

# Keep it Real

## Proverbs 27:5-6; 9-10

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#### I. Open Wound vs. 5-6

- a. Open - undisguised Prov 28:23; Gal 2:14
  - i. Rebuke - **reproach, blame** (during instruction, upbringing)
  - ii. This “better” saying has been prepared for by proverbs that stress the need of the wise person to be open to reprimand and correction; cf. 3:11–12; 13:14
- b. Concealed – to keep secret
  - i. Love – of friendship
    - 1. Verse 5 especially points to the need for communication and interaction among people; few things are worse than being ignored, and the studied avoidance of honest contact destroys any relationship.
    - 2. The *love* is hidden, invisible, manifesting itself by no rebuking word, and therefore morally useless
    - 3. Hence one who truly loves will not be afraid to offer, or receive, needed correction. To remain silent is not a sign of love, whatever be the reason, whether weakness or fear of losing a “friend
- c. Cut
  - i. Faithful- trustworthy. Maintaining faith or allegiance; showing a strong sense of duty or conscientiousness *sincere*.
  - ii. Wounds - Ps 141:5
    - 1. Indeed, the correction can seem like a “wound”! This calls for bravery and honesty on both sides, or the alleged friendship is simply not worth cultivating.
  - iii. Friend - Friends Term used to indicate close acquaintances
- d. Kill
  - i. Deceitful - to kill —to slaughter —to sacrifice —to plead to **be pleaded with** From Heb. root *rāmâ*, meaning treachery or guile
    - 1. *suppliant, confused, fraudulent, bad*, that is, the enemy is profuse in insincere professions of love.

2. v. 6 contrasts genuine and phony expressions of friendship. One must distinguish between salutary rebukes that spring from honest love and hollow displays of affection where no true love exists.
3. A true friend gives time and attention (v. 5) but is not always flattering (v. 6).
- ii. Kisses - Judas Matthew 26:49
- iii. Enemy
  1. they are said to come from "one who hates." That makes the point obvious; the signs of love are clearly not genuine

## II. Really Want v. 9

- a. Desire
  - i. Oil and incense are to be understood as desirable possessions in themselves
- b. Counsel - advice- (Prv 15:22).
  - i. Sweet
    1. a satisfactory reading but for the phrase "sweetness of a friend." Possibly: *sweetness of speech* (or, *of counsel*) *strengthens* etc.;
    2. the sweetness of a friend strengthens the spirit."
    3. The Hebrew is difficult, reading literally "and the sweetness of his friend from the counsel of soul." Perhaps this can be construed to mean that the friend's advice produces sweetness;

## III. Keep Close v. 10

- a. Forsake – leave behind, abandon
  - i. Friend
  - ii. Father's Friend
- b. Brother
  - i. Calamity
    1. The "brother" in v. 10 is a close relative, one to whom people naturally turn in difficult times. Normally the close family identity of the Israelites would dictate that one go to a relative for help, and this verse is surprising for appearing to go against custom here

2. The four verses together teach that one should seek solid, meaningful relationships among one's neighbors and family, but not focus on people who are fun but lack substance and not turn exclusively to relatives, however distant they may be

# Word Study

Open- : undisguised, open (rebuke) <sup>1</sup>Prov 28:23; Gal 2:14

Rebuke - **reproach, blame** (during instruction, upbringing<sup>2</sup>

Love - of friends and individuals in general<sup>3</sup>

Concealed – to keep secret

Faithful – trustworthy. Maintaining faith or allegiance; showing a strong sense of duty or conscientiousness<sup>4</sup>

Wounds - Ps 141:5

Friends Term used to indicate close acquaintances. <sup>5</sup>

Deceitful - to kill —to slaughter —to sacrifice —to plead<sup>6</sup> to **be pleaded with** From Heb. root *rāmâ*, meaning treachery or guile<sup>7</sup>

Kisses – Matthew 26:49

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., [\*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament\*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 192.

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., [\*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament\*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1699.

<sup>3</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., [\*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament\*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 18.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart D. Sacks, [\*“Faithfulness.”\*](#) in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 764.

<sup>5</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, [\*Tyndale Bible Dictionary\*](#), Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 498.

<sup>6</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., [\*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament\*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 905.

<sup>7</sup> D. H. Tongue, [\*“Deceit.”\*](#) in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood et al. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 268.

Enemy – personal enemy

Counsel - A wise person seeks counsel when making plans: “Without counsel plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed” (Prv 15:22). One’s counselors may be one’s parents (Prv 1:8), older people (Ez 7:26), prophets (2 Chr 25:16), wise men (Jer 18:18), or friends (Prv 27:9 <sup>KJ<sup>8</sup>V</sup>). Some counselors are evil, giving deceitful advice (Prv 12:5).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>KJV The King James Version

<sup>9</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, [“Counsel, Counselor,”](#) in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 527.

## Commentary Studies

**5–6** The root אהב, “love,” is the catch word for these verses, which are also related thematically. Both take on the air of paradoxes: Can a rebuke be a sign of true love? Can kisses hide betrayal?

**5** This “better” saying has been prepared for by proverbs that stress the need of the wise person to be open to reprimand and correction; cf. 3:11–12; 13:14. Hence one who truly loves will not be afraid to offer, or receive, needed correction. To remain silent is not a sign of love, whatever be the reason, whether weakness or fear of losing a “friend.” **6** Indeed, the correction can seem like a “wound”! This calls for bravery and honesty on both sides, or the alleged friendship is simply not worth cultivating. Now it can be seen to be reliable. Despite the uncertainty of the description of the “kisses” (see *Note 6.a*<sup>10</sup>.), they are said to come from “one who hates.” That makes the point obvious; the signs of love are clearly not genuine. Both proverbs challenge the reader to look sharply into personal relationships, their strengths and weaknesses.<sup>11</sup>

**9–10** The theme common to these verses is friendship; the catch word is friend. **9** See *Note 9*.<sup>12a</sup> The connection between the two lines is not obvious due to the uncertainty of the meaning of line *b*. Oil and incense are to be understood as desirable possessions in themselves, but they may also have a symbolic value, anticipating the “sweetness of a friend.” So Plöger

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<sup>10</sup>6.a. The MT has the feminine plural niphal participle of עתר, “plead” (here “prayed against,” hence “no violence”), but the parallelism suggests a meaning like the proposed emendations in *BHS*, “deceitful” or “twisted.” No satisfactory emendation has thus far been accepted. “Profuse,” in the sense of “insincere,” is a common, but doubtful, translation. See the discussion of N. Waldmann, *JQR* 67 (1967–68) 142–45.

<sup>11</sup> Rowland E. Murphy, [\*Proverbs\*](#), vol. 22, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 207.

<sup>12</sup>9.a The Hebrew is difficult, reading literally “and the sweetness of his friend from the counsel of soul.” Perhaps this can be construed to mean that the friend’s advice produces sweetness; cf. *NIV*. Or, if the *min* is comparative, the sweetness of a friend is better than one’s own counsel; cf. *NJV* and A. Barucq. There are no compelling emendations; cf. McKane, pp. 612–13, for various “solutions.”

understands v 9b; he emends and translates, with many others, “the sweetness of a friend strengthens the spirit.” **10** This verse does not help much to clarify the relationship of friends. There are three recommendations that do not really hang together: an admonition to be faithful in friendship, especially an established family friendship; a second admonition not to have recourse to a brother when in trouble (this apparently contradicts 17:17); finally, a “better” saying in favor of a nearby neighbor. These recommendations seem to go in several directions. Each one can be understood independently, but the general aim is not clear. In 18:24b the friend-brother relationship also appeared; see the *Comment* there. One can understand that distance is an important factor in seeking help, and the nearby neighbor is a better risk than a distant brother, but it is not clear why all of these differing situations are mentioned here (pace<sup>13</sup> Alonso Schokel, who regards the third line as a motive or justification for the counsel in the first two lines).<sup>14</sup>

**5.** Comparison, ternary-binary. *Open* (lit. *manifested*), frank, direct, from friend or foe. The *love* is hidden, invisible, manifesting itself by no rebuking word, and therefore morally useless; or, by change of vowels: *love that conceals*, that is, does not tell the friend his faults. Frank<sup>15</sup>: *love given up*, that is, the man, instead of telling his friend his fault, withdraws his friendship without a word; but the rendering *given up* is not possible. De<sup>16</sup>: “love that does not show itself by helpful deed in time of need,” but this gives no antithesis. Cf. BS. 19:13–15.—The Heb. text is not quite satisfactory—the antithesis *rebuke ... love* is not clear, and possibly *hate* should be substituted for *love* (cf. v. 6)—“hatred hidden under pretence of friendship.”—**6.** Antithetic, ternary. The adj. of first cl. is *faithful, trustworthy*, here = *sincere*. In second line we expect a contrasted term, instead of which our Heb. text gives a word which is represented in the Anc. Vrss. by *suppliant, confused, fraudulent, bad*, but is generally interpreted by modern expositors

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<sup>13</sup>pace with due respect to, but differing from or despite the interpretation of

<sup>14</sup> Rowland E. Murphy, [Proverbs](#), vol. 22, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 207–208.

<sup>15</sup>Frank. W. Frankenberg.

<sup>16</sup>De. Franz Delitzsch, *Das Salomon. Spruchbuch*. Friedr. Delitzsch, Assyr. Handwörterbuch.

as = *rich, plentiful, profuse* (so RV<sup>17</sup>.), that is, the enemy is profuse in insincere professions of love. This latter rendering is to be rejected as lexicographically doubtful, and as not furnishing a proper antithesis. For the reading *deceitful* (AV<sup>18</sup>., after Lat.) a change of text is necessary.—For *faithful* cf. 25:13; Dt. 7:9; Job 12:20; for *wounds* cf. Job 9:17; *friend* and *enemy* are lit. *lover* and *hater*.<sup>19</sup>

*sweetness of his friend from counsel* (or, *sorrow*) *of soul*. The first line describes a physical pleasure which is presumably the illustration of a spiritual pleasure to be next described. The second line of the Heb. is unintelligible: the *his* has no antecedent, the expression “sweetness of a friend” is strange and doubtful (cf. 16:21), and *counsel of soul*, if it be a possible expression, means simply “counsel given,” not *hearty*<sup>20†</sup> (or, *highminded*<sup>21‡</sup>) *counsel*, or *one’s own counsel*.<sup>22§</sup>—Grk. (with different text): *and* (or, *but*) *the soul is rent by misfortunes*, which offers neither parallel nor contrast to first line; Lat. (by inversion): *and the soul is sweetened by the good counsels of a friend*, an appropriate parallel; Kamphausen: *but sweeter is one’s friend than fragrant woods* (cf. *perfume-boxes*, Isa. 3:20), but the introduction of another physical illustration is improbable; Reuss: *sweet friendship*<sup>23</sup> (= “the sweetness of a friend”<sup>24</sup>) *strengthens the soul*, a satisfactory reading but for the phrase “sweetness of a friend.” Possibly: *sweetness of speech* (or, *of counsel*) *strengthens* etc.; “sweetness” is an epithet not of persons, but of things;

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<sup>17</sup>RV. Eng. Revised Version.

<sup>18</sup>AV. Eng. Authorized Version.

<sup>19</sup> Crawford Howell Toy, [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs\*](#), International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1899), 483.

<sup>20†</sup> See Mich. De. Str. *al.* AV. RV.

<sup>21‡</sup> Ew.: *but a friend’s sweetness comes from counsel of soul* (from a “deep, full soul,” in contrast with *perfume*).

<sup>22§</sup> Saad. Rashi, Zöck. *al.*: *the sweetness* (= agreeable discourse) *of a friend is better than one’s own counsel*.

<sup>23</sup>( Insertion for clearness.

<sup>24</sup>) Insertion for clearness.



cf. 16:21; ψ 55:14(15).—*Oil* (21:17; Am. 6:6; Ez. 16:9; Cant. 1:3; 4:10) and *perfume* (see the adj. in Cant. 3:6) are cosmetics and accompaniments of feasts. Cf. ψ 104:15, BS. 40:20, 21<sup>25</sup>

TYPE: THEMATIC CATCHWORD (27:5–6)

**27:5–6** A true friend gives time and attention (v. 5) but is not always flattering (v. 6). In addition to a common catchword,<sup>3266</sup> both verses concern the nature of genuine friendship. Verse 5 especially points to the need for communication and interaction among people; few things are worse than being ignored, and the studied avoidance of honest contact destroys any relationship.

Verse 6 is somewhat different.<sup>3277</sup> Whereas v. 5 concerns stifled or hidden emotions, v. 6 contrasts genuine and phony expressions of friendship. One must distinguish between salutary rebukes that spring from honest love and hollow displays of affection where no true love exists. The two verses together advise that in any relationship, an open exchange of honest and caring communication is essential.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Crawford Howell Toy, [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs\*](#), International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1899), 484–485.

<sup>2636</sup> Both contain the root אהב (“love”).

<sup>2737</sup> The NIV translation is valid here. Despite lengthy discussions of alternative interpretations or an emendation for נְעִימָה, the traditional understanding of it as “abundant” is still the most persuasive (see Delitzsch, *Proverbs* 2:201–2, and McKane, *Proverbs*, 610–11). Also in context with v. 5, the NIV is right to read v. 6 as a kind of implied better saying, although the text literally only says, “The wounds of a friend are faithful, and the kisses of an enemy are abundant.”

<sup>28</sup> Duane A. Garrett, [\*Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs\*](#), vol. 14, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 216–217.

**27:8, 10** Verse 8 to some degree contrasts with v. 10; the former counsels the reader to stay close to home, which presumably refers to family and not to a house, while the latter addresses someone who is far from family support. The “brother” in v. 10 is a close relative, one to whom people naturally turn in difficult times. Normally the close family identity of the Israelites would dictate that one go to a relative for help, and this verse is surprising for appearing to go against custom here. Line c helps to clarify the matter: the brother may be too distant (either geographically or emotionally) to be of help. The four verses together teach that one should seek solid, meaningful relationships among one’s neighbors and family, but not focus on people who are fun but lack substance and not turn exclusively to relatives, however distant they may be.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Duane A. Garrett, [\*Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs\*](#), vol. 14, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 217–218.