



AS  
IRON IRON  
SHARPENS

SO ONE PERSON  
SHARPENS ANOTHER

PROVERBS  
27:17



*[Proverbs 27:17] Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.*

*The Book of Proverbs is vastly different in theme, purpose and style than most other books in the Old Testament. We're given a unique vantage point into God's intentions for His creation because of Proverbs' laser focus on the wise and prudent ways He calls us to live practically. Our monthly verse from Proverbs 27:17, Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another, provides guidance and understanding into one way the Lord calls us to live in community. The Lord didn't create community simply because He didn't want us to be alone. He created community with growth, sanctification and refining in mind.*

*If you find yourself with a dull blade while chopping potatoes for dinner, you won't get very far in your meal preparations. Your knife is no longer able to fulfill the purpose of its design. Sharpening the knife is a process we take to achieve a fresh edge; you must use an abrasive surface to grind material from the edge of the blade to renew it. We grind away the "usage marks" that have had a natural dulling effect on the tool.*

*We, too, pick up usage marks. We are doing our day to day tasks, pouring ourselves into the people we feel called to care for while also trying to care for ourselves. Our efforts may become stagnant as we pick up our own usage marks; sometimes they look like cynicism, woundedness, bitterness, fruitlessness. We become less effective in what we've been designed and called to do and begin to feel the effects of jagged edges that keep us from being useful tools in the Lord's hands. We need an abrasive surface to come along and refine us again into an efficient tool.*

*Being sharpened by an abrasive surface-- rather, a trusted friend, spouse or mentor, can be a painful experience. When an insightful friend points out something we otherwise wouldn't see, oh that dreaded constructive criticism, we receive a gift of grace but it feels like a wound. We pray for the Spirit's help to release our shame and pride as we encourage one another towards the identity God gives us through our hope in Christ.*

*Allowing others to sharpen us is also a costly experience. The knife cannot stay in the knife block; it must be fully exposed for the long, intentional process of sharpening. This happens when trust and safety have been both offered and felt, when vulnerability has been achieved in a relationship-- all of this takes time and it requires us to risk our hearts. We must pray for help in being our true selves in healthy community. In these deeper relationships, we can receive and ask hard questions and be open to and courageous in hard conversations.*

*The Lord works in our hearts in personal and intimate ways, but so often He uses other people in our lives to speak truths to us that the Lord knows we need. When you've cultivated safety in a relationship, the opportunity to push and challenge one another-- to sharpen each other through conviction and accountability-- is a sweet gift. Though it may not always feel good, the Lord intends the very best for us through community and that is good news.*



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### ●●○ FOR PARENTS

Who in your life has God used to refine you through tough but helpful truth?

Who have you developed trust and safety with in your circle of friends/relationships? If the Lord were calling you to step in and offer feedback in gentle and kind ways, would that be difficult?

Consider how conflict has led to growth in your life. Pray for opportunities to invest in a safe, trusted friend.

### ●●○ FOR KIDS

Do you find conflict or constructive criticism uncomfortable?

Are there friendships in your life where you feel safe sharing an area of struggle or pointing one out in them?

How can you encourage your friends who may need to see something they struggle with and the Lord asks you to point it out?



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