

# Contagious Joy

## Part 11 – Friends You Can Count On

Philippians 2:19-30

June 14, 2009

*Having a friend you can count on, trust your life with, and who has your back is a rare commodity these days. Finding a friend like that is like finding pure gold. You sift through a lot of relationships before you find what you're looking for. Paul has 2 such friends in Timothy (v. 19-24) and Epaphroditus (v. 25-30). Let's evaluate our own friendships in light of these 2 scriptural examples.*

*Proposition: What are the characteristics of a trustworthy friend?*

### I. Biographical Sketch: Who were these guys?

#### A. Timothy... **son**

1. Name means: honors God. He was a native of Lystra or Derbe in southern Asia, which is modern day Turkey.
2. Child of mixed marriage: Jewish Mom (Eunice) Greek father (never named). He was heavily influenced by his Greek heritage since we know that he wasn't circumcised as a child but as a young adult.
3. His mom and grandma (Lois) had a profound effect on him spiritually (I Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15)
4. Paul had mentored Timothy and introduced him to Christ (I Cor. 4:17). Paul as an older mentor had invested in this young man. He even included him in the salutation in this letter. He had joined Paul and Luke on a missionary journey. **Acts 16:1-3**

#### 5. **I have no one else like Timothy**

#### B. Epaphroditus... **brother**

1. He may have been the pastor of the Philippian church.

2. He had been sent to deliver a gift from the Philippian church while he was under house arrest. He was trusted with delivering their love gift. (4:18)
3. Shortly after his arrival he got ill. In fact his life was in danger... almost died! After he recovered, he (not Timothy who Paul had planned to send) was sent back to Philippi with this letter. He might also be a bit homesick because he wanted to get back to his flock.
4. Paul emphasizes what Epaphroditus **did** in contrast to describing who Timothy **was**.
5. **Hold him in highest honor or esteem**

### II. Why was their friendship unique?

The Poet John Donne that said “no man is an island”. Even though Paul was fiercely independent, he needs friends.

#### A. **Like-minded** (*kindred spirit*) (v. 19-20)

1. Only time it is used. 2 words meaning “same souled”
2. They thought alike, they were congruent...though their temperaments were different.
3. Example: David and Jonathon

#### B. **Compassion driven** (*genuinely concerned*) (v. 20-21a)

1. People vs. projects, profits, power, or possessions!
2. Care about the right things. Timothy cared about them not his personal agenda.
3. Example: Good Samaritan
4. Contrast: Jesus wept for the city of Jerusalem.

#### C. **Christ-centered** (v. 21b)

1. His consistent testimony was reflected by integrity that demonstrated that his priorities were in order.
2. Vs. self-absorbed or self-centered. Sound familiar? He is reinforcing his previous teaching. (2:3-4)

- Timothy modeled this himself. He was the helper not the star.
  - He not only served them, but Paul
3. What is Christ's interest? Total obedience to his heavenly father.
  4. **F. B. Meyer preached right into his eighties. When he was at the age of 82, he said in one of his sermons: 'I have only one ambition, to be God's errand-boy'.**

D. **Servant-oriented** (v. 22-24)

1. Servants emphasize sacrifice over indulgence. Service before security.
2. James 2:17 Faith without works is dead. Where are you serving?
3. Thomas Brooks, the 17th-century puritan, said: 'Example is the most powerful rhetoric'.
4. Contrast: power hungry
5. Timothy: Like a son to a father (v.22)
  - Proven worth: caliber; tested character...integrity.
  - Friends you can count on are friends you can trust.

E. **Relationally connected** (v. 25-28)

1. He switches to Epaphroditus and describes him as a...
  - **Brother:** We are **family**. Brother used 133 times in NT to describe the relationship between Christians. Who is in your heart?
  - **Fellow worker:** We are **focused**. We work together for the common goal of the Gospel. Who is by your side?
  - **Fellow soldier:** We are in a **fight!** It is a battle. It will cost you something assuming you are willing to make sacrifices. Who has your back?

2. Could these adjectives describe you?

- **longing** v. 26 cf 1:6
- **distressed** (Gr. *ademonon*) also described Jesus' feelings in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37; Mark 14:33).

F. **Courageously committed** (v.29-30)

1. He instructs them to hold guys like Epaphroditus in high regard. Why? He was willing to risk his life for the gospel! He had a cause to die for? He was committed. (v. 30)
2. **About 80 years ago, Nicolai Lenin talked to a little group of 12- 14 people and said, "Give me 100 totally committed men and I will change the world."**
3. **Mark 8:35 For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel shall save it.**
4. **Courage:** (Paraboleuomai): to hazard with one's life; to gamble; He gambled his life for the gospel.
  - Aphrodite (Venus) was the goddess of gamblers. When a pagan Greek threw the dice he would cry out "*epaphroditos!*" meaning "favorite of Aphrodite." Epaphroditus' name may have connections with this custom. If so, Paul may have written that Epaphroditus "risked [gambled] his life" as a play on his friend's name.
5. He was committed: He placed Christ before his own comfort or convenience.
  - Paul is in prison in Rome and the people in Philippi took up an offering to help Paul with his expenses. It was 800 miles and 6 weeks travel over rough terrain. Epaphroditus volunteered to take it. On the way there he caught a disease or infection, and it was deadly. But Epaphroditus is persistent in spite of his pain and near death experience. **He didn't quit, didn't give up!**

What are you willing to risk? What sacrifice are you willing to make?

6. Will you step up? Timothy and Epaphroditus did! They were ready to go anywhere. Two: they were ready to help anyone; and three: they were ready to sacrifice anything and everything. It is the pattern of Scripture!
7. Henry Martyn (Anglican missionary and linguistic expert who translated the entire NT in Urdu, Persian). On the eve of his departure for India said: 'I go to burn out for God, I am prepared to go anywhere, I'm ready to help anyone, and I'm prepared to sacrifice anything'. He died shortly before his 31<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Conclusion: Will you be that kind of Christian? That kind of friend? We need you!

### **Table Talk**

1. Do you have the kind of friends Paul describes? If not, why not?
2. As you review the 6 characteristics, which ones do you exhibit in your life most consistently? Least consistently?
3. Where are you sacrificially serving here at church?
4. Where do you need to stand up with courage in your life?