

A good friend is hard to find. Especially as you get older making friends is not as easy as it used to be. When you are in kindergarten you can just go up to someone and ask them to be friends. Some of you may have found your best friends that way. But it does not always work that way. And sometimes the friendships that we do have are not healthy.

Our Proverb this morning is going to teach us some of what it means to be a good friend. Not just friendships but ultimately it is about healthy relationships. Because all of us want to have healthy relationships. No one wants to be involved in a toxic friendship or relationship. And the Bible has some wisdom about what a healthy friendship and relationship looks like. But when we take a closer look at the verse, we may see it does not look like what we may imagine.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Proverbs 27:6.

We are going to study this verse in reverse order.

We will start with the negative and move toward the positive.

Our first point is bad friends always affirm us.

This is a warning.

This is a proverb so it is not exactly literal.

It is not a warning to beware of those who keep trying to kiss you.

But it telling us to be careful of those who seem to love us.

Those who seem to be your biggest fan.

Those people who continually tell you how awesome you are and how great you are doing at everything.

Just because someone makes you feel good does not mean they are looking out for your good.

Just because someone makes you feel good, does not mean they are pushing you to be good.

Sometimes, these people are actually your enemy.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy."

The kisses of our enemies are profuse.
They are overdone and multiply.
I like the way the KJV translates it, **"the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."**
They appear to have your best interest at heart.
They seem to be your friend and to like you.
They always talk like it.

But it is deceitful and untrue.
It is like a young girl hanging out with the popular kids in school.
They all tell her she looks great and they like her.
But then she finds out they hate and mock her behind her back.

I am reading Voyage of the Dawn Treader from the Narnia series with my boys.
We are currently in the middle of a story about these foolish people called Duffers.
They have a leader named chief.
And after he says anything, all of the other Duffers praise his genius.
No matter what it is or how foolish it is.

It is meant to be humorous because it shows how empty their praise is.

Someone who is always affirming you might not be someone you want to trust.
In fact, sometimes you may need to be wary of them.
Because they may be an enemy.

I was warned of this and have experienced it in ministry.
I have seen people who are my biggest fans right away.
The kisses and compliments are multiplied at first.
But time comes and they reveal themselves as an enemy.

I remember I led a Bible study in low income housing apartments.

It was a small bible study in the common room that only had a few people. One woman came at first and was my biggest fan.

She would talk each week about how amazing I was and this was the best thing ever.

Then a couple weeks later another man was hanging around.

He didn't attend but he was listening.

We started talking and it was clear he wasn't a Christian but he was interested in Jesus.

And this woman interrupted and told me this guy was a democrat and I needed to rebuke him.

And I said, "well, I care a lot more that he doesn't know Jesus than who he votes for right now."

And she got so angry at me.

She started to scream at me and called me an apostate.

Plenty of praise in the beginning, but it did not work at first.

There are people who will lead you right into sin.

There are people who will celebrate you as you sin.

There are people who will cheer you on and root for you as you walk away from Christ and head right towards judgment.

And they will be paraded as good friends by the world.

This is some of what we must be wary of.

Sin gives us deceptive support.

There is much in this world that is praised as good.

Changing your gender is praised as good.

Whatever your sexuality is on the spectrum is praised.

Polyamory and the embracing of as many sexual partners as desired is seen as good.

Political idolatry is praised as being a good party member.

Gluttony and over indulgence is praised as self-care.

This is something the world will tell you.

It will tell you to cut people out of your life that are harmful.

Now you should cut out people who are dangerous.
Those who are a threat to your safety or your family.
But harmful does not mean someone who tells you that you're wrong.
It does not mean someone who does not accept you exactly as you are
and what you want to be.
Someone will not celebrate all the choices you make however moral or
immoral they are. They're not a real friend.
This is foolishness and insanity.
Now, of course, there's people that are not a good influence and who you
need to have a relationship with.
But we don't need to be surrounded by yes men.

We don't want to only if people in our lives who tell us how incredible we
are all the time.
It will be a disaster.

Here is the reality.
Whatever your particular sin issue is, and we all have plenty of them.
You will be able to find people.
Not just friends, but in the days of the internet and the kind of connectivity
it promises,
You can find a community and a group of people who will praise you all
you want.
Who will encourage your sin.
Who will praise your sin.
And who will tell you to cut out anyone from your life that is trying to stop
you from doing what it is you want to do.
But hear me.
The kisses of the enemy is deceitful.
The praise of sin is deceptive.
Sin promises much and it cannot deliver.
It is too good to be true.
You will only be left broken.

We need to be careful that we are not these kinds of people.
Now, all of us need to learn how to not be this kind of person.
Some of us don't know how to be honest.
Maybe we never want to rebuke anyone.
We see someone sin we know that we should say something we know it's gonna start a fight.

This is my temptation, my struggle.
I've been sitting at meals with family and someone says something racist.
Start making mental calculations on well don't wanna say something or not?
Say something they're gonna get mad they're gonna fight back.
They're gonna accuse me of being a liberal, and all these other things that are true.
It's just gonna ruin the meal, maybe won't say anything.

There are times when we act like that. That we are not being a good friend.
And we are not behaving like someone who loves them.
Because it refusal to ever call out sin.
If you never give your friends anything but kisses and compliments.
If you never push back or challenge.
You never do that you were not really a good friend.
You might actually be an enemy.

Now this is not just about friendship.
This is actually how sin works in general.
What bad friends do is just the symptom of a deeper issue.

Sin is not a new thing.
It was not just invented.
This is how it has always worked since the garden.

Sin comes up to us with kisses.
It seduces us with promises of good things.
It tempts us with something that sounds good and feels good.
Alcohol and drugs promise to take your pain and suffering away for awhile.
Sexual sin and pornography promises to make us feel good.

It makes promises.
It tells us if we just give in this one time.
If we just go ahead and do it, it will feel so good.
It tells us that no one will know.
It tells us that we deserve it.
It tells us God wants us to do it.
It tells us that this is who we are and we cannot help it.
But it lies.
It betrays.
And it will lead us to our death.

I couldn't help but think of Judas as I read this.
Judas who was a disciple of Christ.
Who was with Him from the beginning.
He saw all of the miracles.
But he betrayed Christ with a kiss.
Even at the pivotal moment, he pretended to know and love Jesus.
But He gave Jesus over to be executed by the Romans.

Sin pretends to love you.
But it lies.
It betrays us with kisses.

Sometimes it uses other people in our lives to lie to us.
Sometimes sin uses people who call themselves our friends.
We need to see that affirmation is not always good.
Sometimes it is dangerous.
Sometimes it is deceptive.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy."

I. Good friends sometimes wound.

These two points are really opposites of each other.

And again it's not as much about literal kisses or literally wounding and hurting someone.

It's showing us that sometimes things feel good, but they are your enemy. Sometimes there are people in your life hurt you do things that don't make you feel good, but it is a good thing they are faithful.

The faithfulness is kind of describing the character of what these friends are.

A faithful friend is one that hurts you, sometimes.

When you need it.

These wounds, most often are times when friends hurt our feelings. Especially these are times when our friends confront us.

Does anyone in this room like being told when you're wrong?

Do you like having your flaws and sinful tendencies revealed?

Do you particularly enjoy when other people point out that you're doing that thing again but they've asked you not to do?

No. None of us like that.

Because it hurts.

It can feel physically harmful.

Even if we know that they are right and what they are saying is true it can feel inside like a wound.

It can feel like they are attacking us, and attacking our character or the core of who we are in our souls.

It might not feel good.

It's certainly does not feel good in the moment.

However, the wounds of a friend are faithful.

They are wounds that we can trust.

A faithful friend may have to tell us that we need to stop joking and being so sarcastic.

Because it might be fun for you, but it is really starting to hurt other people.

A faithful friend may have to tell us that we are complaining a lot more recently than we have in the past.

A faithful friend may have to tell us that we just said something racist or unchristlike.

A faithful friend is willing to say the hard thing.

Even when they know we will not like it.

It means that they are saying something or they are doing something that does hurt us, but it comes from a place of love.

We can trust that what they are saying is good.

We can trust that they are a faithful friend and wouldn't not be saying this unless they had to.

And they do it for our good.

But there is a difference between these kind of wounds, isn't there?

Sometimes people say things to hurt your feelings.

They say things that they bothers you where they offends you or they know is going to get you riled up.

So they wound you, but they do just hurt their own entertainment.

Maybe they have a twisted sense that is what friends do.

I had a friend like this once.

He just like to insult and tear others down.

Especially if they ever got more attention than he did.

And he would always play it off as a joke.

Like this is just how guys talk.

It wounded.

But it was not faithful.

Because it was not for our good or out of love.

A faithful wound does not mean you love the person so you can wound them however you want.

That is how people just justify domestic violence.

To be clear, maybe I need to put a caveat here.

I wish that I didn't have to, but this is not endorsing domestic violence.

This is not being violent towards one another.

It is not saying that you can hit and punch and physically harm because you're doing it out of love.

That is a misunderstanding, and a gross misinterpretation of God's word.

It is when you were only doing what is necessary for good.

A wound can only be faithful when you are doing something Jesus would do.

The wound can only be faithful when it looks towards our healing.

Let me give a simple example that may help.

When we were at the beach in Florida.

There's this beautiful wood pedestrian bridge that you take right down to the water.

I wear shoes every time we go not because it can be hot, but because I don't wanna get any splinters.

I wear the shoes down at the end and there's like six steps from between where I leave my shoes to where I'm safe on the sand in the beach.

The last times we did that and I walked off right there at that spot.

I took off my shoes.

And on those last step I got a splinter.

It was a big one and it really hurt.

I tried to get it out myself, and I could not do it.

Thankfully, Brianna was willing to help me.

But her help didn't feel good.

Getting poked with tweezers and needles feels terrible.

It hurts and it wounded me.

She got the splinter out, but my foot still hurt for a couple days.

Why was her wounding me faithful?

Because I needed to be wounded.

Leaving that big splinter in my foot and ignoring it was going to lead to a lot of health problems.

Taking it out might hurt now and I might wound and sting lead to my restoration and my long-term health.

My children always like don't understand and sometimes medicine hurts. Sometimes we have to take medicine that does not taste really good, but you need it.

They get really bad bug bites that balloon up.

Grant especially got like 7 on his face.

They don't like it when we put stuff on it because it stings and hurts.

I try to tell him it hurts right now, but it's gonna help you feel better.

I feel like I'm hurting you right now.

I'm actually trying to heal you and help you.

Please just trust me and get in the bath.

Please trust me I need to put this medicine on your bites.

That is what the wound a supposed to be.

They remove the point out the splinters and the logs of our feet and our eyes in our lives.

Our sin pointed out to us feels bad.

We get convicted by the Holy Spirit and feel shame,

It can make either run to Jesus and repent,

Or it can make us languish under the condemnation of the enemy.

And makes us want to scream and fight, resist deny the sin to get angry at the person who's trying to help us .

But the wounds of a friend are faithful.

They can point out to us.

They can tell us Hey I know this is gonna hurt and it's not gonna feel good but you're going down to dangerous path.

They wound us when we need it.
They keep us from being fools.
They tell us the truth.

Friends who are willing to pull aside and I noticed you're getting really obsessed with politics.
It seems like this obsession is taking her eyes off of Jesus and putting it into other places.

A willingness to say I know that you shared in the past you are struggles with alcohol and I've noticed it seems like you're drinking again.

To willingness to say hey, the way that you talk about your spouse is not right and it is not healthy.
And if you want to get advice and figure out how we can honor Jesus in your marriage, that's great, but I'm not gonna sit here and listen to you talk that way about him because it isn't right.

When someone comes to you and says that they're hurting.
That they're struggling with their sexuality they're struggling with their gender. They feel like they're born in the wrong body.
And they're reading the Bible they're trying to understand how to reconcile these things.
A faithful friend says, I love you and God loves you. Let's look at what his word says together how painful but it's flourishing now and then into eternity.

The faithful friend has to be willing to have the hard conversations.
A faithful friend has to be willing to wound in the moment to heal.

Ecclesiastes 7:5 tells us, **"It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools."**

We need wise friends who rebuke us.
We don't need the encouragement and praise of fools and enemies.

Are we that kind of friend for others?
Are we faithful?

Do we let others be that kind of friend of us?
Sometimes we just don't.
Because we don't listen when our friends try to rebuke us.
Or we don't even let someone get close enough to us to see our sin.
We don't want someone to be close enough to rebuke us.

Some of us really need to take this to heart.
We really need to become this kind of friend.
Because some of us might never want to wound others.
We might have a difficult time telling anyone they are wrong.
And so we do not ever wound our friends or loved ones.
Even when we should.
Even when they come and ask our opinion about something.

For us we need to have courage.
We need to learn and remember that sometimes love does wound.
It is faithful and good.
As long as we have a Christlike attitude.
And as long as we do it in a way that honors Christ.
We have to be willing to do the right thing.
To confront one another in gentleness when the time comes.

So some of us need to do this more.
But some of us might need to do this less.
Or others will be tempted to go to the extreme.
You might begin to be tempted to tell everyone everywhere all of the
sinful acts they are committing.

And you could justify your behavior by saying you are only trying to give
them the faithful wounds of a friend.

This verse is not license or permission for you to take the Holy Spirit's place.

Nor does it give us the freedom to say whatever we want.

This is some of us.

So for those of us who are tempted this way,

We will need to ask ourselves whether our wounds are faithful.

We need to examine our own hearts to see if we are speaking for their good or if it is just for our own.

There is a sense in which of the gospel is like this.

There are moments when the gospel wounds us.

Because the gospel begins with having to understand our need for salvation.

The gospel by telling us that we are sinners.

It looks at us and points out and says you don't need to go to doctor because you're sick. You were dead.

It is way too late for you to get your own.

Your only hope is Jesus.

The gospel assaults and insults are pride.

It tells us that our best efforts are not good enough.

It tells us that even on our best day we fall short of the glory of God.

The gospel informs us that we need Jesus.

This is part of way of the gospel is so offensive.

Because the gospel wounds us and points out our problems.

The challenges are assumptions. It lets us know. There is not many ways to salvation. There is only one.

It's a painful pill to swallow.

It is not a diagnosis we want to receive.

In there who don't like this part of the gospel.

There are some who struggle with it.

They like Jesus, but they only work part of the gospel that makes them feel great. They don't want the part that wounds them.
And some find this offensive that they never want to talk about sin when you proclaim the gospel and we want you to proclaim love and the good news.

But the bad news too.
The gospel wounds us.
But the gospel wounds us because Christ is a faithful friend.

The gospel is not flattering kisses that will not amount too much or that will betray and disappoint us.
The gospel might hurt, but it can lead to our healing.
If we are willing to accept Christ as our savior.
If we are willing to accept the salvation He brings.
If we are willing repent of our sins and acknowledge of our need.
Then Jesus redeems us.
Then Jesus will make us a new creation.
He takes away our sin and makes us righteous.

Not just the beginning of the Gospel, but following Jesus can hurt too.
We have to take up our cross and follow after Christ.
Like the disciples we have to leave behind our nets and our family and follow Jesus.
Follow Jesus and embracing the gospel means denying ourselves daily, and that is painful.
It hurts to walk away from sin every day.
It hurts sometimes to live in a sinful culture that wants to pull you away from Christ.
Well, it is painful. Well it hurts. And we do not always understand why.
it leads to salvation.
It leads to our deliverance.

The Sting of the gospel, my last for a little while.

There may even be some sting that comes from following Jesus.
But it is nothing compared to the healing, the redemption and the eternal life that waits for us on the other side.

Because Jesus loves us.
Jesus disciplines those He loves.

Hebrews 12 reminds us that Jesus only disciplines His children.
He only wounds us because He is a good Father.
He cares for us.
He does not want to let sin to continue to destroy our lives.
He wants us to be make new.
So He rubukes us.
He sends the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sin.

Jesus is the most faithful friend.
He is faithful to us even when we curse Him.
Even when we betray Him.
Even when we are faithful, He is faithful.

Are you listening to Jesus?
Do you let Him in?
Do you listen to His rebuke, or do you listen to the affirmations of the enemy?

Because Jesus loves you.
He believes in your.
He knows what you can be.
He knows what He can created you in your mother's womb to be.
If you will only listen.
And come in faith.
Come to Jesus and be healed by the wounded Savior.