

A Life Worth Living
Session 5 May 26 2024 New Friendships
Philippians 2:19-30

Resource: 'A Life worth Living' video 5, 5/26 new Friendships
(all videos can be found at www.woodside-church.org under the sermons tab)

Icebreaker: "You can choose your friends, but not your family." If you could choose to get to know anyone alive today as a new friend, who would you choose and why?

Read Philippians 2:19-30 together.

Foundations

Men and women were created to live in relationship with God and each other (Genesis 3:8; 2:18). Sin caused the breakdown of all these relationships (Gen 3:8-19), so that we all live with the tension of desiring human friendship (because of how we were created), but often find them difficult or painful (because of the inherent sin in the world around us). Jesus restores relationship by (a) on the cross destroying the "dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14) between God and one another; (b) by example, choosing disciples as friends (John 15:14).

- **How does the value that our society places on friendship compare to the Christian view?**
- **Does this biblical view tally with our modern-day experience of friendship?**
- **How can friendship teach us about our relationship with God?**

Philippians 2:19-30 gives us an insight into Paul's friendships with Timothy and Epaphroditus. Read the following verses and identify what they show about their friendships.

1 Corinthians 4:17, 16:10;

Philippians 1:1, 2:19-23, 2:25-30;

Colossians 1:1; Acts 16:1-5, 18:5, 20:4;

1 Thessalonians 3:6.

Four ways to develop great friendship:

1. Be Genuinely Interested (v.20)

Paul contrasts Timothy's "*genuine interest*" (v.20) approach to friendship with a surrounding culture blighted by self-interest (v.21). Likewise, Paul's genuine concern for Epaphroditus (v.27-30) is equal to Epaphroditus' genuine concern for the Philippians' interests rather than his own (v.26).

- **Friendship and evangelism go hand in hand. But if we make friends in order to evangelize doesn't this compromise genuine interest?**
- **How do we develop a genuine interest for others if we have become too self-interested?**

2. Foster a Common Focus (v.21)

Close Christian friends have a common focus quite unlike that of the surrounding culture (v.21). This unique dimension in Christian friendship gives an unparalleled closeness that the New Testament terms “fellowship” – about which the world knows nothing. Fellowship comes from more than our common interest in Christianity. It comes from the trust, security and openness that is the result of our common focus on Jesus Christ.

- **Jesus accepted everyone, but chose his friends. How do we decide who to build deep friendships with?**
- **Paul trusted Timothy very deeply (see 1 Thessalonians 3:2). How can we build the kind of deep trust and “fellowship” the New Testament talks about?**

3. Serve Together (v.22)

Paul and Timothy’s friendship had a common vision and goal. Both understood their roles in pursuing that purpose together. Paul didn’t lord his apostleship over Timothy, but they “co-slaved” together (in Greek v.22 means “he slaved with me”). Often it’s working together for the gospel that brings us close to our Christian friends. Likewise, Epaphroditus was Paul’s “fellow-worker” (v.25). Friendship and mission go hand in hand in the New Testament. Any group not involved together in “the work of the gospel” eventually shrivels and dies. Conversely, working together causes friendship to flourish.

- **As friends, what’s the purpose of our growth group? What are we trying to achieve together?**

4. Take Risks and Battle Together (v.25)

The three words in v.25 “brother, fellow-worker and *fellow-soldier*” are arranged in an ascending scale of common sympathy, common work, *common danger and toil and suffering*.

Epaphroditus had been prepared to “risk his life” for Paul (v.30). His name suggests his parents had devoted him to Apaphrodite – the goddess of love and the patron of gambling. The Greek historian Plutarch, calls the highest cast of the dice “Epaphroditus”, so his name may mean “one blessed with gambling luck”. Likewise, the RSV version of the bible describes the expression in v.30 as “hazarding his life” and an accurate translation may be “gambling his life”. Perhaps by associating with Paul (who was in prison) he risked being charged of the same offence, or risked his health through excessive hard work. Either way, he showed reckless courage and disregard for self.

All friendship involves taking risks. Jesus was open and committed to the end (John 15:13-15). Christian friends know that it is often in hazarding our lives for one another that we find true blessing. The old Sunday School definition of joy: J(esus) O(thers) Y(ourself) is shown in the friendships of Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus.

- **In what ways do we give our lives for our friends?**
- **In what ways do we take risks on other’s behalf?**

Prayer and Ministry

- Pray for your small group, that as friends together you might put into practice some of the things you have been discussing during the session.
- Pray for your group’s friends who aren’t Christians – that our involvement in their lives might flow from a genuine interest and love, and evangelism might go hand in hand with our interest.
- Pray for wisdom to know which friendships to invest in.

After today’s discussion, what is one action you will take this week?