

Wounds from a Friend

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Have you ever been wounded by a friend?

Wounds from a friend are better than many kisses from an enemy. — Proverbs 27:6

What is this verse talking about? A true friend will speak truth to you even when it hurts. A true friend is more interested in your long-term well being. He is willing to risk your anger and misunderstanding to warn you of danger. He loves with godly love.

In the end, people appreciate frankness more than flattery. — Proverbs 28:23

Unfortunately, I wonder if we really do appreciate the truth. There are many cases where friends have been cut off simply because they loved enough to speak the truth.

What does the Bible say about being a true friend?

A friend loves at all times.... — Proverbs 17:17 (NKJV)

Even when rejected for telling the truth.

And here is how to measure it—the greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends. — John 15:13

Being a true friend means you will do what's best for the other person even if it costs you everything. That means you will warn your friend about danger even if it makes him angry or uncomfortable.

What dangers need warning?

Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. You must warn each other every day, as long as it is called “today,” so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. — Hebrews 3:12-13

Sin is very deceptive and it can harden us against God. When hardened, we have trouble hearing God for correction or blessing. This makes it easy for us to fall into more serious sin. The nature of deception is that you don't know it when you are deceived. So, when you are deceived, you think you are not deceived.

Sin is doing that which is against the nature, character, or Word of God. That is, anything that is “ungodly.”

But I thought we were set free from sin? We have been set free from the condemnation of sin, but not from many of the consequences of sin. It is important that you understand your right relationship with God and how your spirit, soul, and body function. There are lessons on both these topics in the *Building Blocks of Life* series—available at the resource center or for free download at www.life4square.com.

For now it's enough to know that your sin may not cost you your salvation or adoption into God's family, but it can still cost you a high price.

What's the big deal about a little sin?

So since God's grace has set us free from the law, does this mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can

choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval. — Romans 6:15-16

When you sin, you become a slave of sin.

As we read the next verse, ask yourself which of the listed results are evident in your life or the life of your friends.

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. — Galatians 5:19-25

So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus. Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to its lustful desires. Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God. Sin is no longer your master, for you are no longer subject to the law, which enslaves you to sin. Instead, you are free by God's grace. — Romans 6:11-14

Those who sin are opposed to the law of God, for all sin opposes the law of God. — 1 John 3:4

To reject the law is to praise the wicked; to obey the law is to fight them. — Proverbs 28:4

How should we warn others?

"If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If that person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. If the church decides you are right, but the other person won't accept it, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector. — Matthew 18:15-18

Take note of those who refuse to obey what we say in this letter. Stay away from them so they will be ashamed. Don't think of them as enemies, but speak to them as you would to a Christian who needs to be warned. — 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

You take this step after who have already attempted correction and reconciliation. God's desire is always for reconciliation and restoration. Our goal must be to edify and build up the other person.

Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ. — Galatians 6:1-2

Again I say, don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. The Lord's servants must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone. They must be able to teach effectively and be patient with difficult people. They should gently teach those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will believe the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the Devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants. — 2 Timothy 2:23-26

But we're not supposed to judge others—are we?

“Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. For others will treat you as you treat them. Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged. And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log from your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye. — Matthew 7:1-5

We are not called to sit as a judge over people, condemning them. But this passage is not saying that we should ignore another person's issues. It's saying to deal with your own sins so you can be in a position to help others overcome theirs.

It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your job to judge those inside the church who are sinning in these ways. God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, “You must remove the evil person from among you.” — 1 Corinthians 5:12-13

There is a proper place for church discipline for those who defiantly refuse to abandon their sins. However, the goal is always restoration. That's why we warn people.

Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. — 1 Thessalonians 5:14

What about when people warn us?

Have you ever spent some time with friends, then later found you had some embarrassing stain or other problem that no one mentioned? They just let you walk around all day looking stupid. How did that make you feel?

Have you ever ignored something embarrassing because you didn't want to hurt your friend's feelings? You're not acting like a true friend. True friends love enough to risk anger and discomfort for the sake of their friend.

Have I now become your enemy because I am telling you the truth? — Galatians 4:16

We tend to get defensive when someone points out a fault or warns us. Then we get offended and cut them off. That is not smart!

When confronted on an issue, it's important to respond in humility, prayerfully considering the possibility of a problem even if you don't think there is one. Listen carefully. Appreciate the other person's willingness to speak up, even if they don't do it well or if they are wrong. At least they cared enough to speak.

Even your enemies can speak some truth. Sometimes, they are more honest than your friends. I have learned much by looking for the grains of truth in even the most critical and unfair comments from my “enemies.”

Have you noticed that you cannot see your own face without some help? You may have a big old nose hair hanging out, but unless you look into a mirror or someone mentions it, you can't see it. Learn to appreciate the mirrors in your life, whoever/whatever they are. We need each other in the Kingdom of God. It won't work any other way than together.

And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself. For if you just listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you keep looking steadily into God's perfect law—the law that sets you free—and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. — James 1:22-25

Remember that when someone confronts you, it's probably because they care about you. Too often, we assume they hate us.

If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children after all. — Hebrews 12:8

Are you perfect? Then there is something that needs correcting. If God never corrects or disciplines you, then you need to worry. It's time to find out what's going on. A common cause is ignoring God's voice and not dealing with little sins. As a result, we become hardened to God's voice. It's a dangerous place to be! We need to diligently work to get rid of all ungodliness in our lives and rejoice when God corrects us—either personally or through those who love Him.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy he knew would be his afterward. Think about all he endured when sinful people did such terrible things to him, so that you don't become weary and give up. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin. — Hebrews 12:1-4

Jesus' great joy at having a close intimate relationship with you empowered Him to die the death you deserved on the cross. Let that same joy empower you to live a godly life for Him.

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is. — Romans 12:1-2

Jesus is in the business of changing people from the inside out.

Antidote for Sin

- Obedience/Godly Choices
- Transformation (from the inside out)
- Friends/Teamwork (remember the mirrors)

“So if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. — Matthew 5:23-24

God is more interested in your relationships with other people than your sacrifices for Him!

Two Questions Remain

What kind of friends do you want?

Cultivate friendships with those who will tell you the truth in love.

What kind of friend will you strive to be?

Wounds from a friend – welcome them!