



Philippians 2.19-30 “Friends”

Never by the leaves that fall
Count your day by golden hours,
Don't remember the clouds at all.
Count your nights by stars, not shadows.
Count your life with smiles, not tears.
And with joy on every birthday,
Count your age by friends, not years.

Friends – we all need friends!

Tim KELLER: “God made us in such a way that we couldn't even enjoy paradise without friends. . . . Adam had a perfect quiet time everyday for 24 hours a day. Yet he needed friends.” ¹

Genesis 1:31

31 Then God saw everything that He had made,
and indeed it was very good.
So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Genesis 2:15

15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

Genesis 2:18

18 And the LORD God said, **“It is not good that man should be alone;**
I will make him a helper comparable to him.”

Bill Gothard: IBYC – “Knowing how to detect, and terminate, unwholesome friendships while also learning how to develop genuine friendships are two of the most important skills we must have for lasting happiness.”

Friends fall into several categories – though you may have never thought in these terms:

Communication is the ONLY way to discern what level each person will become in your friendship levels.

- **Notice – physical attributes are not important for true friendship**
 - Physical Handicaps
 - Physical Appearance
 - Clothing, make-up, hair style or color, muscle toning, etc.

Categories of friendships:

- **Acquaintance Friends (>20)** – occasional contact
 - You have the freedom, and they have the freedom to ask general questions about you; basic public information.
- **Casual Friends (10 or more)**
 - Common interests, activities, concerns

¹ <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/spiritual-friendship-6579/>

- Freedom to ask specific questions: ideas, opinions, goals
- **Close Friends (6-10 people)**
 - Adult children
 - Based on mutual life goals (World view; Ministry goals)
 - There are seven major worldviews namely **Theism, Atheism, Pantheism, Panentheism, Deism, Finite Godism, and Polytheism**. People with these views have different beliefs about how they see life and the world at large. Worldview is like a colored glasses; it colors everything at which we look. ²
- Freedom to suggest mutual projects to achieve mutual life goals
- **Intimate Friends (1-6 people)**
 - These are not your children of any age
 - Committed to developing each other's character
 - Helping each other in personal issues, open to personal challenges
 - Speak frankly of "blind spots" in each other's lives.
 - Open honesty with discretion
 - Mutual discernment of future problems with personal decisions.

Paul's casual friends:

- **Romans 16** lists more than 30 friends he cared for
 - Different races, ranks and genders

Paul's close friends:

1. Barnabus
2. Lydia
3. Priscilla and Aquilla
4. Titus
5. Luke
6. Silas

Paul's intimate friends:

1. Timothy
2. Epaphroditus

Tony Merida: "Paul was relationally wealthy. He traveled with friends; he stayed with them; he visited them. He worked alongside them; he preached alongside them; he was beaten alongside them. He even sang in prison with friends. He encouraged them, and was encouraged by them. At times, Paul disagreed with his friends. And at times, he reconciled with them.
We need friends because we are human beings, not trees. Our hearts ache when a friend or loved one has died. We miss their company. And when we're on our deathbeds, it won't be our accomplishments we long to hold (books, diplomas, trophies, house keys, and so on); we will want to hold people." ³

We imitate our closest friends:

- Be careful whom you choose to imitate
- Paul asked his disciples to imitate him:
1 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore I urge you, imitate me.

² Google Dictionary

³ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/paul-needed-friends-so-do-we/>

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1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

Hebrews 6:12 that you do not become sluggish,
but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

3 John 11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.

He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. 4

19 But I hope **in the Lord Jesus** to send **Timothy** to you soon,
so that I also may be encouraged when I know your circumstances.

20 For I have no one like-minded
who will sincerely be concerned about your circumstances.

21 For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

22 But you know his proven character,
that like a child with a father he served with me for the gospel.

Timothy is there with Paul in the Roman Prison

Helping Paul to live and write

- **Good Friends** are those, like Timothy and Epaphroditus who:
 1. Are loyal
 2. Encourage you and others
 3. Tell other friends of your encouraging news, not critical news
 4. Are like-minded
 5. Are Christ minded
 6. Seek to serve rather than be served
 7. Shine, don't whine – not high maintenance
 8. Sincerely concerned about other's circumstances
 9. They seek the interests of Jesus Christ
 10. Forgive readily and completely
- **Lucy and I know people that are “givers,” and some that are just “takers”**
 - We still consider the “takers” to be friends, but we are very careful.
 - Recognize those that are “takers” and beware.
 - Choose to imitate “givers”

23 Therefore I hope to send him at once,
as soon as I see my circumstances.

24 And I am convinced in the Lord that I myself will arrive shortly also.

- Paul was fairly convinced he would soon be set free:

Philippians 1:19
19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Philippians 1:25–26
25 And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,
26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.
- **BUT – Paul wasn't too sure what would happen at his impending trial.**
 - If freed he would quickly make his way back to Philippi.
 - If not, he would be soon executed

25 But I considered it necessary to send to you **Epaphroditus**,
my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier,

but your messenger and servant of my need,
26 because he was longing for all of you
and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.
27 For indeed he was sick, coming near to death,
but God had mercy on him and not on him only, but also on me,
so that I would not have grief upon grief.

Epaphroditus:

- Literally – “charming”.⁵

David Jeremiah – “Apart from these few verses he would be an unknown, but in many respects, that fits him anyway. He was just a layman in the church at Philippi who held no office, wrote no books, gave no sermons, led no great enterprises for God. He was a messenger boy for the gospel, a servant for his Lord. No task was too menial for him to do. No assignment was too little for him to accept. No risk was too great for him to take. He would have been comfortable with a towel and basin.”

- My brother
- My fellow worker
- My fellow soldier
- A servant of my need
 - **A LOW MAINTENANCE FRIEND!**

H.A. Ironside used to tell about a group of believers who thought only of “fellowship.” They had little concern for reaching the lost or for defending the faith against its enemies. In front of their meeting place they hung a sign: **JESUS ONLY**. But the wind blew away some of the letters, and the sign read—**US ONLY**. It was a perfect description of a group of people who were not balanced Christians. ⁶

28 Therefore I am sending him **with special urgency**,
in order that when you see him again you may rejoice,
and I may be less anxious.
29 Therefore welcome him in the Lord with all joy,
and consider such people highly honored,
30 because on account of the work of Christ he came near to the point of death,
risking his life in order that he might make up for your inability to serve me.

- Paul had been very concerned for Epaphroditus health
 - He almost died!
 - He risked his life for his friend Paul
- THEREFORE – welcome him!
 - With all joy!
 - Honor him highly
- We should serve every missionary in this manner!

⁵ **Epaphroditus** (1891) is mentioned only in the present epistle and according to Vincent is derived from Aphrodite (Venus), and means charming and how well he lived up to his name. Others say his name means “belonging to” or “favored by Aphrodite” and later came to mean “loving” or “lovely.” As an aside the goddess Aphrodite was associated with gambling (cf Epaphroditus “risking his life” or “gambling his life” in [Php 2:30](#)) so that rolling two sixes was called the ‘throw of Aphrodite’ and it was considered to be a clear indication that a person would win a game.

⁶ H. A. Ironside, *Notes on the Epistle to the Philippians* (Loizeaux Brothers: Neptune, NJ, 1922), 64–65.