factor that will make all the difference, one thing that will increase the value of the friendship beyond measure.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." I would submit that the only third strand worth strengthening yourself by is our gracious God. When you have a friend who also shares a mutual dependence on God, the Holy Spirit is empowering you both. Remember, there's no limit to what God can do through His people.

If you're still struggling with your fitness, perhaps it's time to reach out to a true friend and ask for accountability. If you already have a friend supporting you, could you describe them the way Solomon does? Is God at the center of the friendship?

God puts people in our lives for many reasons. Allowing God to use them to make us more like Himself is one such reason. We would be wise to seek friendships that increase not just our happiness, but our holiness as well.

Prayer

Father, thank You that no matter what, You can be at the center of my support. Will You forgive me when I try to do it alone? Please direct me to people who love You more than anything else. Amen.

Meditation

Sharpen me that I might bring You glory.

Daily Spiritual Exercise

Proverbs is loaded with great verses regarding friendship. Read the following from Proverbs: 12:26, 17:17, 18:24, 27:6, 27:9, and 27:17.

After deciding which verse is your favorite, meditate on it for three to five minutes. Think about the implications the verse has for your life.

Thank God for the friendships He has given you.

Pray that you could be a friend to someone in need.

Pray also for wisdom regarding someone who could pour into you in a meaningful way, who could challenge you in your faith, who could help you grow in holiness.

Being sharpened may not be easy, but it sure beats being broken.