

Sermon: Colossians: Friends (Part 17)

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. Who are two good friends you have or have had? What was one quality about each that stands out to you?
2. What was written in your high school year book about you?
3. What passages of Scripture do you tend to skim?

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. How does 2 Timothy 3:16 show us that even studying a list of names is important?
What Scripture passage will you pay more attention to next time you read it?
2. Get to know Tychicus: Col 4:7,8; Acts 20: 2-6; Eph 6:21; 2 Tim 4:12; Tit 3:12.
How did Paul characterize him? How would you describe him?
If you met Tychicus, what would you ask him?
3. Get to know Aristarchus: Col 4:10; Acts 19:23-29; 20:2-6; 27:1-3; Phm 23, 24.
How did Paul characterize him? How would you describe him?
If you met Aristarchus, what would you ask him?
4. Get to know Luke: Luke 1:1-4; 2 Tim 4:11; Col 4:14; Phm 23, 24.
How did Paul characterize him? How would you describe him?
If you met Dr Luke, what would you ask him?
5. Read Prov 18:24; Ecc 4:9, 10 and John 15:13-15. (Read other versions.)
Compare and contrast 'companion' and 'friend.'
6. What is noteworthy about Paul ending his letter with this list of names?
What does this tell us about Paul's personality?
Who in this whole list stands out for you? Why?

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. Pastor Henry highlighted four keys to 'building' genuine friendships.
Why did he use the word 'building'? Which one (s) stand out for you?
Which one(s) is a challenge for you?
2. How can the group pray for you to be on mission with your friends?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

Resources on 'loneliness' in society:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/life-of-solitude-a-loneliness-crisis-is-looming/article15573187/>

<http://nationalpost.com/tag/loneliness>

Reference to Francis and Lisa Chan:

<https://www.youandmeforever.org/>

THE WORD (NIV)

Colossians 4:7-18

⁷Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. ⁹He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. ¹⁰My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) ¹¹Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. ¹²Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. ¹³I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. ¹⁵Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord." ¹⁸I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

Sermon Study Summary

Lists can be dull – unless we know a person on that list. To someone, a list of names serves as a precious reminder of someone who is precious to them. In the Bible, names represent real people who were precious to God and to others. Even postscripts in the Bible have something to teach us and to apply to our lives (2 Tim 3:16). To Paul, these names were his friends whom he loved and cared about. We often think of Paul as a driven, task-oriented personality. Yet from his letters we see that he loved people and had a great number of friends who did life with him. Friends were important to Paul. They were also important to Jesus who communicated that in this life nothing is more important than loving God and others. We are wired to be in relationship with others and to have genuinely satisfying relationships. See some of Paul's friends:

- Tychicus (Col 4:7) was a Gentile from Asia Minor who served the Lord by serving Paul and encouraging him. He appears five times in the Bible and clearly displays his servant-heart by traveling with Paul. He both scribed his letters and delivered messages for him to destinations that were hundreds of miles away.
- Aristarchus was a faithful friend to Paul. He was from Greece and in the six references to him, he stayed with Paul no matter the circumstances – some of which resulted in him being beaten, thrown into prison or shipwrecked. No matter what he faced, he was a faithful and loyal friend to Paul and remained with him to the end.
- Epaphras founded the Colossian church and came to Rome to fill Paul in on the issue they were having with false teachers. This prompted Paul to write the letter to Colossae. Epaphras was passionate about prayer, wrestling in prayer for Paul and others.
- Luke was a Gentile physician who, by choosing to travel with Paul had given up a lucrative position that held great status. And Paul often needed a doctor! Luke chose to live for the Lord and humbly serve Paul and those around him. In the end God inspired Luke to write the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

Research today tells us that we are not very good at developing close relationships. Loneliness has become an epidemic, doubling over the last 30 years despite our being in the most technologically connected age. Studies show that loneliness causes people to be more susceptible to sickness and were three times more likely to die than those relationally connected. We are created to be in relationship with others and have true genuine friends (Eccl 4:9-10). How many close friends do you really have? Many people 'know' others yet have no close friends or even know where to begin to develop close friendships. How do we build genuine friendships? You cannot simply order up a McFriend; building friendships takes time. And you have to give priority to – and take the initiative in this. What are some keys to building genuine friendships?

1. **Give priority to praying for a friend.** Pray daily that God would introduce you to a potential close friend – a person of peace, whom you can respect and have a special connection with. Put yourself in a place where you may meet people who are on the same page as you are in matters such as values, interests, and core beliefs. You will never find a friend sitting at home or by coming to a church service and ignoring those around you and not reaching out. Be courageous, follow the Lord's leading, and step out in faith. Ask good questions. Be a good listener. Be transparent. Keep praying about this possible relationship.
2. **Give priority to being a friend.** You can do this in many different ways.
 - a. **Be humble like Dr. Luke.** Jesus calls us to lay down our lives to move our friends forward (John 15:13). Friendship is not a competition or all about you. This bears repeating: ask good questions and be a good listener (James 1:19).
 - b. **Be encouraging with your words, like Tychicus.** DL Moody: 'People have a way of becoming what you encourage them to be – not what you nag them to be.' In discussions a response like 'amazing!' is far more received than 'baloney!'. How you use your words can either encourage people and draw them to you or discourage them and push them farther away (Phil 2:3). Focus on others and lift them up. Believe in them. Celebrate their victories and accomplishments. Bless them with genuine compliments. Encourage them with your actions. Tychicus encouraged Paul by being a friend he could count on. Good friends make sacrifices for one another and are willing to be inconvenienced, and to not leave one alone in times of failure and despair.
 - c. **Be faithful and loyal like Aristarchus.** A true friend is committed to the friendship even when the going gets tough (Prov 18:24). They choose to see the good in you and believe the best about you. They confront anyone who may slander you, and keep confidences relating to you. Aristarchus didn't quit when the going got tough but remained faithful in difficult circumstances.
 - d. **By praying for your friend daily like Epaphras.** Ask God regularly to show you what He would have you say to them or do for them.
3. **Giving priority to being on mission with your friends.** You can't be close friends with everyone (Prov 18:24). Those who would be close friends with us want to go deeper with God and us and together be on mission with God. They will challenge one another to be in the Word and be obedient. They will pray for one another and inspire each other to be faithful in worship and in serving and giving to the Lord. They will spur one another on to reach out to those in their sphere of influence who need the Lord. In the end being on mission brings people closer together. We are all missionaries. With whom are you locking arm to arm and heart to heart to accomplish the mission Christ has called us to?