

The Friendship Factor II Timothy 1: 16-18

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As we get closer to Thanksgiving one item that should lead the list of things for which we are grateful would be friends. In seminary I was introduced to Dale Carnegie's book "How to Win Friends and Influence People." I consider it a classic and I wish it were required reading in seminaries today. I am surprised at the lack of Christian music on the subject of friendship. There are a number of songs pointing to Jesus as our friend. But reviewing three major hymn books of the 1990's I found only one that had specifically related to Christian friends. It said, "Reach out and touch a friend that is weary."

While I don't encourage "bar hopping" the theme song of the TV comedy focused on the need for friends:

*"MAKING YOUR WAY IN THE WORLD TODAY TAKES EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT
TAKING A BREAK FROM ALL YOUR WORRIES, SURE WOULD HELP A LOT,
WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO GET AWAY.
SOMETIMES YOU WANT TO GO, WHERE EVER BODY KNOWS YOUR NAME,
AND THE YOU'RE ALWAYS GLAD YOU CAME.
YOU WANNA BE WHERE YOU CAN SEE, OUR TROUBLES ARE ALL THE SAME, YOU
WANT TO BE WHERE EVERYONE KNOW YOUR NAME."*

I wish that song could have been written to describe most churches.

"You've Got a Friend" is another song that shows the benefits of friendship

There are a number of motivations in gaining friends:

- Survival.
One school of scientists explained it this way. We have friends, or we are friends, in order that we do not get killed. They believe our human behavior is traced animal ancestry. Animals huddled together for protection from the predator. I believe in divine creation. The Genesis couple did not know fear until their crime against the Creator God. But the expulsion from the garden brought fear into their lives and we are recipients of fear. This fear breeds the gang or pack mentality. In one's lack of identity, affection and security the gang mentality seems to be an option to many.

- Pleasure.
We want someone to enjoy our activities. It'd more fun to hunt, fish, attend a concert with a friend.
- Business.
This is a utilitarian reason. Jay Kessler said that one of the goals of his life is to end up with eight who are willing to carry one of the handles of his casket. It seems logical that two heads are better than one especially if that person will help to share the start-up expense.
- Companionship.
Last summer I took my car to have the breaks checked. There was a gruff loud man acting as though he hadn't had his morning coffee. He vented his displeasure of his last marriage eighteen months before. "Why did I make that stupid decision?", he yelled. I knew why, but I didn't say anything. Because he was lonely.

The follower of Christ should add another motivation. Making friends earns me the opportunity to share my faith to others. It is God's love flowing through me that encourages that friendship.

There is a "**Friendship Factor**" in the Great Commission Matthew 28:19-20 Paul, the hero of church planters was aware of the power of friendship. Romans 16 is Paul's personal directory of friends: Phoebe, vv. 1-2, Priscilla and Aquilla, v.3

Fellow tentmakers, moving from place to place, in order to make friends and introduce people to Jesus: Epenetus, v.5b, Persis, v. 12, a dear friend.

These were not a collection of independent individualists, but names of people connect to the "Community of Friends."

What traits do you need to develop to be a good friend? Paul identified a few of them in our text. They resided in the personality of a man named **Onesphorus**. I Timothy 1:16

Paul was in the Roman prison when he wrote this letter. He knew the Roman sword awaited him because he was a political prisoner. Twenty four hours a day he was chained to a Roman guard. He had been the pastor on

Onesphorus for three years in Ephesus. And now that deacon had come to be with him. He demonstrated **"The Friendship Factor."**

A friend is:

- An Encourager, v. 16
- A Risk Taker, v. 17 (For the communicator: You can find a very graphic in Barclay's commentary as he quotes a passage from P.K. Harrison at this point.)
- Loyal, v. 16, not ashamed of my chains. Proverbs 17:17 Not all who call themselves friends are loyal., II Timothy 4:10, 4:16
- Helpful, v.18

Talking of two friends read Ecclesiastes 4:10. The story of Hudson Taylor

Conclusion: At this point in your life you may not feel your need friends. It's time consuming. It can be costly. It may not last long. I am not here to debate the issue. I can only testify that Joyce and my lives have been greatly enriched by a community of friends.

There is a friend that you deeply and eternally need. He has loved you sacrificially, and unconditionally. Without Him you are unprepared to die. He will be with you in life and He will meet you at the depot of death. There is no other friend to me like Jesus.