

Prov. 18:1, 19, 24: Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment . . .

¹⁹ A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, & quarreling is like the bars of a castle . . . ²⁴ A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Intro: 1) God created us to be in community (common/unity) with one another: First “not good” in the Bible?

- **Gen. 2:18:** It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him. [Made in God’s image]

2) Community is hard: We are all sinners! Conflict happens, but we forgive & love & stay one & pursue peace!

3) Within the church community, you should have your best, closest, & most loyal friends! Jesus’ blood: thickest!

Jesus saved you to be in a church family, pursue peace, love deeply, & be His friend forever!

1. God Saved You To Be Deeply Involved In His Church Family

Prov. 18:1: Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.

a. Selfish people (seeks own desire) don’t flourish in community: Selfish people are always focused on me, myself, & I – my wants, my desires, my feelings, my life, my everything! They often isolate themselves – they prefer to be alone because it’s all about them anyway. (Unfriendliness) This is foolish – he even fights wisdom!

John Kitchen: Here, the individual takes the initiative & separates himself from the community at large. Within the context of Proverbs, the group he separates himself from would, no doubt, be the faithful, wise community of God’s people. In our context, we might refer it to the family or church. Solomon is describing the renegade, the lone ranger, the anti-social individualist, who will not listen to others. He finds his identity in his non-conformity & obstinately sets himself apart, independently, from the body of those to whom he should belong & who could offer wise counsel . . . Such a person “seeks his own desire.” In simple terms, he is selfish. All his thoughts lead to himself. He measures everything by his thoughts, his wishes, his comfort, his perspective – assuming that they are supreme . . . The one who feels he does not need others “quarrels against” such wisdom. The word is of uncertain derivation, but may come from a root meaning “to show one’s teeth” or perhaps “to break forth in hostilities.” . . . it always appears to have to do with quarreling. Fierce independence snarls & growls at all attempts from others to counsel or guide. In the end, the doggedly self-willed person may indeed get his “desire,” but lose “sound wisdom.” Such a man has forfeited his treasure.

b. If you are a Christian, God saved you from this kind of selfishness: Matt. 16:24: Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself & take up his cross & follow me.” **GOSPEL!**

c. If you are a Christian, God saved you to be deeply involved in His Church family: Membership Class:

I want you to think of four people & their attitudes toward church:

- John: follows Jesus but not into “organized religion.” He feels he worships best by going for a hike on Sunday.
- Leann: church hopper. Here for a while, there for a while. Somewhere pretty much every Sunday.
- Natasha: found a great singles group. Always there on Sunday night, & shows up at church in the morning when the sermon seems like it’ll be interesting.
- Jose: loves the preaching at this church, but tends to slip out right afterward. Never really thought about joining. What’s the point?

Q: What do all these people have in common? They all see themselves as Christians; they all see the church as pretty unrelated to their faith. & they all share a fundamental misunderstanding of what it means to be a Christian. God saved us to be in a loving, committed church community/family where we: 1) Love one another; 2) Encourage one another; 3) Guard one another; & 4) Obey your church leaders:

1) Love One Another:

• **1 Pet. 2:17:** love the brotherhood of believers; **Gal. 6:10:** So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, & especially those who are of the household of faith.

• Love that isn’t easy (It’s easy to be a loving person when you are isolated!). **Rom. 15:1:** We who are strong

have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, & not to please ourselves. **Rom. 12:13:** Contribute to the needs of the saints & seek to show hospitality. & two verses later, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another.”

- Love without commitment doesn’t say much about the Gospel—just like in marriage.
- Note that all these passages are written to all Christians—not just an elite few. This isn’t something you only do once you’re “mature.”

2) Encourage One Another:

- **1 Thess. 5:11:** encourage one another & build each other up;
- **Heb. 10:24-25:** let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, & all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
- God’s plan is about more than merely your own individual holiness!
- By your pouring your life into other people in a committed fashion, those who are weaker in the faith will be strengthened, you will grow too, & God will be glorified.

3) Guard One Another:

- **Heb. 12:15:** See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up & causes trouble, & by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy
- **1 Cor. 5:1-5:** It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, & of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife. & you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; & as if, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

4) Obey Your Leaders:

- **Heb. 13:17:** Obey your leaders & submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy & not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Church Membership Sermon (Why every Christian should become a church member):

1. Become A Church Member Because It’s Where God’s People Are Under God’s Rule In God’s Place
2. Become A Church Member Because Christians In The Early Church Joined The Church
3. Become A Church Member Because Christians In The Early Church Kept Lists And God Keeps A List In Heaven
4. Become A Church Member To Display The Gospel Life Inside Of You
5. Become A Church Member Because Jesus Gave The Church The Authority To Recognize You As A Citizen Of Christ’s Kingdom
6. Become A Church Member Because Christians In The Book Of Acts Were Added To The Church
7. Become A Church Member To Love One Another
8. Become A Church Member To Seek The Peace Of And Unity With The Church
9. Become A Church Member To Care For One Another Physically And Spiritually
10. Become A Church Member To Watch Over One Another And Hold One Another Accountable
11. Become A Church Member To Edify And Build Up One Another
12. Become A Church Member To Bear With One Another
13. Become A Church Member To Pray For One Another
14. Become A Church Member To Keep Away From Those Who Would Destroy The Church
15. Become A Church Member To Reject Evaluating People By Worldly Standards
16. Become A Church Member To Labor Together For The Spread Of The Gospel
17. Become A Church Member To Be Godly Examples To One Another
18. Become A Church Member To Submit To Church Leaders
19. Become A Church Member So Church Leaders Will Know Who They Are Accountable For
20. Become A Church Member Because God Forbids You To Say To Other Christians: “I Don’t Need You”

21. Become A Church Member Because Christ's Body Consists Of Individual Members
22. Become A Church Member Because Temples Are Made Up Of Individual Stones
23. Become A Church Member Because Flocks Contain Individual Sheep
24. Become A Church Member Because Families Are Made Up Of Individual Family Members
25. Become A Church Member To Obey Jesus' Command For Corrective Church Discipline
26. Become A Church Member For Assurance Of Salvation
27. Become A Church Member To Help Expose False Gospels And False Churches
28. Become A Church Member Because You're Commanded To Meet Regularly Together
29. Become A Church Member To Love Jesus
30. Become A Church Member To Glorify God

d. Jesus came down from heaven & denied Himself of His greatest joy to save you: Prov. 18:1: Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. [1) Jesus didn't isolate: With His disciples; Often in the temple teaching; Often with crowds teaching; Friend of tax collectors & sinners; In Gethsemane; 2) Not My will but Yours be done; 3) He was isolated on that cross!]

Jesus saved you to be in a church family, pursue peace, love deeply, & be His friend forever!

2. God Saved You To Pursue Peace With His Church Family

Prov. 18:19: A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, & quarreling is like the bars of a castle.

a. When those closest to you sin against you, it cuts deeper: This proverb addresses the deep wounds that sin, conflict, & disagreement can cause with those who are closest to us. You sin the most against those you love the most – those you have closest relationships with. (Navy & Church; Voddie's sermon at his daughter's wedding)

John Kitchen: Scripture abounds with illustrations of the bitter animosity that is born when conflict between close relatives is not soon settled: Cain & Abel, Joseph & his brothers, Benjamin & his brothers, Eliab & David, Absalom & Amnon, & Judah & Israel . . . [Jacob & Esau's reconciliation; Paul & Barnabas' reconciliation] . . . We are reminded of the division possible when people look at themselves & their own desires, rather than those of others (Prov. 18:1). Likewise, we are reminded of the wisdom of nipping strife in the bud: "The beginning of strife is like letting out water, So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out" (Prov. 17:14). If "contentions are like the bars of a castle," how much wiser is the man "who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city" (Prov. 13:32b).

b. In conflict, our goal often becomes "I just want to win!": David Hubbard: The consequences of letting the argument boil over are noted forcefully in 18:19. The image drawn is of a fortified "city" or a "castle" with "bars" to secure the gates. Defensiveness is the best way to sum this up. Arguments alienate brother from brother. Each becomes more convinced of the rightness of his position or more reluctant to back down. The issue is no longer truth but winning. All energy goes into making the city "strong" or keeping the castle's bars in place. No vitality is available to reexamine the issues, take stock of what the battle has cost, or develop a conciliatory strategy.

c. Your only hope: the Friend & Brother you have most deeply offended Who also loves you the most:
- **Prov. 18:19:** A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, & quarreling is like the bars of a castle.

Fireproof Movie: Dad: Caleb, if I were to ask you why you're so frustrated with Catherine what would you say?
Caleb: She's stubborn. She makes everything difficult for me. She's ungrateful. She's constantly griping about something.

Dad: Has she thanked you for anything you've done the last 20 days?

Caleb: No! And you'd think after I washed the car, I've changed the oil, done the dishes, cleaned the house, that she would try to show me a little bit of gratitude. But she doesn't! In fact when I come home she makes me feel like I'm, like I'm an enemy! I'm not even welcome in my own home, Dad. That is what really ticks me off! Dad, for the last three weeks, I have bent over backwards for her. I have tried to demonstrate that I still care about this

relationship. I bought her flowers, which she threw away! I have taken her insults & her sarcasm but last night was it. I made dinner for her, I did everything I could to demonstrate that I care about her, to show value for her, & she spat in my face. She does not deserve this, Dad. I'm not doing it anymore! How am I supposed to show love to somebody over & over & over again who constantly rejects me?

- At this point his father stops walking, looks at the cross standing there, touches it lightly, turns to face his son & then leans against the cross. "That's a good question."

Caleb: Dad that is not what I'm doing.

Dad: Yes it is.

Caleb: No. Dad that is not what this is about.

Dad: Son, you just asked me how someone can show love over & over again when they're constantly rejected. Caleb, the answer is you can't love her because you can't give her what you don't have. I couldn't truly love your mother until I understood what love really was. It's not because I get some reward out of it. I've now made a decision to love your mother whether she deserves it or not. Son, God loves you even though you don't deserve it, even though you've rejected him, spat in his face. God sent Jesus to die on the cross & take the punishment for your sin because he loves you. The cross was offensive to me until I came to it. But when I did, Jesus Christ changed my life. That's when I truly began to love your mom. Son, I can't settle this for you. This is between you & the Lord. But I love you too much not to tell you the truth. Can't you see that you need Him? Can't you see that you need His forgiveness? [Now, we forgive like He has forgiven us! Now, we love our enemies!]

Eph. 2:14-16: For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one & has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, & might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. [Jew & Gentile; Paul & Christians; KKK members & African Americans]

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3. God Saved You To Give And Enjoy The Deepest Love With His Church Family

Prov. 18:24: A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

a. A man of many companions may come to ruin: This proverb is a warning against having many superficial friends who are not really friends at all. You may have many of them! Maybe they are with you because you are the life of the party, because you have lots of money, because you can do something for them! But when times are tough & life gets hard, they are no where to be found.

Bruce Waltke on "many companions": The absolute plural found here is used four other times: of superficial sexual partners (Jer. 3:1) verses true ones (Song. 5:1), of companions attracted to wealth (19:4), & of falsely denouncing neighbors [who betray you]: **Job 17:5:** If anyone denounces their friends for reward, the eyes of their children will fail.

When you have these kinds of companions, you have the great possibility of coming to ruin! They will ruin you! They will use you! They may even turn on you & falsely accuse you to get what they really want! Judas! How many true friends do you have? May God grant them here! May God grant them in His church!

b. But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother: What is a true friend according to God's Word?

- 1) Born again, saved, God-fearing, true believer & follower of the LORD Jesus Christ
- 2) Filled with God's Word & God's wisdom & God's Spirit
- 3) Loyal, faithful, loves you as they love themselves: **1 Sam. 18:1:** As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, & Jonathan loved him as his own soul.
- 4) Tells you the truth: **Prov. 27:6:** Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.
- 5) Prays for you & points you to God & His Word – points you to Jesus Christ.
- 6) Enjoys spending time with you, you can be yourself around them, not judged, they are for you, & want your best

- 7) More than anything else, they want you to be all that God meant for you to be (like Christ) & help you get there!
8) They would die for you.

Are you that kind of godly, loving friend to others?

They would die for you: Jn. 15:12-15: This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

- **Heb. 2:11-12:** he is not ashamed to call them brothers, ¹² saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."

They will never leave you: Matt. 28:20: behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

- **Heb. 13:5-6:** Keep your life free from love of money, & be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶ So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

Hymn: There's not a Friend like the lowly Jesus: No, not one! No, not one!
None else could heal all our souls' diseases: No, not one! No, not one!

Jesus knows all about our struggles; He will guide 'til the day is done!
There's not a Friend like the lowly Jesus: No, not one! No, not one!

No friend like Him is so high and holy, No, not one! No, not one!
And yet no friend is so meek and lowly, No, not one! No, not one!

There's not an hour that He is not near us, No, not one! No, not one!
No night so dark, but His love can cheer us, No, not one! No, not one!

Did ever saint find this Friend forsake him? No, not one! No, not one!
Or sinner find that He would not take him? No, not one! No, not one!

Was e'er a gift like the Savior given? No, not one! No, not one!
Will He refuse us the bliss of heaven? No, not one! No, not one!

Jesus saved you to be in a church family, pursue peace, love deeply, & be His friend forever!

Christ Jesus Came His Church To Save
Community That's One And Brave
Deals With Conflict, Loves, Forgave
For On God's Hands Our Names Engrave
Like Him We Love And Act – He'd Pave
A Way To Give Just Like He Gave
For Jesus Died – Our Sins Forgave
Then Rose Alive Up From That Grave
Now We're His Friends – Not Just His Slave
He's Elder Brother Strong And Brave
Our Friend Like None We Always Crave
Our God Who Loves And Came To Save!