Christian Friendship

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Date: 04 February 2024

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[0:00] Timothy chapter 1. I heard about, you know, how local churches send out postcards to the neighborhood. I heard about a local church that sent out a postcard to the neighborhood saying, come to church, we won't lick you.

To me, that would be an immediate, like, no thank you? Because this implies that there may have been a past in which licking occurred or at the very best case, they've put the youth pastor in charge of advertising.
What about this postcard? What if we sent this out? Come to church, you won't be lonely. Come to church, you won't be lonely. So is that true?
Would be a good question. For us to ask as a local church and as individuals. And I think I can say this. That in order to become more and more like the church God would have us to be, we've got to make that statement more and more likely in so much as it depends on us.
And we're really supposed to be in 2 Timothy chapter 2 this week, but I didn't want to leave chapter 1 without discussing the theme of friendship. In fact, all of this week, we're going to discuss this theme.
[1:24] On Monday, Angela is going to speak with the ladies about friendship. And on Tuesday, there'll be a podcast on the subject. On Wednesday, community group discussing this. And also on Thursday and Friday, even more content coming via the podcast.

So this is a friendship week for us. And I think as you'll see, hopefully today, but certainly throughout the week, is that growing in the art of friendship is a leading indicator to one's own growth and godliness.
You know, you wouldn't want to measure your growth and godliness simply by the amount of information you're learning, right? You want to look at some kind of real world living out evidence because faith without works is dead.
And so it's like, well, what do you look at? But one of the first places you might look is, am I becoming better at friendship? And of course, friendship is also a leading indicator of a healthy church.
Now, we will get to the text, but because we're going to talk about this all week, I wanted to take some time this morning to lay out some fundamentals. And the first thing I want to do is I want to define friendship in a way that applies to all people, not simply to Christians alone.
[2:40] So I want to define friendship just in general, because friendship is a lot like marriage. Jesus says that God causes the rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous alike.

This is a reference to something called common grace, where God gives his gifts to all people, marriage being one of those gifts. And friendship is also one of those things that God has instituted, created for the blessing of all people.
So I want to come up with a definition that applies universally. I think the thing we can come up with, even though we don't have, it would be nice if we just had a Bible verse that said, well, I will trust the Lord's wisdom in not giving us this.
We don't have a Bible verse that just says friendship defined is this. What we do have is a whole book full of friendships explained to us, a narrative unfolding of multiple friendships.
And we also have lots of passages that tell us the kinds of things friends do. So you say, well, Chris, where are you getting your definition? It's like, well, I'm getting it by analyzing the biblical data.
[3:51] And here's what I would say. The definition of friendship would be this. A friend is someone who was willing to invest himself in your good.

A friend is someone who is willing to invest himself in your good. Whether that's investment of time, mental energy, resources, and so forth, a friend is someone who is willing to invest himself in your

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good.
Now, that's a universal definition. Let's shrink it down and differentiate and say, what is distinct about Christian friendship?
Well, broadly speaking, the thing that makes Christian friendship different is found in 2 Timothy 1, verse 7, and also again in verse 14.
Both of these verses say the same thing slightly differently, and both say this, for God gave us, plural, a spirit. For God gave us a spirit, or in verse 14, by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.
[5:01] In a categorical sense, the main difference between a Christian friendship and a non-Christian friendship is the existence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian that is a shared supernatural force that both individuals or multiple individuals are experiencing.

You could say this way, we've got this universal definition of friendship. A friend is someone willing to invest themselves in your good. And then we can say that beneath that, there's two forms of friendship.
Friendships that have the flesh in common, and friendships that have the spirit in common.
Friendships that have the flesh in common, and friendships that have the spirit in common.
Now, that's really rock solid in terms of what the Bible says. Our unity as Christians comes about because we have the Lord God living inside of us through the Holy Spirit, and that creates the difference in the dynamic between Christians and non-Christians in terms of friendship.
But let's get a little bit more specific. So there's three markers that I can see, at least three markers of spiritual friendship. And the first one is, is that we have a defined understanding of goodness.
[6:20] Remember the definition, a friend is someone who is willing to invest himself in your good. But here's the problem with that. We don't all naturally agree on what our good is.

Right? So if you have a friendship walking in the flesh, you might have two, three, or ten definitions of what good is. Each person might bring their own aspiration of this is what I think is for my good, or this is what I think is for my good.
They might get that from the culture or their own emotions or whatever. So in a non-Christian friendship, goodness is either individually or culturally defined. But in a Christian friendship, the presence of the Holy Spirit, illuminating the Word of God, gets us all on the same page about what good is.
And we all have the same good, namely godliness. The Christian understands that the best thing for him or her, the best good he can achieve, is to become more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.
So in Christian friendship, we have an agreed upon, a predefined sense of what good we are to be seeking for one another. A second idea that's unique to Christian friendship is there's an ethos, an attitude of delayed gratification.
[7:46] The first one is defined good. The second one is delayed gratification. What do I mean by that? Well, I mean that Christian friendships operate with an eye toward eternity. They operate with an eye toward eternity.

You will often see, in fact, you see when Jesus becomes the husband, the friend of the bride, the husband friend of the bride, he is working for her eternal good.
Paul often expresses a desire to present his friends pure and blameless on that day. In chapter 1, Paul is celebrating a friend who stood by him, and he says, may the Lord bless him and show him mercy on that day.
Christian friendship, in addition to having a defined good, has some sense that there is a future harvest of happiness, and that's what we're all working toward.
So there's an emphasis on delayed gratification in Christian friendship, investing ourselves in this eternal joy that we await for in the new heavens and the new earth.
[8:58] And number three, another distinction in Christian friendship is Christian friendship has a dependence on God. I mean that specifically this way, to supply the things we need to be good friends.

So a non-Christian friendship has their own resources, their own thoughts, their own wisdom, their own understanding, their own amount of natural patience, their own amount of natural moxie, to say the hard thing.
But Christians have an additional set of resources in the Lord with which to invest in one another.
Last Wednesday, Kate Wilhoff shared at Moms University on the book of Ruth, which is a prime

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example of friendship.
And I want to point one thing out to you about that story that's so meaningful to me as I try to be a good friend. So it starts with Ruth taking responsibility for Naomi.
She is going to invest her life in Naomi's good. But she has written a check that she can't cash. She does not really have the resources to be the kind of friend to Naomi that Naomi needs.
[10:18] And what do we see unfold in that story after she's made the commitment, I will be your friend? What do we see? We see the Lord providing the resources that Ruth needs to care for Naomi.

The commitment is made of faith. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Ruth has tremendous faith. We're going to talk about this again in a moment. And in her commitment to the friendship, she discovers the resources that only God could provide in order to fulfill her obligations and her commitment to that friend.
At first, it's pretty hand-to-mouth. It's mostly Ruth elbow grease. She's out gleaning in the fields. But very soon, Boaz, the Christ figure, starts furnishing Ruth with more and more resources.
And when we look at that text, we see that Boaz, the Christ figure, is saying, it is because you have done this great honor. You have made this commitment. I want to make sure you're taken care of.
And so what she thought when she made the commitment was that she would have very little resources to actually be Naomi's friend. But God met her in her commitment to friendship and provided richly above and beyond all that she could ask or imagine.
[11:38] The story ends with Naomi being kind of the wealthy grandmother type. You know, she can afford to go to the salon every week to get her hair did. But almost none of that involved Ruth's resources.

All of it pretty much involved Ruth's commitment and God's resources. And that's the picture of Christian friendship. And friends, if you're in a marriage, if you're walking with your kids, if you're in a friendship, you need to understand that one of the unique glories of Christian friendship is that you are not limited by what you have.
God will give you what you need to serve the other. So those are some distinctives of Christian friendship. And really, this book, 1 Timothy, and this is why I didn't want to move on until we covered this, it's really a book that is friendship on display.
What Paul is doing is friendship. That's what the letter is. You're seeing friendship done. But now I want you to imagine, I think this will be helpful.
I want you to imagine 2 Timothy as a letter between pagan friends. Okay? So this is a pretty common thing. Back then, we have ancient letters like this between two people who are not Christians exercising friendship.
[13:03] And the general idea, this comes all the way from at least Aristotle, who thought a lot about friendship. The general idea is that a friend is someone who looks out for the other one's good.

But let's imagine that 2 Timothy, instead of being a letter between two Christian friends, is a letter between two non-Christian friends. And I want us to think about what would the letter look like? How would it differ from what we have? Let's use our imaginations and say that Paul's a pagan, Timothy's a pagan. What kind of friendship would we observe?
Well, as I said, I think pagan Paul, if he is fulfilling the definition, the universal definition of friend, he would still be investing himself in Timothy's good. But what good?
The goodness in view would be something less than holiness or godliness or happiness in God. I think pagan Paul would probably mostly be aiming at Timothy's short-term happiness.
[14:06] He's not thinking a lot about eternity for Paul or for Timothy. And then I think also this issue of resources. Pagan Paul would have less to invest than he does in the letter we do have.

He would mostly be sharing his advice, his insight, platitudes, the kinds of things that go on coffee mugs. And that'd be that. He certainly wouldn't have any kind of supernatural power to bring to the table.
So I think if we had just a pagan version of 2 Timothy, we would just have a letter full of self-esteem, platitudes, a pragmatic view of happiness, a lot of opinions, cheer up, it'll get better, and so on and so forth.
Now, I think it's helpful to think about that for two reasons. The first one is that because sometimes even Christian friendships walk in the flesh. Maybe I should be super clear.

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What I just did there was I said, here's friendship in the spirit, here's friendship in the flesh. And I think it's important to recognize what friendship in the flesh looks like because just because two Christians are friends does not mean they're doing Christian friendship.
[15:20] The Bible is very explicit on this, that for the Christian, we may either walk in the flesh or walk in the spirit. And so just because two Christians are friends doesn't mean they're doing Christian friendship.

They may be doing fleshly, worldly friendship, in which all of the things I just discussed about with Pagan Paul come into play. Friendship heavy on self-esteem. Friendship heavy on pragmatic happiness.
Short-term view. So on and so forth. I think it's good to remember that just because you're a Christian and the other person's a Christian doesn't mean you're doing Christian friendship.
Christian friendship involves a common sense of good, which is godliness, a sense of delayed gratification, an eye toward the eternal destiny of the individual, the eternal fulfillment, the eternal happiness of the individual, and a reliance on God's resources to conduct the business of the friendship.
And that doesn't always happen in even Christian friendships. The second reason I thought it would be good to think this way is because I think we can now understand why some Christian friendships fail.
[16:35] I think we've introduced enough clarity, in fact, to deal with one of the big pain points of 2 Timothy, and that is like, man, this guy.

This guy lost a lot of friends. He lost a lot of friends. The truth is that 2 Timothy is a book littered with emotional wreckage, with relational wreckage, rather.
It's a book littered with disloyalty. On the front end in chapter 1 and verse 15, Paul writes, you are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are phygeus and hermogenes.
On the back end of the letter, in chapter 4, verse 10, For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.
Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. In verse 16 of chapter 4, At my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me.
[17:41] May it not be charged against them. We need to make some sense of this data. Why is it that Paul had so many failed friendships?

And I think we can see the answer by what we've already stipulated. Generally speaking, in a broad sense, he lost friends because those friends stopped being willing to invest in his good.
But specifically, what was happening, I think, most of the time when Paul lost friends, was that his friends would walk with him so long as they had the resources to be his friend.
But friends, there's just moments in a friend's life that's very dark, scary. Perhaps you'll get sucked into the suffering black hole if you get too close.
And a person who is doing friendship with their own resources backs out. They don't have the faith to keep being friends.
[18:47] And so I think that the clearest explanation is that these folks likely abandoned their friendship with Paul because the price of that friendship was more than what they thought they could pay.

And of course, the truth is that if they had asked the Lord and trusted the Lord, he would have richly provided for them so that they, like Ruth, could stick in it for the long haul.
I think one of the biggest things I want to communicate about friendship, about Christian friendship, is that it is fundamentally fueled by faith. Both parties have to believe that God exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
Both parties must believe that the highest good of any human being is godliness, that holiness and happiness for the Christian are pretty synonymous. They both must believe that this happiness is really harvested more than any other time in the next life.
They must have a sense of time that is appropriate to the way that God's actually working. And they must believe that God will supply the needs that they have in this friendship.
[20:02] And all of that just requires faith. It just requires faith. See, for instance, I've walked through friendships that have lasted and others that have failed.

And when you see a friendship that fails, a Christian friendship that fails, that's sort of the moment on the timeline that stands out. But the real moment is before that.

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And that is when someone had substantially weakened faith. A failed friendship is just downstream of a moment prior in which an individual's trust in God starts to evaporate.
And there will be a time often where the individual's faith in the Lord, his trust in God's promises, his trust in God's provision, there will be a time when that's gone and a sense of duty will keep him going for a little bit.
And then there's a desertion. It's like, well, what caused the desertion? A dissolution of faith. That's where the desertion came from.
[21:18] One of the friends, at least one of the friends, stopped trusting God, stopped believing God's word, and so on and so forth. If you want to be a Christian friend, you must strengthen your faith in God.

The stronger your faith in God, the better friend you will be. The weaker your faith in God, the worse friend you'll be. It is absolutely no coincidence that when we examine biblical history, that the men and women who had great faith also were great friends.
That's not a coincidence. Abraham, man, you talk about a friend you would like to have. You talk about a foxhole friend. Abraham was an incredible friend to his nephew Lot.
And Abraham was, in fact, a man of great faith. The two always go hand in hand. The whole nation of Israel had Moses as their friend. This is a man who interceded for them, who forgave them, who worked out mercy for them before the Lord.
And Moses was a man of great faith. Ruth was a woman of great faith, and it just seemed like it came out of nowhere. Suddenly, boom, she's believing enough to do her whole life differently.
[22:38] But her great faith made her a great friend to Naomi. Jonathan and David, great faith, great friendship. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. If you're ever tempted to think that friendship is like an optional elective in the Christian life, look to the author and perfecter of your faith and see what he did with his time on earth.

Friendship was a fundamental part of the life of Christ. And so it should be a fundamental part of the Christian life. What about Paul?
Paul was a man of great faith, and he was also a great friend. Pastor Tony Merida writes, When surveying the life of the Apostle Paul, we see his firm belief in the sufficiency of the gospel and his willingness to suffer for it.
But there's another often overlooked feature of the Pauline mission. Friendship. As Paul planted churches throughout the Roman world, he didn't do so as a one-man band.
Paul was relationally wealthy. He traveled with friends. He stayed with them. He visited them. He worked alongside them. He preached alongside them.
[23:56] He was beaten alongside them. He even sang in prison with his friends. He encouraged them and was encouraged by them. At times, Paul disagreed with his friends.

At times, he reconciled with them. A quick read through Acts shows Paul's commitment and genuine concern for his friends. Barnabas, Titus, Silas, Luke, Priscilla, Aquila, Lydia, Onesiphorus, Epaphroditus, John Mark, the Ephesian elders, and more.
In Romans 16, he mentions more than 30 names. The whole list oozes with affection. It also magnifies the gospel, demonstrates beautiful diversity, race, rank, gender, and contains moving expressions of honor.
Now, I want to take a quick practical moment to talk about this idea of the diversity we see in Paul's friendships. People walking with a fleshly view of friendship often believe that their best bets for friendships are with those who have the most in common with them.
And people that are especially self-absorbed, and I might be stepping on your toes, but I'm just telling you this is the problem and, boy, it'd be great for you to get over it, will often identify certain aspects of their life, whether it's a struggle or a triumph, and say that my friends have to have that in common with me.
[25:31] This is just foolish. To organize your friendships, to eliminate from the possible pull of friends, all of the Christians, and say, no, they must have blonde hair, and they must have this, and they must have that.

Oh, my goodness. You are doing yourself an incredible disservice. What you're doing there is you're looking through the eyes of the flesh, and that the way that the flesh marks things.
Paul's very clear about this, by the way. This is when he talks about, therefore, there's no longer Jew or Gentile or, you know, barbarian, a slave, and Scythicun, and so on and so forth. He's saying

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that's the way the flesh looks at this.
But in Christ, we have something in common that is far bigger than whatever the thing is that we're imagining to be central to our story. Knowing you, I could go through it.
I won't do this. Don't freak out. I could go through you and tell you, like, this would probably be one of the things you'd be tempted to think is central to your story. Season of life. Kids, no kids.
[26:43] Age. Education. Income. You're getting tricked. Don't do it. Don't you do that. You're probably already doing it to some extent.

When you look at friendship through the eyes of faith, the Holy Spirit will help you to see that you have something in common with Christians that is far bigger than whether or not you have kids, whether you're 20 or 50, your ethnicity, your income bracket.
When you look at yourself through the eyes of your life, the organizing value, the thing that is the most important, and that widely expands your potential pool of friends.
Friends, you've been essentially catechized by consumerism, and you've been taught to be a discerning consumer. C.S. Lewis writes in the Screwtape Letters, it's a, I forget, I think it was Wormwood that was writing this.
He says, one of the best things we can do is make a man a connoisseur of churches. Do you know what he's talking about? Someone who has like a highly refined, selective opinion, and he sort of just like, like, browses churches like, like someone would browse salad dressings or something, you know?
[28:19] A Goldilocks syndrome for churches. Friends, this is, I do see that with churches, but I see it far more often in Christians with the way they think of friendship. They've really become consumers.

Paul didn't do that. Most of the biblical friendships you'll see have some gap in them. There's a gap of rank. There's a gap of age.
There's a gap of station, so on and so forth. And these magnify Christ, and they also bring much good to the individuals who partake in them, because it turns out those differences add more value than you will get from walking with someone who's in exactly the same situation as you.
Friends, this is part of the flesh. We think that our happiness lies in being understood. Your happiness lies in understanding Christ.
Now, that's just a side thing I wanted to comment on, but I want to now turn and get into the text more explicitly and examine just a few ways we see Paul being a friend to Timothy.
[29:32] The first key, I think, to the art of Christian friendship is one must spend mental energy thinking and praying for others. The first key to friendship, as best I can see, is to spend time thinking and praying for others.

We see Paul doing that. In verse 2, Paul writes, I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now I'm sure dwells in you as well.
I think it's very important to understand that something shifted somewhere, you know, middle of last century, and now we live in a culture in which your attention span is the primary resource people are trying to mine.
This is called, referred to as the attention economy. So our mental energy, our attention is being solicited constantly.
It's being competed for across all of the streaming movie services, across all of the apps, across all the social media services. Your attention is the commodity that most companies that are doing well are looking for.
[31:12] This will be on full display during the Super Bowl. Why is a Super Bowl ad so much? They're buying attention. So this began to be developed by a psychologist slash economist named Herbert Simon.

He was the first to propose this idea. And he says, What information consumes is rather obvious. It consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence, a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention and the need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it.
Information, as it becomes more readily available and expands and there's more and more information, you have the same amount of attention you did 100 years ago.

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We're living in an attention deficit economy. One other thought leader in this space, Matthew Crawford, said it quite simply.
[32:32] Attention is a resource. We only have so much of it. Now, maybe you've heard that there is increasing talk, even from the Surgeon General, that there is an epidemic of loneliness.

What is happening in our world today? I would completely agree with that. What is causing this epidemic of loneliness? Well, I want to point out two things.
The first one is that the lack of church attendance and Sabbath keeping, when put on a chart, directly correlates to the increased sense of loneliness that people feel.
You could put church attendance on a chart. You could put increased sense of loneliness on a chart, and you'll see correlation. But that only goes so far because I know it is possible to attend a church faithfully and still feel disconnected.
That's why I want to send a postcard out saying, come to our church. You won't be lonely. And I think our church does better than any other church I know of.
[33:38] But at the same time, I realize, well, we still have lots to grow in. Church attendance and loneliness have some correlation, to be sure. But there's a secondary explanation, and that's this attention economy.

People simply aren't investing mental energy into one another like they used to. That's really a big part of this.
Before cell phones, Angela and I, now I don't think we're, we don't really look at our phones much at night. We mostly just fall asleep immediately at night, but it's a competition to see who has to hear the other snore.
So, on your mark, go. But, you know, we used to lay in bed at night, and we would just talk about our kids for an hour or so, and then we would talk about people in the church.
And we would just lay there in the dark and talk about the people in our life. We spent at least two, three hours a day thinking about others, about investing.
[34:53] We spent that much time investing mental energy into others who we didn't see that day, who we just know, who we're concerned about, hopeful for, proud of.

I think that that's another explanation for the epidemic of loneliness. People, Christians, spend very little mental energy thinking even about their closest friends.
You know what a grace it is to get a text that says, hey, I just wanted to let you know I was thinking about you. You doing okay? So, this church attendance and this attendance, this attention economy thing, it's funny because there's actually a Bible verse that deals with both of those.
And if we would just obey this verse, I think we'd be in a wonderful, a much better position. And that verse is Hebrews 10, 24 and 25. And let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works.
Consider. Consider. Think. Dwell upon. Imagine. Invest mental energy in. Let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works.
[36:08] Verse 25. Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another all the more as you see the day drawing near. So, here's what I really want you to leave home with, leave today with, and go home with, is this one fundamental.

What can you do to invest more mental energy into those that you do life with? Into the members of your local church?
Into your children? Into your spouse? Can you set time aside and think about and pray for the people that God has called you to befriend?
And then will you make time together? And spend time together? Now remember, attention is a resource. And in order to devote some time to thinking about what I'm recommending, you have to cut something out.
You only have so much attention. And friends, for a lot of you, that just means I'm plugging something. Give yourself time to feel bored and then remind yourself, oh, I'm bored for a reason.
[37:17] I'm inflicting boredom on myself right now. What was it I was going to do when I got bored? Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Think about others. Now when Paul thought of Timothy, that's what we saw in the first four verses, he did two things with the mental energy that he expended.

Number one, he brought affirmation. He brought affirmation. Author Sam Crabtree says, He also wrote, by the way, if you needed another stinger, when our mouths are empty of praise for others, it is probably because our hearts are full of love for self.

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Paul does this when he says, I am reminded of your sincere faith. When I think about you, Timothy, I think of your sincere faith. And now Timothy's getting a one-two.
He's getting this sense that Paul is thinking about him and praying for him. And when I think of you, I think of your sincere faith. So when Paul invests mental energy into Timothy, one of the things he does is he brings affirmation.
And we have so much to talk about this week, but let's wrap it up with this second idea. The second thing, fathers, pay attention. The second thing one must do when they invest mental energy is they will speak into temptations.
[38:53] Here's the thing. One of the things that will happen when you invest mental energy into thinking and praying about others is that God will give you his vision of that person. You will begin to see that other person's situation, not just in the way they see it, but more like the way God sees it.

We live individually kind of like we're afloat in the parade. We can see what's before us. We can see what's behind us. We can see the float in front of us, the float behind us if we turn around. We can see the portion of the street we're on. God sees the whole parade.
Friends, fathers in particular, I am saddened by the number of men I see who do not think about their kids enough to anticipate the particular temptations they will face in the next season of life. And when I talk to these fathers, they act surprised. Like, I don't know what's going on here. It's like, I guarantee you, the evidence that was needed to speak into that situation was available to you five years ago if you had spent mental energy to see it.
So one of the things Paul does when he thinks is he brings affirmation. And another thing Paul does when he thinks about Timothy is he speaks into a particular temptation that perhaps Timothy at this time isn't even aware of.
[40:13] Verse 6, For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power, love, and self-control.

The whole context of Paul's situation is suffering. Timothy's in a situation where the temperature is increasing. Does Timothy know that he might be tempted to back out?
I don't know if he knows that. Paul knows that. Because Paul has spent time thinking about Timothy. And so in addition to bringing affirmation, he comes and says, I want to warn you of a particular temptation.
Here's something that could be in your future. You might be tempted at some point to turn down the heat of your gift.
It will feel safer. It will feel prudent. So on and so forth. But I just want to tell you, resist that temptation and fan that gift into a flame.
[41:20] You know, I love church history and I particularly love letters. And I've realized this week that the reason why I love the letters is because they're so full of friendship. And one of the things I've found, I found a letter from Calvin where he warned one of his best friends, like, hey, you're preaching kind of long sermons.

Can we talk about that? And, you know, don't think this is a good idea. And I found one from John Newton where he wrote to a young man who he had kind of mentored a little bit and who had just got his first pastorate.
And John Newton, the letter is just to congratulate him and there's affirmation and so forth. But there's also a warning and he just says, now I know you and I know your heart and I know you might be tempted to think that your congregation is too small.
And then he says, but trust me, the day will come when you must give an account for every sheep and at that time, you will think it just right. But this thoughtfulness that goes into writing that letter, the thoughtfulness to say, I want to encourage what I see, I want to congratulate what God is doing. I also want to tell you, I'll bet you right about now, you might be tempted to think, well, this is kind of puny congregation for a man of my gifts. And so these good faithful friends, the harvest of their mental energy invested is insights into the other, insights that have related to affirmation and insights related to potential temptations.
[42:54] Practically speaking, for you, that's going to look something like this. Spell it out. Hey, I was thinking and praying for you. Super thankful for your faithfulness in X, Y, or Z. or see God doing this.

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If I were in your situation, I might be tempted to. Something like that. Not an accusatory, this is definitely a problem you have, but just a little fishing expedition to say, you know, as I was using my mental energy to think about you, I thought, well, I wonder if they're struggling with this.
Is that something you're struggling with? What a refreshing conversation to receive. That someone cares about you enough to invest what, in our day especially, is its most precious resource, attention, mental energy, and that they've thought about you well enough to see things that are praiseworthy and also to see potential problems that could emerge.
That person isn't lonely. A person on the receiving end of that ain't lonely. Everything I said, Lewis has this way, everything I said is summarized in three sentences from C.S. Lewis.
In The Weight of Glory, he says this, it is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses. You got to give Lewis a little stretching room there.
[44:21] He's Mr. Oxford mythology guy. He doesn't mean that in a literal sense. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses. He's just talking about the glorified state.

To remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare.
all day long, in some degree, we are helping each other to one or the other of these destinations.
He said everything that I was trying to say in three sentences. We have an eternal view of one another. You're going somewhere forever and you'll either be a creature that I would be tempted to worship or a creature that I'll be tempted to flee from in horror.
You'll either enter into eternal joy or eternal damnation. You're going somewhere forever and my friendship is, a part of my friendship is to acknowledge your foreverness.
[45:29] And another part of my friendship is to invest myself into you having the best forever you can. In small ways, in big ways, we are all helping one another either by our activity or our neglect.

reach one of these two destinations. I really would love for you to lean in this week as we talk about friendship at this level for the whole week.
Because friends, trust me, this, if we can get good at it, and I think, I don't think we're bad at it, if we can get good at this, oh my, the glory of God, the glory of God, the glory of God that will be evident through groups of people who are excelling at being friends.
Let's shift over to communion. John 15, 13, Jesus says, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.
[46:46] This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one, nothing, greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

The gospel is fundamentally an act of friendship. Think about that. The foundation of our faith expresses itself in God becoming friends with dorks like Peter and you and me.
And that friendship ultimately expresses itself in him surrendering himself fully investing himself for the salvation of his friends.
1 Corinthians 11, 23 says, For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he'd given thanks he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you.
Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.
[48:03] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Now the thing to do right now is not to walk to this table with some sort of like energy about being a better friend.

You'll hear back more later about that. The thing to do right now is to come and celebrate the friend you have in Christ. because as you look to that you become that.
As you behold the glorious friendship of Jesus you become a better friend. So if you're a follower of Jesus Christ just come to this table and thank Jesus for laying down his life for you.
Why don't you come now? Why don't Thank you.

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