

**Chapter 15: I Let My Friend Down (For My Friend, 'Rick.')**  
**Life Application Verses:**

**Proverbs 27: 17.** As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

**T**he following story is true. The names are the same as they were then, but I will only refer to my friend as, 'Rick.' Remember, what you are about to read actually happened:

It was several years ago and the community college where Rick and I worked had merged with another two-year college in the city. We were going through some difficult times as college employees due to many factors in the merger process, including changes to the methods and schedules we had long established and validated. Rick had always been the 'early bird' at the college, and I had always been the 'night hawk.' This complemented our coverage of classes, as well as the opening and closing of the building and classrooms for our Division of Computer Information Systems. Rick was one of those rare individuals who cared deeply about his work and the students we were teaching. He had a superb work ethic that was rarely seen in organizations. At the time, I was the Chair of the Division. With the merger, the job was beginning to take a turn that I did not like.

Long before the merger, Rick and I had become very good friends. As in Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another", so we sharpened one another's perspectives, perceptions, and practices in our Division and in our respective classrooms. We had the largest Division at the college, with a buzz of students, classes, and technologies. When the merger was finally accomplished, so were some administrative appointments. In particular, and God guide me in the telling of this story, some operational changes had been suggested. These changes impacted our schedules, particularly Rick's schedule. This particular administrator—I'll refer to as Perkins or The Perkins—wanted to move Rick from his early arrival to night classes. I didn't agree with this suggestion by The Perkins, so Perkins decided to call a meeting with the newly appointed President subsequent to the merger.

At this meeting, The Perkins suggested to the President that Rick be moved to nights. He argued that this change would help the college, improve student attendance, and be a fair schedule change for all concerned. In my heart and mind, and before My God, I did not agree

with these suggested changes in any form as they were being presented. And just as ‘iron sharpens iron’, so it renders a horrible grating noise when the sharpening is out of synch. My friend, Rick, was against this change, and rightly so on all accounts. I was somewhat angered by the idea that had been presented by Perkins, and when the President asked me what I thought, I created a dullness in the relationship between myself and Rick. I made a horrible error in judgment, and I failed to protect my friend—which was my God given responsibility as the Division Chair—to rebut and stop this ill-conceived notion to change Rick’s schedule in the strongest terms possible. Without any defense or excuses on my part, I let my friend down. Soon after this, he resigned his position at the college. I had not only lost a highly respected colleague, but I had deeply hurt my friend, nearly destroyed our relationship beyond repair, and harmed our Division. Most importantly, I had lost a Christian brother who for years had helped me to live Proverbs 27: 17—even though he may not have even been aware of this Truth.

At this writing, this event occurred several years ago. I have thought about it more often than I would like to admit through the years, often chastising myself for not standing up for him. It’s not that I worry over the incident as God tells us not to worry; I rather consider my failure as not conducting myself properly before God. I have Prayed about this event many times, asking God to forgive my weakness and lack of Trust in Him at that time and to help me avoid ever doing anything even remotely like what I did to my friend Rick. When we have good Christian friends, we should do everything that is within us to protect that friendship. The friendships we have developed are for the purpose of the Life Application Verses: ‘As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.’ I believe that good Christian friends are a gift from God for us to sharpen our Christian lives. Jesus considered friendship very important:

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other” (John 15: 9-17).

As you can see in the passages above, Jesus is adamant about friendship. In fact, hear what He says about the significant importance He places on the bond between individuals: “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” As we live in these turbulent times in the United States, and in the world in which we live, I can only imagine how Heavenly Minded a person must be to achieve a level of Earthly Good to the point that he or she would ‘lay down one’s life for one’s friends.’ In my case, it wasn’t my life that I needed to lay down before The Perkins, it was my determination to protect my friend. In other words, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends, or to stop bullies, or to speak out against injustice, or never compromise one’s friendship.” Jesus was giving up His Life for those He loved, those He called friends; we must be there for our Christian friends, help them when they need us, and not compromise our principles of Trust, Brotherly Love, and Friendship. What is this friendship and how do we define it?

If you look at what Jesus said, you might miss something that only the Son of God is able to disclose. In the verses in John 15, look closely at: “Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” Did you catch that in the Words of Jesus? He was telling his disciples that he had chosen them as friends and that what He had “learned from my Father I have made known to you.” Do you see the Heavenly Minded power of what that statement is telling us? Jesus choose these men as disciples—His friends; and this friendship led to His making known to these friends what He had learned from the Father. Jesus was sharing with His friends the Glory of The One True God. It gives me a sense of exceptional humbleness to think of this friendship between Jesus and His disciples. He was God the Son, He was in the beginning, He was with God, He knew the Father, and He was friends with His disciples. He was Lord, Savior, and Friend. How is it that we can know this in the study of God’s Word and still let our friends down?

This example Jesus gives us is not some Holy-Roller-Pie-in-the-Sky example of how important our friendship is between Christian brothers and sisters. Why do we call them ‘brothers and sisters?’ Maybe it’s because when we are Born Again, we are born into a Heavenly Family that is made up of Heavenly Minded Children of God; our Earthly Good mission is to love one another, take care of one another, and be a friend that is ‘closer than a brother’

(Proverbs 18: 24). If Jesus refers to His disciples as His friends AND that what He had learned from the Father He made known to his friends, what does this lesson tell us about friendship? Wow—these lessons are difficult to hear sometimes, especially if we have let a good friend down. As this chapter was being written, it was placed on my Heart and in my Mind to write the following:

### **Iron Sharpens Iron**

As iron sharpens iron, Let us not forget,  
To be a careful friend, Not one to cause them fret.  
Jesus gave example, He shared the Father's Love,  
That we might understand, Guided from above.  
A friend is a gift, Lest we ever forget,  
To care for them with Honor, Or else we may regret.  
Our deeds that fail to be, A friend that is a brother,  
Grieves the Heart of God, And joy our error does smother.  
When fail we do our friends, Amends we must pursue,  
For God sees our failures, He knows we must renew.  
The bonds of lasting friendship, Life shall be at odd,  
For in the end of all, Best Friend will be our God.  
He gave us 'iron to sharpen', each other in His Love,  
Friends sharpen friends, God said this from above.  
Now let us be a friend, closer than a brother,  
To follow Jesus' Words, the Greatest words none other.  
"I have called you friends, for everything I learned,  
From My Heavenly Father, to you made known, I yearn."  
Never yield to compromise, no matter what 'Perkins' may do,  
Protect your friendships wisely, For Jesus said this is True.

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As you read this, do you have a friend like “Rick” that you have let down? It may not have been intentional, just a very poor error in judgment at the moment of the decision. Have you ever in any way harmed that friendship by your actions? Did you do or say something that resulted in the other person’s decision to leave a position, remove himself or herself from some type of community or paid service, or were your actions so egregious that your ability to sharpen one another in the service of God was dulled beyond continuance? Can it happen between Christians? Yes. Should it? No. As with the Sport of Fencing, to keep ourselves from harming our friendships, we must always be *“on guard.”*

When you combine the verse in Proverbs 27: 17 and the words of Jesus in John 15: 9-17, you begin to see the **high importance** in Christian friendships. We must have the love of God to survive; we need the Salvation of Jesus to exit this lost life and world; the family bonds of love and friendship are paramount to our existence; and we need our Christian friends to sharpen our lives for service. When we let our God, Jesus, family, or friends down, I think of words like: forgiveness; reconciliation; life-long sharing; Prayer; meeting-of-the-mind-and-heart; Christ-Centered Love; understanding; ‘don’t-do-that-again’; ‘I’m truly sorry’; and, fellowship with God to confess our error in judgment or our lack of attention to what we should have done. Read the following story about friendship. Maybe we don’t give our lives as in this story, but giving our lives may consume a lifetime of sharing and caring for others. Giving our lives may include being a best friend to a spouse to build a bond of Trust and Love for an Earthly Good lifetime (Author Unknown).

Horror gripped the heart of a World War-I soldier, as he saw his lifelong friend fall in battle. The soldier asked his Lieutenant if he could go out to bring his fallen comrade back... “You can go,” said the Lieutenant, “but don’t think it will be worth it. Your friend is probably dead and you may throw your life away.” The Lieutenant’s words didn’t matter, and the soldier went anyway. Miraculously, he managed to reach his friend, hoisted him onto his shoulder and brought him back to their company’s trench. The officer checked the wounded soldier, then he looked kindly at wounded soldier’s friend. “I told you it wouldn’t be worth it,” he said. “Your friend is dead and you are mortally wounded.” “It was worth it, Sir,” said the soldier. “What do you mean by worth it?” responded the Lieutenant. “Your friend is dead.” “Yes Sir,” the soldier answered, “but it was worth it because when I got to him, he was still alive and I had the satisfaction of hearing him say: “My friend...I knew you would come!”

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We all have those people that are close to us and are special in our lives. But how many of us would be willing to save the life of a friend while giving up our own? As the above story signifies, “Greater love has no one than to lay down their life for a friend.” Let’s all be thankful for the friends that we have and value the time that we spend with them. Start with applying the Truth Jesus gave us about friendship. Then extend this Truth to our Fellowship with God, our service and Life for Jesus, our family bonds of love and friendship, and to our friends in the workplace, at our local Churches, and in our community service experiences. IF you let a friend down, go to that friend and tell them that you are sorry for the hurt, seek their forgiveness, and restore that friendship in the name of Christ Jesus. Peter denied His Savior and Friend Jesus three times. He let Jesus down. He repented, sought forgiveness, and became The Rock of the Church. Let our Christian friendships be like The Rock of the Church. If we make a mistake, repent, seek forgiveness, and restore your Path of Christian Friendship as noted in Proverbs 27: 17: “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” My experience with Rick is the foundation from which this chapter is based. I am sending him a copy of this chapter so that he will know that he Glorified God as he was used of God to fulfill His Truth: “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”

**Question of Curiosity:**

How many people would call you a friend that is closer than a brother? If you were to write them down by name, can you name one, five, ten, two dozen? If your list is empty, pray to God for a friend that is closer than a brother.

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**“The steady discipline of intimate friendship with Jesus results in men becoming like Him.”**

*~ Harry Emerson Fosdick ~*

**“By friendship you mean the greatest love, the greatest usefulness, the most open communication, the noblest sufferings, the severest truth, the heartiest counsel, and the greatest union of minds of which brave men and women are capable.”**

*~ Jeremy Taylor ~*

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