

# Iron Sharpens Iron

[Proverbs 27:17](#); [Eccl. 4:9–12](#); [10:10](#)

*“As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend”*  
(*Prov. 27:17 NIV*).

“Man was framed not for solitude, but for society,” wrote Charles Bridges. “It is only as a social being, that his powers and affections are fully expanded.” In the Proverbs, Solomon gives much advice about man in society. In particular, he has a lot to say about friendship. We looked at some of Solomon’s counsel on this subject when we studied his advice to the young. We studied Solomon’s warnings against wicked companions, but no where does he tell us to avoid people altogether. He only sets the parameters of social interaction. Like Bridges said, man is made for society. While we should be cautious in choosing our friends, we should never recede into a cocoon of anti-social sentiment.

When God created Adam, he said, “It is not good that man should be alone.” He then created woman, and the building blocks of society were laid. To recede from the society would be contrary to the created order. Of course, we are not to be “friends” with the world, but some Christians go beyond this command and isolate themselves even from Christian brethren. As a result, much of their life stagnates—not only because of loneliness, but because they have forfeited the sharpening benefits a community provides.

[Proverbs 27:17 \(NIV\)](#) says, **“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”** We grow and develop through interaction with others. **“The communion of saints”** is a legacy that we all share. Yet many do not acknowledge the practicality of this article. We do not regard the communion of the saints as a privilege and a responsibility. As Bridges says, we should gladly take up the bond of brotherhood with others because, by this, we will grow. **“If a brother seems to walk alone, sharpen his iron by godly communication,”** Bridges wrote. **“Walk together in mutual ‘consideration’ of each other’s infirmities, trials, and temptations; and mutual ‘provocation’ of each other’s gifts and graces.”**

If you have receded from society, either because of failed friendships or fear of others, renew your love for your brothers and sisters in Christ and recognize your need to be a part of other people’s lives. God made you to be a part of society. If you deny this, you will stagnate and, like the neglected iron, you will grow dull and blunt.

How much time have you spent recently with people outside your family? If not much, what were the reasons? Lack of time, initiative, or interest? Choose a person in your church you could minister to or get to know better. Call that person today and set up a visit. If you’ve neglected a friend, call him or her today.