

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 4:7-18

CHRIST-LIKE FRIENDSHIP



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

DAVID MURRAY
OCTOBER 25, 2020 (AM)

INTRODUCTION

We all want friends, but how many of us want spiritual friends? A spiritual friendship is a friendship that does all parties spiritual good. It differs from ordinary friendship in three ways.

First, spiritual friendship is usually more diverse than ordinary friendship. Ordinary friends tend to be people like us. Spiritual friendships are more diverse in age, race, background, social status, etc.

Second, spiritual friendship has less drama and more encouragement in it. We try to lift one another up rather than get one-up on others.

Third, spiritual friendship is more challenging. We spur one another on in our spiritual lives.

Wouldn't you like more of these kinds of friendships? That's the aim of today's sermon.

CONTEXT

The Apostle Paul exemplifies spiritual friendship in his farewell remarks at the end of his letter to the Colossians. Although it looks like a list of irrelevant names and details, it's also God-breathed Scripture **and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work** (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It completes the letter about being complete in Christ by showing how Christian friendship can encourage that completeness.



What does this spiritual friendship look like?



1. CHRIST-LIKE FRIENDSHIP IS EXTENSIVE

Paul's friendships were diverse. He did not limit himself to people just like him, but befriended people from different backgrounds and different social groups, with different interests, gifts, and personalities.

He was friends with a range of missionaries: He mentions Tychicus (7), Justus (11), and Archippus (17), all of whom had different ministries and missions.

He was friends with slaves: Onesimus was a runaway slave, a low man who'd been a bad man. He was on the lowest rung of the social ladder (9).

He was friends with prisoners: Aristarchus had been converted through Paul's ministry (Acts 17:1-9), served with him in various places (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2), and was now in prison with him (10).

He was friends with a failed friend: Although Paul and Mark had previously fallen out over Mark's defection (Acts 13:13; 15:36-41), God had redeemed this friendship and Mark is now imprisoned with Paul (10).

He was friends with Jews and Gentiles: He lists three Jewish friends (Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus Justus) and three Gentile friends (Epaphras, Luke and Demas).

He was friends with a doctor: Luke, the beloved physician (14).

He was friends with women: Nympha and the church in her house (15).



Paul's final greetings to his spiritual friends encourage us to increase the diversity of our spiritual friendships. We miss out on a lot if we're only friends with people like us. That's what most non-Christians do. But spiritual friendship should be different and is improved by difference. Why not review your friendships, see where you are lacking variety, and pursue that? That kind of diversity is biblical and Christ-like.



Jesus has the most diverse friend group of anyone, which gives us all hope that we can be friends with him, no matter who we are, where we've been, what we've done.

BIBLICAL DIVERSITY IS WELCOMING
NOT THREATENING



What are the benefits of spiritual friendship?



2. CHRIST-LIKE FRIENDSHIP ENCOURAGES

Let's look at all the people Paul encourages and how he does it in so many thoughtful ways.

He encourages Tychicus: He was Paul's special envoy and was mentioned in other places (Eph. 6:21-22; Acts 20:4), 2 Timothy 4:12; Tit 3:12). Paul calls his messenger "a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord" (7).

He encourages the Colossians: "Tychicus will tell you all about my activities....I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts" (7-8). Paul encourages by sharing his news.

He encourages Onesimus: He doesn't call Onesimus a slave but "our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you" (9).

He encourages through sending greetings: He sends six people's greetings to the Colossian church. As 'greeting' means 'embrace' he was ending hugs to them.

He encourages through his encouragement: "They have been a comfort to me" (11).

He encourages Epaphras: He's "always struggling on your behalf in his prayers...For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you" (12-13).

He encourages Luke: He reminds them how beloved Doctor Luke is (14).

He encourages other churches: Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house (15).

He encourages with God's call: And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord" (17).

He encourages with grace: Grace be with you (18). He ends where he began (1:2). The favour of God, and all good, the blessed fruits and effects of it, be with you, and be your portion.



How can you encourage your spiritual friends? What does Paul do that you can learn from? If you want to be a better friend, be a better encourager.



Paul reveals the encouraging heart of Christ that lies behind these words. Ultimately it's Christ that is sending greetings and hugs to his people.

CHRIST ENCOURAGES HIS PEOPLE
THROUGH HIS ENCOURAGING PEOPLE.



I need encouragement in my friendships, but I also need to be challenged. 

3. CHRIST-LIKE FRIENDSHIP EXHORTS

Spiritual friendship is not just tender, it's also tough. It spurs others on.

He exhorts them to diversity: As we saw above, Paul modeled diversity in his friendships and therefore gave them an example to follow.

He exhorts them to be encouragers: He does this by modeling this throughout the letter but especially here at the end in a very personal and individual way.

He exhorts them to suffer for the Gospel: By mentioning that he is in prison, and he doesn't regret this, he's challenging them to suffer for the Gospel (10),

He exhorts them to faithfulness and love: He does this by commending these characteristics in Tychicus (7), Onesimus (9), and Luke (14).

He exhorts them to welcome visitors: He called them to gladly and warmly receive Mark if he came to them (10).

He exhorts them to pray: He highlights Epaphrus's prayer ministry, and describes it using the same word for a soldier fighting for his life on the battlefield (12).

He exhorts them to spiritual maturity and certainty: Epaphrus was praying that they "may stand mature (complete) and fully assured in all the will of God" (12) Reject all other promises of completeness through visions, asceticism, and philosophy.

He exhorts them to labor: He points to Epaphrus's example. "I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis" (13).

He exhorts them to remember other churches: He wants them to share his letters and greetings with other churches in the area (15-16).

He exhorts to persevere in ministry: He sends a message to Archippus that "you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord" (17).

He exhorts them to remember his chains and receive grace (18).

♥ Ask your spiritual friends to challenge you, to speak into your life, to spur you on. Maybe name a specific area or ask them to name a specific area for you to work on.

♥ Christ is the best spiritual friend of anyone. His friendship is extensive, encouraging, and challenging. What a friend we have in Jesus!

IF WE WANT TO BE CHANGED
WE MUST BE CHALLENGED



CONCLUSION



Books

- [Made for Friendship](#)
- [In Search of Biblical Friendship](#)

Discussion Questions

1. Who are your spiritual friends and why?
2. Give examples of the diversity of your spiritual friends? How can you increase that diversity?
3. Who did you encourage this week and how did you do it? Who encouraged you this week and how did they do it?
4. Ask a friend to give you a spiritual challenge. What did they challenge you with?
5. Describe your friendship with Jesus.
6. What do these greetings teach you? Rom 16:20, 24; 1 Cor 16:23; 2 Cor 13:13; Gal 6:18; Eph 6:24; Phil 4:23; Col 4:18; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philem 25; cf. Heb 13:25; Rev 22:21.

First Byron Christian Reformed Church
8541 Byron Center Ave SW, Byron Center, MI 49315
Phone: (616) 878-9768
www.firstbyroncrc.org

Pastor David Murray
www.headhearhand.org
www.livingthebible.net