

## Christian Friendship - Part 2

### Kindness & Encouragement

Various Texts

Well you've heard I'm sure how in the southern hemisphere, of course we live in the northern hemisphere, when you flush your toilet the water spins in the opposite direction. You know you've heard that because of the Coriolis effect the rotation of the earth and may not ever experimented with this but you heard this. It's not true, it's a myth, no it is a myth, it's a myth, it one of those believable myths, but it is a myth. The direction of the swirl of the water in your toilet has to do with toilet design, it has nothing to do with the Coriolis effect, just so you know. You've heard people say blind as a bat, you're blind as a bat. Of course, bats are blind, that's why God gave them all that echo radar stuff that sound, you know the echo location, well of course they're blind. No, it's not true. Bats are not blind, they're color blind, but they're not blind actually they have pretty good eye sight. God did give them the echo location skills but that's not true that they're blind. Hydrogen Peroxide you know that's good to pour on the wound if you got a cut, put that on there, it'll bubble up and those bubbles mean something good is happening there, right? No, most doctors now are pretty unified in saying it really does more damage to your skin cells and to the healing process if you didn't use it. That's a kind of common believable myth. Oh yeah, and if you chew bubble gum and swallow it, it'll stay in your stomach for seven years. You've heard that one, right? Not true. It probably won't make it seven hours the way that we eat. No, your bubble gum will not stay in your stomach for seven years. (02:08)

These are myths, they're believable I suppose to some because they sound reasonable, they seem to make sense but they're not true. There are some believable myths unfortunately they're circulating in our church and that's what I want to talk about this morning. Believable myths, a lie that it seems that growing Bible believing Christians are apt to believe. They swallow it hook line and sinker for some reason and I suppose the reason is because it sounds reasonable. It's a deception that Jesus countered with his teaching and not only his teaching with his example. It's one that all insightful Bible teachers who've studied the text of scripture have roundly denounced through the centuries and yet Christians I find even right here in our church they seem to believe it. The believable myth that really when it comes to the Christian life to be content all you need is your relationship with Christ. That's it. You relate to Christ, if you're walking in step with the Lord, you know what? That's all you need, you should be content with that. Well of course that is not what Jesus taught. As we looked last week, John 15, it's not what he demonstrated and his 12 friends that were his closest friends that wasn't just for the sake of some kind of mission that he was accomplishing, although it certainly was important to that. But even in the garden when he was distressed he looked at his friends and he said, "I need you now. I need you to watch and pray with me." This is not an act this is the perfect human being, is it not? The God-man Jesus Christ showing in his behavior and in his life and his patterns he needed to walk through his life with this friends, they were necessary components. He was not going to be content without them. (03:51)

Speaking of insightful Bible teachers, I assume you trust, generally speaking at least, the good insights of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Who said this about friendship, we need it, need it, we can't live self contained solitary lives we are refreshed by companionship sympathy, the advice of like minded comrades. We're foolish just to surround ourselves with a lot of acquaintances but the wise know what it is to find and invest in faithful friendships. He said friendship is one of the sweetest joys of life. This is not just a recent development in church history go all the way back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Chrysostom, one of the great golden mouth preachers of the early church that's what Chrysostom means. He said this about friendship, a friendship is more to be longed for than light, he said. It's better for us that the sun should be extinguished than that we should be deprived of friendship. Better to live in darkness than to be without friends. I mean that would be a poetic way to put it but I think he's right, studying the words and example of Christ, we need friends. And if you're life is lived without them, the kinds of friendships that we started to study last week then we've got a major deficiency. And if you sit around saying I should be content without this then you're believing a myth. It may sound reasonable, it may even sound godly to you, but it's not, it's the opposite of it. (05:18)

Last week we studied John 15 when we looked at several things about the priority of friendships and what we should have as Christians prioritizing our relationships and then we ended with as I told you, just a general direction. We



kind of pushed in the general direction and we used these words. Selfless generosity and that is the right direction but now I want to get very specific this morning and I want to turn primarily to the book of Philippians to draw some principles out of God's word that'll help us get specific about two things that I put under the heading as you see in the subtitle of our message this morning, we put under the heading of kindness and encouragement. Kindness and encouragement. Now we're going to turn to the book of Philippians, I want to start in the first chapter and if you'd turn there with me I want us to think in two distinct categories. Not that these words can't be interchanged at some level but I do want to take these two categories and give you three observations in each from the scripture and then have us leave with a much more specific target as it is to be that essential element of my life that I'm to invest in, cultivate and maintain. Real solid Christian friendships. (06:25)

Under the heading of kindness, let's put that in a category this morning. Although it's not exclusive to the category lets put it in the category of actions. So, let's call it this and then we'll explain it. Number one on your outline if you're taking notes and I wish that you would, jot this down, number 1 we need to perform strategic acts of kindness. (06:45)

### 1. Perform strategic acts of kindness

When it comes to our friends we need to perform strategic acts of kindness. Now you've heard the phrase, random acts of kindness have you not? I suppose that's good advice if we're creating a nice society to live in or a nice workspace at your office. But that won't do for friends. Random acts of kindness, what we need are strategic acts of kindness. Things that we give thought to and we do what the scripture teaches us to do when it comes to our friends. And that is we get very thoughtful, very strategic, very wise and insightful about how we are going to be kind. And I want to start in verse number 8 of Philippians chapter 1 to get our first sub-point here. As we think about the kindest thing we can do for our friends beginning in verse number 8. Philippians 1:8 says, for God is my witness, Paul speaking here to the Philippians, he says, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. Some great word studies we could do here if we had time, but the point is man he's transparent before God. God knows this is not just bloviating this is not platitudes, I long for you, I yearn for you with all the affection, there's a word of friendship, affection, of Christ Jesus. Now we have a connective conjunction here in verse number 9 to give us the first thing that we see that is the top of his priority list as an expression of his friendship and kindness for those people, it is mine – now underline this word, you care for people? You ought to do this – prayer, prayer. Letter A, let's jot it down this way, we need to pray strategic prayers. (08:13)

### A. Pray strategic prayers

And we're going to look at this prayer and try and itemize some things so hopefully you can write small and put several things here that Paul is going to pray about for people that he says he yearns for with the affection of Christ Jesus. You care for your friends, here's the kindest thing you can do for them. You can pray for them. Now we're good at praying for ourselves. We get little aches and pains and boo-boos in our life and we say, "Oh God, help me." We cry out to God, we go to the source of all good things and we recognize that he is the giver of them, so we pray even as he taught it, as give us this day our daily bread and anything else we might need we're going to go to you. You are the source of all good things just like when your stomach is grumbling for food and that refrigerator is the source of all good things. You just go to that and you open it up and you keep going back to that, and that's great. But if I'm sitting there at your house and you keep eating and munching down on all this good food, you keep going back and forth to that, I don't feel really much like a friend if you don't go to that refrigerator and start grabbing a few things out of that refrigerator and bringing them to me. Now that would be nice of you to do. That's what the Bible calls intercessory prayer. When we go to God not for our own needs but we're interceding on behalf of another that God would be good to them. That's the kindest thing you could ever do. Strategically wanting God to give them good things. (09:36)

There are four good things in this prayer, and let's just itemize them here, okay, ready? Letter A, we've got now sub-point 1, the thing that he asks for first is this. It is my prayer that, here it comes; your love may abound more and more. I put it down this way, we want God to generate more love – there's the key word – in my friends. So, I've got a list of friends and I want to start saying, "God I need to pray for them faithfully and I need to pray for them thoughtfully and strategically." Number 1 that you would increase this thing the Bible calls love. Now love is a great distillation of all the demands upon us from heaven regarding the Christian life. Jesus said this himself, you take all the rules and expectations of God and put them down to this one word in two directions and you know this. When it



comes to what God wants from us, one word, two directions. To love, first of all, the Lord God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. And to love each other, love our neighbor as ourselves. So, this covers a lot of ground but right now I would like to have my friends have God grant them more love in their lives in two directions. I want my friends to love God more and I want my friends to love people more. That is very important and I think it's not only something that is good for them and glorifying to God but wouldn't that be good for you? Wouldn't it? I mean if you're Jesus, let's just put us back in the upper room there from last week and I'm praying that their love would abound. Well, how much better would it be to be a part of that network of people? That would be great. Do you pray generally for our church to have love abound more and more? Well, it would be even more, more specific and more concentrated and more effective to take your list of friends and say, "I'm going to take my list of friends, I'm going to increase my list of friends and what I'm going to pray, selflessly and generously is that they would love God and love each other more and more." That's great, good place to start. (11:31)

Number 2, with knowledge, let's just make that the second thing, I want God to generate more love, I want God to give them or grant them more knowledge. That would be good. You don't want dumb friends, I assume. I'd like them to be smart friends. I'd like them to have knowledge and of course they can think like the world or they can think the way they ought to, the way God designed them to think. They need a Christian brain, with a Christian worldview and they need that and I want them to have that. That's why so often as I pray that for my friends I end up recommending things for them to read, I recommend things for them to think about, I recommend books for them to read, blogs for them. Hey, you need to, I just pray for you that you'll have more biblical knowledge, more wisdom about the world that you would see things the way God would see them, that's my prayer for them that becomes part of my concern for them and its certainly what God would have us do for people we yearn for with all the affection of Christ. (12:21)

Number 3, and all – what's the next word? – discernment. So, I want God to grant them three things. More love, more knowledge, I want God to give them more discernment. Now you know what that means. You can have all the smarts in the world in your brain but if you can't translate that into good decision making well then, it's for naught, right? I mean what good is it if you cannot apply that to life. So, discernment is that ability to take the knowledge that God has revealed in his word that we've gotten into our brains that we see the world with and begin to make decisions about that. Now isn't that what friendship is about in part that I'm walking through life with them and I know the decisions they're facing, I mean that's so much of what we discuss with our friends. What are you facing, what do you have to do, what are the decisions you have to make, what are you going to do about that job, what are you going to do about that account, what are you going to do about that vacation, what are you going to do about that diagnosis, what are you going to do? I want you to have discernment. Now to get more detailed he gives three things that will come from good discernment, good decision making. Here they come, fast upon each other in verse number 10, that you may, here it goes, approve what is, here's the first thing, excellent. So now I've got a little letter a under this third one and that is this, I want them to make those discerning decisions that become excellent decisions. They're the right thing, as I like to say that Greek word *teleos*, they're just the right things, it's just perfect, that's the perfect decision. Don't you want that for your friends? To make just the right decision with every fork in the road they just pick the most excellent path. That's good, that's what a want. So, I pray for good decision making, good discernment that results in excellent decisions. (13:49)

And the next thing certainly have to be concerned with this, purity. I want it to result in the fact that they're godly, they are holy, that they're pure. I want them to make the best decisions that does not lead them into temptation but they make the right decisions that really affirms and builds on their sanctification so I want discernment so they can make excellent decisions that can lead to more purity in their life and then the third one to kind of invert it, to be blameless on the day of Christ. I want them to have less regrettable decisions. I don't want them to have to stand before God with a lot of wood, hay and straw to use the words of 1 Corinthians chapter 3. I want them to make good decisions so they have less regrets when they stand before God. Wouldn't that be a great thing if people prayed that for you? We're not talking about you being recipients today. We're talking about you being agents of that. I need you to start saying I need to pray more strategically for my friends in at least three ways so far, love knowledge and discernment that result in decisions that are excellent, pure and blameless. (14:42)

And then one more which I guess is a summary of them all, it can hardly be itemized it really covers them all. It's this verse number 11, filled with the fruit of righteousness. Right, the outworking of God working through them that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. I want their lives to be more fruitful. I put it down this way, for God to bear fruit in them. That's what I want, just like it says in John 15, that the branches abide in the vine



and that through that connection with Christ, Christ is producing things in them that are good. They do good works, that's great. Generate more love, grant more knowledge, give more discernment, generate more fruit, bear more fruit. Boy, that would be great, that's how we need to pray, at least by way of example here in Philippians chapter 1 verses 8 through 11, I need to pray more specific and strategic prayers for my friends. That's the kindest thing you can do for your friends. (15:34)

Secondly, we'll be back to Philippians but let me turn you over to 2 Corinthians chapter 7, 2 Corinthians chapter 7, Paul is here giving a little autobiographical statement regarding when he came to Macedonia, this area that is now in modern day Turkey, and he's having a lot of trouble, a lot of conflict, a lot of opposition. He says in verse number 5 note this now it's on your worksheet already has the reference there listed for you but you'll have to look up the passage. Here it is 2 Corinthians 7 verse 5, for even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, we were afflicted at every turn. Now he explains – fighting without, or on the outside, we had a lot of conflict on the outside, and fears within. A lot going on turmoil in our hearts. But, here it goes, thankfully, God, who comforts the downcast, are you following along as I read this? God who comforts the downcast, comforted us period. Correct me if I'm wrong, is that what it says? No, it's about to explain the agency. Here's trouble in Paul's environment, turmoil in Paul's life, God is the giver of comfort, God please comfort us, God does comfort, he does it through the agency of something really specific here, by the coming of Titus. Titus shows up. Letter B, let's put it this way, you need to perform strategic acts of kindness, here's one, show up at strategic times. (17:00)

#### B. Show up at strategic times

You need to pray strategic prayers and you need to show up physically in the presence of your friends at strategic times when they need you there. As it says in Romans chapter 15 verse 2 this is something we do to bear their burdens and not please ourselves. You understand we need to think about when to show up in our friend's lives not when we want to be there, not when it's convenient for us but when we think as we pray for our friends I think they can use me there right now, and we show up. To show up in the presence of our friends is so important and I know that little device that I made you pull out earlier in the service makes us think that we're connecting with our friends and I suppose we are as I said before I'm not anti-phones, I'm not a Luddite, I understand the role of the phone in our lives and it has so many advantages but it gives us the illusion that we're connecting with people when in reality we don't even use our phones for the thing it's named after. We hardly ever talk on it, you notice that? Let alone get in the presence of someone and have real physical presence here. We're not even in their presence. You know that you as an average adult, certainly in Orange County it's probably more than this, but the national average for adults is you're checking your phone, I said this earlier in the year, 221 times according to Wall Street Journal report they issued. Two hundred and twenty-one times in your waking hours if you sleep a normal amount of time. That's every four minutes you're going to your phone and most of that is interaction with people. You're interacting with people through text and emails, you've got social media going on and you're checking and you're connecting with information about people. Unfortunately, that doesn't always translate into what God is intending for us, and that is that you are supporting people by you being in their lives physically. It gives us a sense of connection when in reality we need to go the rest of the way and actually show up more often. And that's not teenagers you understand. When I went to camp and preached to your teenagers last week, I mean I look at the stats for what they're doing on their phones which I don't even want to mention to you the stats of their phone usage. I'm talking about your phone usage. There's probably not four minutes in the day when they're not connected to their phones. Huh, we're connecting with our phone every four minutes and all I'm telling you about that is not that I'm against your phone but I am in favor of you recognizing that it's not enough and it certainly doesn't substitute with you showing up in their lives at strategic times. (19:29)

Now all of these things that I'm going to show you from scripture are going to require that you give some thought and some insight and wisdom and discernment yourself in knowing how to do it and I don't know the best times for you to show up in your friend's life but if you give it some thought and you pray about that, you'll know. You know what they're going through some, I just need to show up right now. I need to be there and then you need to be there, just like Titus was, look at verse 7, with some cheerful things, with some comforting things, not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you. In other words, he got a good report from the Corinthians as he told us of your longing and your mourning and your zeal so that I rejoiced still more. In other words, I rejoiced that he showed up and I rejoiced that when he was there he was a blessing to me, he brought joyful news. He relayed things from you Corinthians that was your love us, your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me and that really helped, because I was bummed. Bear one another's burdens, Galatians chapter 6 verse 2 says so



fulfill the law of Christ. As it's put in Romans 15 it is the obligation that we bear the failings of the weak, when they're weak and in this text Paul was weak and Titus was the one that was used to strengthen him and not please ourselves. Romans 15:1. Galatians 6:2, Romans 15:1 for you copious note takers. (20:45)

This may help you too to understand the spiritual battle that we face. 1 Thessalonians 2:18 as long as we're jotting references down. 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 18, 2:18, it says this, that Paul who intended to come to the Thessalonians, he says, I wanted to come to you, I, Paul, again and again – but Satan hindered us. Does it help you to know that one of Satan's strategies in your life is to keep you out of the presence of your friends? I hope that's those are fighting words, they should be fighting words for you. You should fight to be in the presence of your friends at strategic times when they need you there. Pray strategic prayers, very important, we all need to pray more for our friends. Go in that intercessory prayer to the source of blessing as I illustrated the refrigerator and bring them good things. God please grant them and then you know what? Sometimes God is going to answer their prayers by me showing up and just being a source of encouragement to them. (21:38)

Thirdly back to Philippians chapter 4, there's one more thing that is almost telescopically an extension of what we've just seen. When you are there as a sense of support bearing their burdens there's another way to do that even sometimes when you can't be there it'll be great if you brought this when you are there with them and that is under this heading the letter C on our outline, beginning in verse 14 of Philippians 4. It was kind of you, Philippians 4:14, got ahead of myself with all that setup but we'll see here comes the punch line. And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I was out there serving when I left Macedonia, no church entered into – now underline this – partnership with me. By the way partnership if it's not already noted in your Bible somewhere. If you grew up in the you know 70s the cool groovy youth room that you had, where you had posters up, one of them might have said that Greek word transliterated, Koinonia, remember that? Maybe it was called that, it was some etched burned wooden sign. The Koinonia Room, or something like that, right? I'm just talking to myself at this point apparently but with the green shag carpet and the paneled walls. The Koinonia Room. Koinonia what does that mean? Well when you translate it in your mind and the Bible studies in Junior High it was what? Fellowship, fellowship. That's this word right here. Here's an aspect of fellowship, partnership and that is the aspect of giving and receiving. He says you guys helped me in my troubles, look again at verse 14, you shared in my troubles. In this case, it wasn't just showing up, in this case you sent an emissary, Epaphroditus, you gave me something and I received that thing. (23:23)

Even in Thessalonica, verse 16, you sent help for my needs, you brought a gift to me, once and again. Not that I seek the gift, not that I'm grubbing for a handout, he says, but I'm excited about the process of Koinonia here. I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. Which is a very interesting thing to say. Paul loves his friends so much, that he says I'm glad you came and brought me a gift because I'm glad what that does for your relationship with God. Now it would sound like an arrogant thing to say because you're not an Apostle, but it's a good thought for you to have. To say you know when we start giving and receiving things that we give as an act of love to our friends, here's a gift, something that might encourage you. Here's something I think you might need, that's a great thing to know that in that expression there is this sense of God crediting people with giving. God takes it personally. He says, as I have received, verse 18, full payment and more. I've got all that I need, I'm well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. Now he describes what they are, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to me. Underline me. Do you see that there? Pleasing to who? God. Now that's interesting. Here he is, now he's a teacher, so he's going to break into this stuff all the time. But he says you brought me a gift and met my need, you shared in my trouble, you helped bear my burden, you brought me something that was helpful to me. And you know what? God saw it. I love this, as a fragrant, a fragrant offering, it was a gift that God, it was like driving down La Paz when In-N-Out Burger is just blazing with their smoke coming out of the roof of that place. Even on the I-5 sometimes, am I not right? Down there you can sometimes smell it when the wind is right and even in anticipation of that I just roll my window down, just to smell it, it smells so good. (25:19)

Now can you imagine today giving thoughtful attention to strategically saying, "What would bless my friend this week?" And you decide to give them something, and you give that gift and God goes, "[sniff] Ahh, that smells so good." I know that's an analogy. But you know that feeling that's hard to put into words the thing that you smell something that smells so good, so savory. God says I love when I see my kids giving gifts to each other like that. A fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice and of course you don't even need this word we know what a fragrant offering does to you God it is pleasing to you. And again, I'm very one sided about this because we general direction of friendship last week and that was selfless generosity and now I said be warned don't start thinking who said





who's going to meet my needs. If all I'm all about meeting needs and giving gifts and giving all this encouragement and kindness, who's going to be? Here Paul says listen my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory. Why? Because he loves to see you guys giving gifts. That's why he said I'm more excited not about the fact that you met my needs which doesn't sound like a very good thank you but he's a teacher, he's trying to express this. It's even better what credit you got from God because he was so pleased with how you gave gifts to your friends. (26:36)

Now situations in our church, it may be the rare exception, actual monetary need and you have to lay down some money, but sometimes it happens. Just so happens had a discussion at the end of the last service about someone in a situation and they needed something that cost money. They don't really need the money but people stepping up and meeting that need. And I thought we just preached on this and there it is, the expression of generosity. Let me give this to you, I'm going to lend you my car this weekend. I want you to take this and just do it and here this was the giving and the receiving and God [sniff] Ahh it smells good. Give strategic gifts. (27:12)

### C. Give strategic gifts

So, we've got three things here under number 1. Pray strategic prayers, show up at strategic times, and give strategic gifts. That's going to be something that you have to give thought to, you're going to have to creatively think. What will be a helpful blessing of a gift to give to my friends? Number 2 broken this into two categories, though the words can be interchangeable in some degree but the categories I want to focus on are acts of kindness and secondly words of encouragement. Let's put it this way, number 2, certainly thoughtful has got to be a part of it as well. We need to offer thoughtful words of encouragement. Number 2, let's jot that down. Offer thoughtful words of encouragement just like we need to perform strategic acts of kindness. (27:57)

### 2. Offer thoughtful words of encouragement

It's about what I do in my friends lives and it's about what I say. Now soon as I say offer thoughtful words of encouragement if you don't see the word thoughtful there and you just say, "Oh I need to say encouraging things to my friends." What's going to happen unfortunately because it's so easy to dump words out of our mouth is we're going to say things and not give a lot of thought to it and sometimes those things we dump out are just platitudes, they're just really, I mean flattery, they're just empty words of praise or just trite sayings. And I don't want that and that's why I want to give a qualifying statement. If you're still in Philippians 4 look up at verse number 8. Let's just use this as a governing parameter of the words that I share with my friends that we're seeking to encourage then, I want to make sure that they're in the category of truth. Look at it, verse number 8, finally brothers whatever is true and add to that whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely – this is Philippians 4:8 – whatever is commendable if there is any excellence or if there is anything worthy of praise think about these things. Now put yourself in this context, Paul is telling these people that are perhaps going to worry and be anxious, don't worry, pray and then God, he will guard your hearts and minds, verse 7. And now verse 8, now think about these things. So, I know this, my friends, God wants in their minds this kind of thing to be bouncing around. True things, honorable things, just things, pure things, lovely things, commendable things, excellent things and things that are worthy of praise. That's what needs to be in their mind. Now what I don't want to shove into my friend's head is vain things, platitudes, cheap sentimental lines that don't mean anything, flattery, empty praise, I don't want any of that in there. What I'd like is to encourage people with the truth. So, I put it this way, letter A, we need words that reflect God's. (29:45)

### A. Words that reflect God's

I want words that reflect God's words. Doesn't mean I'm quoting God's word although that's not a bad idea either. Have you noticed how that can be real encouraging to your friends? Write it out by hand that verse that you know might minister to them right in that situation, encourage them. Great, that's good. It doesn't have to be verbatim, but certainly we don't want them to be outside the bounds of what God's word says. In other words, I do not want to try and encourage people with lies. I want to encourage people with the truth. And by the way, haven't you been on the receiving end of some platitudes that you know are empty praise? How does that feel? I mean unless you're dense, you're thinking this does nothing for me. It's like someone running through Wal-Mart and grabbing a card off the shelf, signing it and giving it to you. It's like words, I mean half the time half of you don't even read the front of the card. Am I revealing too much here about myself? They didn't write that? I want to get to the part they wrote. Now



smile at me, you do that too. You want to quickly what did they write? Not what the guys at some company, you know, write on his hours working for some card company, Hallmark. All I'm telling you is sometimes it feels like the words are nothing but a printed set of words that are really not thought out well, so let's not give words that just sound like they should be given but let's give words that we really give some thought to. Words that are truthful. So, with that said, and we said that quickly just make sure you underscore this in your notes and I put it down for you there and that is Proverbs 16:24. If you want to turn there it'll only take a second and only take me a second to read it. But I guess as you're looking at this if you are turning there and I'll read it for you, you don't have to turn there but let me remind you of 1 Samuel chapter 14. (31:22)

In 1 Samuel chapter 14 there's something that sets my mind up for what I'm about to read to you in Proverbs 16. 1 Samuel 14 you might remember Saul's in charge. Saul is the king. God is taking his favor off Saul, he's the king, he's a loser at this point in his life and David has been anointed the king and God's favor rest on him and yet he's running as a fugitive and you've got the son of Saul, his name is Jonathan, and Jonathan is friends with David and he's not loyal to his father in many ways because he knows his father is doing toward David is unjust and not right. Well there is a day when he's seeking his enemies, trying to tear you know David and his crew and everybody else down and Saul says in his consternation toward his army, no one is going to eat till we kill our adversaries. So, we're going hunting here for people and no one is going to eat any food until we hunt our adversaries and kill them all. Well Jonathan who communication is not great in the ancient days as it should be in the modern day, and he gets to the group, and he's the prince, he's the king's son, he doesn't hear the command that's come down and that's why no one stopping for lunch here, as they're out here marching through the forest. Well as they're going out to battle he sees a honeycomb that falls to the ground and it's broken open and there's fresh honey in it. He takes his staff and he dips his staff in it and takes it and puts it up to his mouth and he takes it – I love the Hebrew idiom – and his eyes brightened. He takes just, now you can imagine, you know the MREs the Meals Ready to Eat have not been issued, no one is barbequing anything, these guys are hungry. He's hungry, he doesn't know why everyone's not eating, he didn't know about the ban on food and the obligatory fast, he takes that like candy in the ancient world and he sticks some in this mouth and he goes, "Mmmm, wow, that's good." And he's revived and he keeps on going. And people say, "Oh, your Dad said we're not supposed to eat." Now with that in view, no one likes to be famished and have a mouthful of honey. Here's the text, Proverbs chapter 16 verse 24. (33:13)

Gracious words, gracious words are like a honeycomb, there is sweetness, not to the palate of your mouth but to your soul. Matters of fact, just like that idiom, they brighten your eyes, they give health to the body. It's so good to hear the right kind of words. Gracious words, not flattery, not empty praise, genuine thought out encouraging words. I put it this way, letter B, words that cheer hearts. (33:43)

#### B. Words that cheer hearts

That's what we need to be giving. Words that cheer hearts, they're designed that way, they're gracious, they're honest, they're truthful. But they're words that are pleasant, it's like food. Food analogies are great, think about this, it's like eating candy. And if you're the health nut, sorry – for you, it's like a fluffy ham and cheese omelet. Just to modernize it out of the Jewish context for a minute. Mmm, you wake up famished, it's like a juicy double cheese burger, as long as I brought up In-N-Out here. Mmm, let's move later in the day. It's like a slice of chilled cheesecake. Mmm, that's what it's like. What's like that? Oh, gracious words, they're like that to the soul. You ever experience that? (34:48)

Proverbs 27:9, oil and perfume they make the heart glad and the sweetness of a friend, look at that, the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel. His honest statements, not his flattery. But when you know they mean it, that's why the word thoughtful is so important. They offer thoughtful words of encouragement. What kind of words? Well you know words are intended to cheer them, to make their heart happy, like eating a piece of candy. You know how easy that is to do and yet we don't do it? You could right now, I mean even through a text and again I'm not against the phones you can actually send electronically a Recess Peanut Butter cup to someone's soul. Five words, five words. I am thankful for you. How hard is that to text? Too many words? Okay, I appreciate you. There's three words. You can pull out your phone right now in the middle of this sermon. Think of some friend as I'm teaching on friendship on a Sunday morning in the middle of the morning and just say, you know what? This is thoughtful, it's sincere, I appreciate you. You ever pull out your phone and get a statement like that, and go, "ugh, ick". No, it maybe small, like a couple of chocolate M&Ms, it maybe small but it's good. It's good. Gracious words are like a honeycomb, a sweetness to the soul. (36:24)

Speaking of bearing one another burdens it may be like Paul that you cannot possibly encourage them and bear their burdens with their presence. I mean it will help to get some words over there to them. By the way a lot of the New Testament is an expression of that. Reading letters where Paul couldn't be there and he's giving them encouragement. Proverbs 12:25, Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down. Titus showed up at a strategic time, that's good, but even if you can't, a good word makes him glad. Anxiety, [uhh] it's like a backpack, a good word can be like helping hold that backpack up. Words that cheer hearts. Can you get more strategic about that? More thoughtful about that? Use your phone for something other than chasing imaginary things in parking lots. And text your friends, that you appreciate them, that you think of them, that you pray for them, that you like them. That would be good. (37:31)

Letter C, back to Philippians the longest passage I want to look at, just because it's long because it's a great example of what I'm about to say. Philippians chapter 2 verses 19 to 30. Philippians 2:19 to 30. Now let me give you the point so that you can write down the wording of the third section or the third movement, second category here. And then we'll bounce around in this passage a little bit. Here's letter C, you need to offer words of encouragement, what kind? Words that honor people. (38:03)

### C. Words that honor people

There's key word, honor people. Letter C. Thoughtful words of encouragement, what kind of words? Words that honor them. That's the category. Now keep your thinking cap on because I want to bounce around in this passage real quickly here and observe three ways that he does it. One is a command that is a direct way to do it. Look at verse 29, speaking of Epaphroditus he tells the Philippians, receive him in the Lord with all joy, embrace him and receive him and welcome him joyfully. And – here it comes – honor such men, so I'm assuming words are going to be a part of that because I know the context is certainly describing how you honor people with words. So, would you honor Epaphroditus? Say things that put him on a pedestal. Say things that are praising him, that's not an ungodly thing to do, that's not blasphemous. We're praising the person, honor them. That's the first way to do it and it's direct. (38:56)

But, now start in verse 19 and I'm going to show you two other ways to do it. Here's two other ways to do it that we ought to do more of. I do want you to honor your friends, not just say, "I appreciate you", which is how you feel toward them, and it may cheer them, but start praising them for who they are and what they do. You honor them. Now, verse 19, I hope in the Lord to send Timothy, and here's what I'm going to have him do for, no. He doesn't get in, it's not just a statement of who he is, now he's going to start praising him and honoring him. I hope in the Lord to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. And listen I have no one like him, verse 20. He's genuinely concerned for your welfare. Man, does he care, does he love people, for all seek after their own interests. I mean that's a general statement about most people just looking out for themselves and not those of Christ. Oh, but not Timothy, no, no, no, but Timothy you know he's proven worth, he's like a son with his father, serving with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it goes with me whether I'm going to get out of prison or not. And I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come to and I am going to get out of prison. And he says I thought it necessary to send Epaphroditus and it's not a period here, oh he's my brother he's my fellow worker, he's my fellow soldier, what a fighter he is. He's your messenger, look how he serves you and he's bringing messages and he's a minister to me. That's praising our friends to other people, now that's a different aspect of this but it's a very important nuance distinction. It would be good for us to speak well of other people because most people talk about other people in negative ways. I'm just saying why not talk to people about people when you're honoring them. You are now honoring your friends as you speak to your other friends. How great it would be if in our circles of conversation and someone comes up, you stop and immediately start saying some things, what a great servant that person is. What a cheerful person that is. You know how well, how they sacrifice for you. I just really appreciate that person. Now I would like you to do this as a secondary means of honoring people because it would be good if you told them that. But if you are telling them that it would be good for you to tell other people that's what you think of them. That's the second way that we honor them. (41:02)

There's even a third way, keep reading verse 26. For he has been longing for you all, and he has been distressed because you heard he was ill and indeed he was ill and near to death, but God has mercy on him, not only on him but on me because if he were to die I would have sorrow upon sorrow. But I'm the more eager to send him therefore that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and then I'm less anxious and I will be when we get him over there to you. So,





receive him in the Lord with all joy, honor such men for he nearly died for the work of Christ. Risking his own life to complete what is lacking in your service to me. Now that is praising Epaphroditus as to what a good friend he is to them. There's a distinction there do you see the nuanced distinction? Both in verse 26 in particular and verse 30, he's not just saying what a great guy this is to me now he's saying what a good friend that person is to you. That's an honoring of people who are observed to be a good friend to the person I'm speaking to. Now just think if we starting doing that kind of honoring, directly honoring people, praising them for what they've done, and then honoring people to other people for what they've done, and then observing how people have done good things for others and honoring them for doing that. I mean there's just a quick little network of ways in which this is done in this passage and all I'm telling you if you have that kind of network of conversation we'd have no time to gossip and slander about each other. We'd be talking good things about each other and accentuating the positive that God is doing among us. Is there a time to confront? Yes, that's fine, we've got to do that, but right now what we need in our church are more of these networks of truthful affirmations about what's true, what is excellent and what is commendable. Have you been commending people lately? You need to, directly, indirectly and about how people are commendable in the lives of other people. (42:56)

I think you wouldn't mind having Howard Hughes portfolio back in the day. A very rich man, very successful. A lot went his way, I mean we know all about his exploits in business and his success of his company and all that, he's a weirdo I understand that, but Howard Hughes, I mean at one point was worth 4 billion dollars, just him. 4 billion dollars and it was at that point, the height of his financial success he said this, "I'd give every dollar just for a few friends." Now think about that, I mean you might think you want to trade places with him because he's so successful. He's got a lot of things going right in his life. But the thing that he craved and knew that he needed was friendship. You know there's a lot of things that go right in our church but don't be deceived because the portfolio, the spiritual portfolio looks rich, good missions are taking place, church planting is taking place, evangelism is taking place, our doctrine is good, you can get excited about all of that but God could look at us and say, "I know you guys think you're rich and wealthy and in need of nothing, but there's a deficiency there. In your heart makes you poor, miserable, blind and naked and you know what it is, it's the lack of friendship among you." I don't want God to say that about us, and I don't think you want to live that way either. (44:11)

So, last week I encouraged you to linger around, that was, you know last weekend was one of the greatest weekends just to see people here. I know we had a traffic jam between services and all that but how great it was to see our church lingering around saying, "You're more important to me, than my time and me getting off to some other place." This week I want to focus more, not just today but throughout the week on strategic acts of kindness, that's very important when it comes to what I can pray for, when I can show up and how I can give things to my friends. And then thoughtful words of encouragement, ones that are truthful reflect God's truth but they cheer hearts and honor people. Let that be our commission this week, and you know the target is not just going out there and doing this to anybody, I mean really this series is about Christian friendships because our bond in Christ is the fact that we are purchased by Christ's blood. I think that's important for us to underscore because you might look at this list and say we could do this in any non-Christian relationship I guess that would help, I suppose you could try but you're going to fall short of what we're looking for here. And that is people that have been made brothers and sisters that we will lay down our lives for each other because Christ has purchased us. That because of his broken body and his spilled blood we're forgiven and redeemed. Which I just want to follow hard upon that truth by saying that makes us brothers and sisters in Christ. Don't rush to your cars, don't neglect your sisters and brothers in Christ, invest in them this week with strategic acts of kindness and thoughtful words of encouragement. Pray with me please. (45:47)

God as we taste these elements it's to be a tangible reminder that our theology is not built on an idea or a concept it's built on historic facts that a real body was hung on a Roman execution rack, that a real face was beaten by Roman soldiers, that a real back was ripped open by the cat of nine tails by Roman soldiers. Those things happened so that your justice could be completely satisfied in Christ. So, you could look at us as though we had never sinned because your justice was satisfied on that cross. God, we thank you so much that we are participants in that as not we can sit on some spiritual island in solitude as Spurgeon rightly said we're made for friendships, one of the sweetest gifts you've given us and we need to indulge in that in our church. So, heighten our commitment to one another and let us do that kind of kind and thoughtful encouraging relating to one another this week with the foundational thought that we are brothers and sisters because we are forgiven children of God because of the work of Christ your Son. Thank you for that reminder through the Lord's Supper this morning. In Jesus Name, Amen. (47:03)

