

The Value of Christian Friendships

Romans 16: 8-9

The apostle Paul seems to have had many friends. In this chapter alone he identifies by name over 40 individuals that are considered his friends. In our text he identifies Amplias, Urbane and Stachys as *“my beloved in the Lord.”* This morning I want us to focus on the value of Christian friendships and challenge us all to develop more of them. Why Christian friends? Why not friends in general? *“Do not be misled: bad company corrupts good character”* (I Cor. 15:33). God has given to Christians character of life.

I. A Christian friend loves you at all times . . .

“A friend loves at all times” (Proverbs 17:17). We are not sure if Amplias or Urbane visited Paul in prison, or sent a care gift while he was a prisoner, but we can be sure that they loved Paul when he was esteemed and when he was shamed. A friend will love you at all times --- in times of triumph or despair, joy or sadness, at all times! *“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples; if you love one another”*(Jn. 13:35).

II. A Christian friend wounds you at the right time . . .

The people closest to you are capable of hurting you the most. Think about this for a moment --- those near and dear to you who have hurt you, why does it hurt so bad? The only people capable of hurting you emotionally are those you consider friends. *“Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses”* (Pr. 27:6).

III. A Christian friend sharpens you for the appropriate time . . .

All of us need sharpening in character. A Christian friend rubs up against us like metal on metal and challenges us to be the best we can be and to do what is right. *“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”* (Proverbs 27:17). This verse comes in the chapter that deals with the subject of friendships among believers.

IV. A Christian friend focuses you for the next time . . .

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: if one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). A close friend picks you up and peps you up! He is an encourager when you stumble, and an exhorter on the journey of life.

Since Christian friends are so valuable, I want to encourage to do three things:

Celebrate old friendships --- if you knew you had one day to live and you could make one telephone call, who would you call, and what would you say? – why are you waiting?

Generate new friendships --- it only takes a small sacrifice to reach out and make a new friend, and if someone reaches out to you, don't ignore them.

Anticipate deep friendships – don't be afraid to be vulnerable. Open your heart and share your passions and dreams, your hopes and fears, your strengths and weaknesses.