**Proverbs 17:17-20**

**A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.**

**A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.**

**He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.**

**He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.**

How true is this opening statement! A basic requirement for friendship is consistent kindness, and one undeniably relies on family when things go awry. Certainly we all want to surround ourselves with the unfailing affection of good friends and the security of a caring, supportive family. So all of this seems very true and easy so far. But then the next verse tells us that only someone “void of understanding” becomes surety for a friend. What!? Does that mean that my friend won’t co-sign my loan? Who is this advice for, anyway? Perhaps we’d better go back to the beginning. Maybe I am the one who’s supposed to be the loving friend, the caring and supportive family member. But perhaps not to the extent of making foolish financial choices… because God requires more of me than loving my friends at all times. He expects His people to form a holy community, honorable, reliable, and pure. The next couple of verses embellish this theme. Those who love drama (strife) and display (self-exaltation) are not assets to this holy community. God expects His people to behave in an honorable and reliable manner, remember, not like the denizens of daytime talk shows. Similarly for those who are rebellious in heart… or in mouth. Our speech so often leads us into trouble! And those who will not give over control of their hearts and their tongues to God can hardly take their place among His people. I would sure rather live in the community described here in verse 17 rather than that of verses 19 and 20!

**Guianan Cocks-of-the-Rock**

This South American bird is about 12 inches long and weighs, on average, between 7 and 8 ounces. The males are quite remarkable in appearance, being neon orange with generously decorative tail plumage. There’s also the spectacular (also neon orange) half-moon crest on their heads, which makes the males quite unmistakable. Females are a much subtler brownish grey with a signicantly smaller crest. Like many other birds, male Guianan cocks-of-the-rock compete for mating rights with the females. To get the females’ attention however, the males have to join together in a communal display ground called a “lek.” Each male has his own display area about 3 feet in diameter. The display areas within the lek are about 10 feet apart, and there are, on average, around 55 males in each lek. When the males are assembled and the females are ready to choose mates, the males begin their display. They engage in a very unusual sort of bouncing beauty contest, while the females look on. Females judge the males based on their decorative tail plumage, while the males hop up and down to show off their charms. These male birds need eachother, because females require an entire leks’ worth of males before they have any interest in choosing a mate. But the males are competing for the females’ attention, so they object to one another as well. So they bicker often. The poor males are so concerned with outdoing eachother that only the “infrequency of encounters with predators” is “keeping these lekking males alive.” Would you like to live in such a society? Bad news! You already do. But this is not the community that God has planned for us. Strife, frowardness, poor decision-making and perversity are commonplace within the world’s society, but God expects us to be better than that. We are to strive to be members in a community where “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

Netflix

Dancing with the Birds

Start: 34:22 (17:13 from End)

End: 37:20 (14:15 from End)