

Ln 3 ... Making Great Friends

Galatians 2:1-10

We all want great friends because the absence of friends creates a horrible emotion called “**loneliness**.” Many of the greatest hit songs of all time were written about loneliness because the vast majority of people can relate to this feeling. A “path into liberated living” includes **making great friends**, which has **three** requirements.

Administer Encouragement (2:1)

Early in his ministry, Paul went to Jerusalem to see Peter ([1:18](#)). Paul now writes, *Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also* ([2:1](#)). The first time Paul apparently went alone, but this time he brings two great friends and co-laborers. **Titus** is a Gentile whom Paul won to Christ ([Tit. 1:4](#)). **Barnabas** is a circumcised Jewish believer who is greatly respected in the church at Jerusalem.

Paul was initially rejected by the apostles because they were afraid of him and did not believe he was a true disciple. Therefore, Barnabas took Paul to the apostles and told them about Paul’s conversion on the way to Damascus ([Acts 9:27a-c](#)).

What else did Barnabas tell them about Paul in the last phrase of [Acts 9:27](#)?

The name *Barnabas* means “son of encouragement.” He was an encourager, which made him a great friend to Paul in his early Christian life. He also accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey as they evangelized Galatia ([Acts 13](#)).

God often sends a “Barnabas” into our lives. The “Barnabas” in your life is the person who encourages you, renews you, and cares about you spiritually. God not only sends a “Barnabas” into our lives, but He also expects you and me to be a “Barnabas” to someone else.

That’s why God gives what command in [1 Thessalonians 5:11a](#)?

Like Paul, we all need friends who are a “Barnabas” to us and we need to be a “Barnabas” to others. The number one reason believers fall by the wayside is **discouragement**. It is the devil’s most effective weapon against Christians. Therefore, ask the Lord to help you be a “Barnabas” every day, beginning right now.

To make great friends, **administer encouragement** and...

Alleviate Conflict (2:2-5)

Paul returns to Jerusalem because of a *revelation* to confer with the church leaders in Jerusalem. There, he meets *privately* with those recognized to be leaders in the church, probably Peter, James, and John ([2:2a](#), [2:9](#)). Paul wants to inform the apostles about what he preaches *among the Gentiles*, for the sake of unity in the church. Without unity in the church, Paul fears his efforts will be *in vain* ([2:2c](#)).

Even though Paul has been sent personally by Christ to preach to the Gentiles ([Acts 9:15](#)), he wants to explain his ministry to the church leaders. He knows it will be difficult for Jewish believers in Jerusalem to accept Gentiles as equals in Christ. He goes to Jerusalem to alleviate any possible conflict.

Paul is obeying what command in [Romans 14:19a](#)?

Paul brings Titus, who is a “**test case**,” with him. The apostles accept Titus’ conversion because Paul writes they do not force him *to be circumcised*, even though he is *Greek*, or *Gentile* ([2:3](#)). This is in contrast to the Judaizers, who taught that a man could not be saved without being circumcised ([Acts 15:1b](#)).

Paul is a peacemaker who seeks unity with other believers, but not with false teachers. He will not allow the truth of the Gospel to be perverted. Therefore, he writes, *And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage* ([2:4](#)).

The word translated **false** (PSEUDĒS, sue-dace), from which we get the word “pseudo,” means “counterfeit” or “pretender.” The Galatian believers are being led astray by the Judaizers, whom Paul calls *false*, or counterfeit, *brethren*.

How does Jesus describe *false prophets* in [Matthew 7:15](#)?

We have *false* teachers today in the area of morality. The Bible is very clear about premarital sex and homosexuality ([Rom. 1:24-27](#)). Other *false* teachers question the inspiration of portions of sacred Scripture. Paul would call them all “**pseudo teachers**.”

Paul makes every effort to be at peace with the apostles. However, of the Judaizers he writes, *To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you* ([2:5](#)). We should strive to be peacemakers, but never at the expense of the truth of God’s inspired Word.

To make great friends, **administer encouragement, alleviate conflict**, and...

Accept Everyone (2:6-10)

Paul describes the leaders of the church in Jerusalem as *these who seemed to be somewhat* (2:6a). This refers to James, Peter, and John, whom Paul calls *pillars* in verse nine. This James is not one of the original Twelve. He is the half-brother of Jesus and author of the epistle that bears his name.

According to [Acts 12:2](#), what happened to the James who was one of the original Twelve and brother of John?

Some believers considered Peter, James, and John to be more important than the other disciples.

However, Paul writes, *whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me* (2:6b). Paul is not going to change his message. He wants to be sure everyone understands his commission came by direct revelation from Jesus Christ, not from even the most revered apostles.

Paul continues, *God accepteth no man's person: for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me* (2:6c-d). Paul is not being disrespectful toward the apostles. He is simply emphasizing his apostleship and message came directly from God, and not even Peter nor any of the other apostles could change that.

Paul explains, *But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter* (2:7). Paul is saying he has been *committed* with taking the gospel to Gentiles, while Peter and the other apostles have been *committed* with a ministry to Jews. Like Paul and Peter, each of us has been committed by Christ Himself with a sacred mission.

How is that mission summarized in [Mark 16:15b](#)?

Paul adds, *For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles* (2:8). In other words, they, like us, have all been commissioned by the same God. So, the Judaizers could no longer question Paul's authority or teaching. The word translated wrought effectually is the Greek word from which we get our word "energy." This refers to the

empowerment of the Holy Spirit. So, Peter could see the "stamp" of the Holy Spirit on Paul's ministry. Though his ministry was different from Peter's, Paul writes, *And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me* (2:9a). This means the *pillars* of the church at Jerusalem approved the message as preached by Paul and his ministry to the Gentiles. Therefore, they give Paul and Barnabas *the right hands of fellowship* (2:9b).

Paul's receiving right hands of fellowship from the apostles in Jerusalem would be a serious, if not fatal, blow to the Judaizers. This was a common sign of acceptance and friendship.

At the end of our worship services, we ask people to welcome those who have joined our church or made other public decisions by giving them *right hands of fellowship*.

After giving Paul and Barnabas *right hands of fellowship*, what happens ([2:9c](#))?

The apostles in Jerusalem realize there is an immediate, practical way for Gentile believers to be accepted by Jewish believers. Therefore, Paul writes, *Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do* ([2:10](#)).

The believers in Jerusalem are suffering terrible persecution, while many Gentile believers are doing well financially. This is because when Jerusalem Jews become believers, their families often disown them, kick them out of the family business, and leave them destitute. Paul has already brought a love offering from Antioch to the Jerusalem believers and is eager to continue helping the poor.

Being a former Pharisee, Paul is no doubt familiar with what promise in [Proverbs 19:17](#)?

Also, a person's economic status should have nothing to do with the acceptance by believers. In addition, we don't have to approve of a person's lifestyle to accept them as someone God loves. People are loved into the kingdom, not shoved.

To make great friends,

ADMINISTER ENCOURAGEMENT,

ALLEVIATE CONFLICT,

ACCEPT EVERYONE.