



Series Title: Stewardship – Making our Whole Lives Count for Jesus!

Weekly Title: Stewardship.....FRIENDSHIP

Date: Sunday November 13

Bible Passage: 2 Timothy 4:9-22

Purpose of Preach: To encourage people in the importance and power of friendship.

Introduction:

[perhaps open with a personal testimony on what friendship has meant in your life]
This week we are looking at how we can steward friendship in our lives. In his closing remarks in his second letter to Timothy Paul teaches us six truths about the importance and power of friendship.

#1: v.9+21. PAUL KNEW HE NEEDED FRIENDS

Paul longed to have his close friend Timothy back with him.

a) *In v.9+21 he tells Timothy “do your best to come to me quickly” and “before winter”.*

It is so important to not just read Paul’s words but to feel them. He longs for and is desperate to see his friend again. Even though Paul knew Jesus, was running with Jesus and was doing incredible things for Jesus he still knew he needed friends around him.

b) *Jesus Himself knew he needed friends.* Even the son of God, who walked with His Father and spent time with His father, prioritised time to cultivate and deepen friendships. In John 15 Jesus tells the disciples that he calls them His friends. A close and wonderful personal relationship with God does not mean we don’t need friends too. Jesus and Paul did and so do we.

c) *But why do we need friends?* Firstly, the Bible says friends know us at our worst and yet still stick with us. There is a trust and security with good friends (Prov.18:24/Prov.17:17). Secondly, friends support us and encourage us when we feel broken and overwhelmed (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). Finally, friends should lovingly challenge us and inspire us to be all who Jesus is calling us to be (Proverbs 27:17/Proverbs 27:6).

Application - Could it be that there is someone here and you need to stop trying to make it on your own but give time to developing and deepening friendships in your life.

#2: v.10-11/v.16. PAUL KNEW THE PAIN OF LONELINESS

Paul knew through personal experience the overwhelming pain of loneliness.

a) *He says “Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me.”*

He is not being critical here as it is most likely they had gone on mission work and he is not dismissing Luke as not being a friend. But Paul is desperate for more good friends, he knows he needs them. He is feeling lonely and in need of Timothy’s encouragement and friendship.

b) *Then he says in v.16 “at my first defence, no-one came to my support, but everyone deserted me.”* Perhaps people left out of fear of what would happen to them if they stayed with Paul. Whatever the reason there is no bitterness in Paul’s heart as he prays “may it not be counted against them.” Paul knew what it is to feel crippled by loneliness in the very

moment he needed friends. Yet he did not give up on friendship but still knew his need for good friends.

Application - Could it be that there is someone here and you are overwhelmed by loneliness? Our prayer for you is for you make at least one good friend here in Alive.

#3: v.14-15. PAUL KNEW THE NEED FOR THE RIGHT KIND OF FRIENDS

Paul experienced betrayal and pain at the hands of a man called Alexander and warned Timothy to guard himself against him.

a) *Friendship has its risks.* Don't just accept and allow everyone as friends, love everyone but still be wise. The warning is not against having friends but to be wise who you allow to get close in your life. We don't know what "great harm" Alexander caused, but he certainly attacked Paul's teaching (v.15). Some commentators argue that he was responsible for Paul's arrest and may even have served as a witness against him. Paul tells Timothy to be wise who he allows to get close to him and become his friend. We are called to love everyone but it does not mean we allow everyone to get close enough to be our friends.

b) *The Bible is clear that bad friends will have a bad influence on your life.* (1

Cor.15:35/Prov. 13:20). So what are the characteristics of someone we should be wary of? Guard yourself for example, against evil violent people (Prov.24:1-2), people who are constantly critical and gossip (Prov.20:19), someone who has a quick temper and given to anger (Prov.22:24-25), someone who everywhere they go brings division and tension and never accepts it could be their fault (Prov.16:28). It does not mean we don't love and encourage these kind of people, but it does mean we are wise and guard the impact they may have on us and our lives.

#4: v.11+v.16. PAUL KNEW THE IMPORTANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Paul had learned the importance of forgiving those who had failed him. In fact, he believed in giving old friends who had blown it another chance.

a) *It is so easy to miss the enormity of Paul telling Timothy in v.11 to bring Mark with him because "He is helpful to me in my ministry".* During his 2nd missionary journey Mark had turned back. Why? Was he homesick? Did he feel resentment of Paul's eclipsing of Barnabas as leader? Was it physical exhaustion? Was he discouraged? Was it his fear of thieves and muggers? Paul interpreted it as a sign of weakness and an unreliable character. Paul questioned whether he was trustworthy. But Mark had repented and was restored. How? Through the influence of his cousin, Barnabas? Yes. Perhaps also the influence of Peter? Yes. But also Paul! "Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy" (Prov. 27:5-6)

b) *Paul says "he is useful to me! I need him, just like I need Timothy."* Don't be hasty in making snap judgments about people. Initially, Paul thought Demas would never leave and Mark would never be of use. Now, Demas has left and Mark is back!

Application - Could it be that there are people in our lives that we need to forgive today? Are there people we have totally written off that God could be speaking about to us today?

#5: v.17-18/v.22 PAUL KNEW THE BEST FRIEND WE CAN EVER HAVE IS JESUS

Paul knew we are all broken and imperfect and will let each other down but Jesus is a friend who never will. When everyone else had deserted him Jesus was there.

Jesus was with him and strengthened him. He was faithful and true. And that He will always be there and no matter what happens in life we are secure in Him and will make it to heaven. Paul prayed in v.22 that Timothy would know the presence and grace of a friendship with Jesus.

Application – a) You may feel lonely but you are never alone, Jesus is with you. b) Maybe you need to personally accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour today for the first time. c) Could it be that there are people here who need to recommit their lives to Him

