

Ln 8 Making and Keeping Friends

[Philippians 2:19-30](#)

Do you have too many friends? Have you ever been lonely? Have you ever felt like the Hank Williams' song "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry"? One survey revealed the number one emotional problem in America is loneliness. A man named Dale Carnegie wrote a book entitled "How To Win Friends and Influence People" that stayed on the New York Times' best-seller list for ten years—an all-time record. It has sold more than 15 million copies.

We not only **want** friends; God made us so we also **need** friends. When God made Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden, he was in a perfect paradise, but he was not happy. What was the problem?

How does God answer that question in [Genesis 2:18a](#)?

Real friendships don't just happen. They are made intentionally. In Philippians chapter two we are going to look at **four** essentials for **making and keeping friends**.

Be concerned [2:19-20](#)

Paul's imprisonment in Rome made it impossible for him to visit his friends in Philippi. Therefore, he writes: *But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state* ([2:19](#)). Timothy (Timotheus) was Paul's young associate who traveled with him on his second missionary journey when Paul established the church at Philippi. Because the Philippians knew Timothy, Paul writes, *For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state* ([2:20](#)).

Paul says he is sending Timothy to Philippi so Paul might *be of good comfort* or encouraged because he expects to hear good things about them. One reason Paul had so many friends was his continued concern for them.

Most of us do not have many friends like this because we are so consumed with our own families, our own careers, our own problems, and our own lives. Paul writes in [1 Thessalonians 2:8](#) that he and his associates loved the Thessalonians so much they shared not only *the gospel* with them but what else?

That's concern! Concern is when we are willing to share *our own souls*, or lives, which means our time.

There's an old saying that is so true of most of us. It goes: "I'd rather make enemies than friends because it's less trouble."

To make and keep friends, **be concerned** and...

Be consistent [2:21-24](#)

Timothy was evidently a great friend because Paul writes of him: *For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel ([2:21-22](#))*. Timothy was willing to drop what he was doing in Rome and make the 40-day journey to Philippi. Timothy was a great friend because he proved himself to be **consistent** and **dependable**.

How is being a consistent friend described in [Proverbs 17:17a](#)?

Most men do not have even one really close friend. They have acquaintances and know a lot of people, but not one close friend. The main reason for this is just being too busy. We don't take time to make close friends.

Even Jesus, because of His human nature during His incarnation, needed close friends. The night before He is crucified, He goes to the Garden of Gethsemane. As He enters the gate, He says to His disciples: *Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder ([Mt 26:36](#))*.

Then, He takes His inner circle of disciples—Peter, James, and John—with Him deeper into the Garden and tells them His *soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death ([Mk 14:34a](#))*.

What does Jesus then say to them in [Mark 14:34b](#)?

In other words, Jesus is saying, "Guys, I just need you to be close to me right now." Even Jesus needed close friends, and so do you.

You may say, "I really need a good, close friend. How do I get one?" You get one by being a good friend like Timothy.

It is really just practicing what principle found in [Proverbs 18:24a](#)?

Paul tells the Philippians, *Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me ([Philip. 2:23](#))*. Apparently, Paul's trial was to be decided soon and would result in either execution or release, so he wants Timothy with him until then. Though Paul does not know for sure, he believes he will be released; so he writes, *But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly ([2:24](#))*.

To make and keep friends, **be concerned**, **be consistent**, and...

Be real [2:25-27](#)

Now Paul mentions another friend named Epaphroditus who has come from Philippi to Rome to deliver a love offering to Paul from the Philippian church ([4:18](#)).

It appears Epaphroditus was to have remained in Rome with Paul indefinitely to minister to and encourage him. However, Paul is sending him back because *he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick* ([2:25-26](#)).

The Philippians' concern about Epaphroditus was well-founded because Paul writes: *For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow* ([2:27](#)). Whatever illness Epaphroditus had, it must have been very serious because he almost died. It is interesting that earlier Paul had exercised extraordinary gifts of healing so even *handkerchiefs* and *aprons* that had touched him were taken to *the sick*, and they were healed ([Acts 19:12](#)). However, apparently Paul lost his gift of healing as the NT was nearing completion.

That's why he writes what fact in [2 Timothy 4:20b](#)?

Paul didn't try to act super-spiritual; he didn't pretend to be a healer. He was real. If you want to win close friends, be authentic and honest. Paul never tried to act like a super-saint.

Therefore, how does Paul describe himself in [1 Timothy 1:15b](#)?

Paul had many close friends because he was real. Being real is what builds friendships. We must drop the mask and be transparent and honest about ourselves. I don't want to shock you, but I want to tell you a little secret about yourself. Are you ready? Ok! Everyone already knows you are not perfect! Does that surprise you? Don't pretend to be something you are not. Don't pretend to be a super-Christian. Get off the pedestal and be real, and you will have a lot more friends.

To make and keep friends, **be concerned, be consistent, be real**, and...

Be complimentary [2:28-30](#)

Now that Epaphroditus has recovered, Paul is sending him back and writes: *Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me* ([2:29-30](#)). Paul lets the Philippians know Epaphroditus had not failed in his mission, and he should be honored. What a compliment!

Nothing builds friendships like compliments. If you want to make and keep friends, look for something in them you can genuinely compliment.

How does [Proverbs 22:11](#) express this principle?

The Hebrew word translated **grace** refers to kind, favorable speech. Compliments! If you are complimentary, you can be friends with anyone, including kings, but negative, critical people don't have close friends.

To make friends, you must take off the blinders and look for the good in others; you will see it. How about your spouse? If you want to be good friends, find something to compliment. What about your kids or grandkids? I know they do stuff that irritates you, but look for the good in them to compliment, and you can be wonderful friends with your kids or grandkids. The reason it's hard for some of us to find something to compliment is we are often **oblivious to the obvious**. We are in a mode to just focus on the negative.

But having gracious speech and being able to make friends requires obeying what command in [Hebrews 3:13a](#)?

A friend brings out the best in others with compliments. So, bring out the best in others by encouraging them and building them up, not tearing them down.

To make and keep friends:

BE CONCERNED,

BE CONSISTENT,

BE REAL,

BE COMPLIMENTARY.

Which of these areas needs the most attention in your life? What will you do about it and when?
