

Philippians 2:28-30 Commentary

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Philippians 2:28 Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see (AAPMPN) him again you may rejoice (2PAPS) and I may be less concerned (1SPAS) about you ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: spoudaioteros oun epempsa ([1SAAI](#)) auton [hina](#) idontes ([AAPMPN](#)) auton palin charete ([2PAPS](#)) kago alupoteros o. ([1SPAS](#))

Amplified: So I have sent him the more willingly and eagerly, that you may be gladdened at seeing him again, and that I may be the less disquieted. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: So I am all the more anxious to send him back to you, for I know you will be glad to see him, and that will lighten all my cares. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

KJV: I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

Lightfoot: For this reason I have been the more eager to send him, that your cheerfulness may be restored by seeing him in health, and that my sorrow may be lightened by sympathy with your joy.

Wuest: With increased haste and diligence therefore I am sending him, in order that, having seen him again,

you may recover your cheerfulness, and as for myself, my sorrow may be lessened.

Young's Literal: The more eagerly, therefore, I did send him, that having seen him again ye may rejoice, and I may be the less sorrowful;

Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you: spoudaioteros oun epempsa (1SAAI) auton hina idontes (AAPMPN) auton palin charete (2PAPS) kago alupoteros o. (1SPAS):

- Phil 2:26; Ge 45:27,28; 46:29,30; 48:11; Jn 16:22; Acts 20:38; 2Ti 1:4
- Phil 2:27; 2Cor 2:3; 1Jn 1:3,4)
- [Philippians 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Philippians 2:19-30 Worth Imitating](#) - Steven Cole
- [Philippians 2:25-30 Model Spiritual Servants: Epaphroditus](#) - John MacArthur

Therefore (oun) - always pause to ponder **terms of conclusion**.

Eagerly (4709) (**spoudaioteros** is the comparative of **spoudaios** = more earnestly and diligently - see study of verb **spoudazo**) meaning sooner than otherwise.

Less concerned (253) (**alupoteros** is the comparative of **álupos** derived from **a** = without, + **lúpe** = sorrow - see study of verb **lupeo**) is literally "less sorrowful" (**lupe**) and so more free from sorrow or grief. Who is concerned? The man in prison for the saints at Philippi...another example of his considering them more important than himself. Only a man whose very life is Christ could sincerely express such feelings.

Philippians 2:29 Receive (2PPMM) him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold (2PPAM) men like him in high regard; (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: **prosdecheste** (2PPMM) oun auton en kurio meta pase^s charas, kai tou^s toioutou^s entimou^s echete, (2PPAM)

Amplified: Welcome him [home] then in the Lord with all joy, and honor and highly appreciate men like him, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

Lightfoot: Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in honor;

NLT: Welcome him with Christian love and with great joy, and be sure to honor people like him. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Wuest: Receive him to yourselves, therefore, in the Lord with every joy, and hold such ones in honor. Value them highly, and deem them precious

Young's Literal: receive him, therefore, in the Lord, with all joy, and hold such in honour,

Receive him then in the Lord with all joy: prosdecheste (2PPMM) oun auton en kurio meta pase^s charas:

- Mt 10:40,41; Lk 9:5; Jn 13:20; Ro 16:2; 1Cor 16:10; 2Cor 7:2; Col 4:10; 3Jn 1:10]
- Isa 52:7; Lk 2:10,11; Acts 2:46; 8:8; Ro 10:15; Eph 4:9, 10, 11, 12
- [Philippians 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Philippians 2:19-30 Worth Imitating](#) - Steven Cole
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**PAUL COMMANDS
A WARM WELCOME**

Put the "welcome mat" out for him! And do it with **joy, all joy**, a component of the fruit of the Spirit, calling for his readers to be continually filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18), for He is the only Source of this supernatural attitude.

Brian Bill - Paul is very strategic in the closing verses of this section. There were those in Philippi that would have accused Epaphroditus of failing to complete the mission. Paul wanted to leave little room for doubt – Epaphroditus was not a quitter. He commands the church to welcome him with "great joy" and "honor" Epaphroditus.

Receive (4327) (**prosdechomai** from **pros** = in compound Greek words implies motion or direction toward + **dechomai** = a deliberate and ready reception) means to accept favorably, to receive one into intercourse/companionship, to give access to oneself or receive to oneself.

Paul commands the Philippian saints to continually (present imperative) be earnestly expecting, looking forward to and favorably accepting Epaphroditus. The **middle voice** (reflexive) indicates they were to receive him to themselves (reflexive) and the prefixed preposition (**pros**) in its root meaning signifies "facing" which implies fellowship.

Joy (5479) (**chara**) is a feeling of inner gladness, delight or rejoicing. Joy is a feeling of inner gladness, delight or rejoicing. Joy in the NT is virtually always used to signify a feeling of "happiness" that is based on spiritual realities (and independent of what "happens"). Joy is an inner gladness; a deep seated pleasure. It is a depth of assurance and confidence that ignites a cheerful heart. It is a cheerful heart that leads to cheerful behavior. Joy is not an experience that comes from favorable circumstances but is God's gift to believers. Joy is a part of God's very essence and as discussed below His Spirit manifests this supernatural joy in His children (Galatians 5:22-note, Acts 13:52, 1Th 1:6-note). Joy is the deep-down sense of well-being that abides in the heart of the person who knows all is well between himself and the Lord. There is a chorus from an old spiritual song that is apropos...

**Happiness happens
But joy abides**

And hold men like him in high regard: kai tou s toioutous entimous echete, (2PPAM):

- 2Cor 10:18; 1Thes 5:12; Heb 13:17)
- Acts 28:10; 1Cor 16:18; 1Ti 5:17

DESERVING OF A HERO'S WELCOME!

Hold (2192) (**echo**) means to have or hold and is in the **present imperative** commanding them to continually value Epaphroditus highly.

High regard (high value)(1784) (**entimos** from **en** = in + **time** = honor, esteem, price) means honored, valued, prized, and even precious.

The NT emphasizes the importance of showing honor:

Romans 10:12; For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;

Romans 13:7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; **honor** to whom **honor**.

Ephesians 5:33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 6:2 **HONOR** YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise),

1 Timothy 5:17 The elders who rule well are **to be considered worthy of double honor**, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

1 Timothy 6:1 All who are under the yoke as slaves are to **regard their own masters as worthy of all honor** so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.

1 Peter 2:17 **Honor** all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

1 Peter 3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone

weaker, since she is a woman; and **show her honor** as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Wiersbe - There is no contradiction between Philippians 2:7 ("made Himself of no reputation") and Philippians 2:29 ("hold such in reputation"). Christ "emptied Himself" in His gracious act of humiliation, and God exalted Him. Epaphroditus sacrificed himself with no thought of reward, and Paul encouraged the church to hold him in honor to the glory of God.

Paul is saying Epaphroditus deserved a hero's welcome!

Sam Gordon - Men willing to do what Epaphroditus did are few and far between. These are men who dice with death and do not stop to ask questions. They flirt openly with all kinds of risk but they do it from a profound sense of loyalty to their friends and a consummate love for their Lord. These men, says Paul, are thin on the ground. We thank God for them! (An Odyssey of Joy: The Message of Philippians)

Alan Carr on **Anatomy of a Lovely Christian** - ([See sermon notes on Part 1](#) - Php 2:25-27)

B. The Fruit Of This Burden - Because Epaphroditus was a people centered person, he brought joy to the lives of others, Phil 2:28-29. Notice the worlds Paul uses: *rejoice and gladness*. The Philippians knew what a treasure they had in Epaphroditus. So does Paul. He was the kind of person who made you feel important and loved. He put you first and you knew it. He was an encourager! As a result, he was a joy to know and be around!

(**Note:** How do people react when they see you coming? Do they cringe as they wonder what criticism they are about to hear? Do they dread your coming because they know your attitude is going to be negative and self-centered? Do they avoid you because they are afraid you will give them an "*organ recital*" as you name off the afflictions and trouble you have? Or, do their faces light up when they see you, knowing that you come with a word of encouragement and blessing? I don't know about you, but I want to be an encourager instead of a critical complainer. How about you?)

III. Phil 2:30 A LOVELY CHRISTIAN IS A BRAVE CHRISTIAN

(**ILLUSTRATION** We have already seen that this man was *Balanced* and that he was *Burdened*. [see [See sermon notes on Part 1](#) - Php 2:25-27] This last verses also tells us that he was *Brave*.)

A. There Is Bravery In His Service - The first phrase of verse 30 seems to indicate that the sickness Epaphroditus endured was the result of his labors for the Lord Jesus. Ancient church tradition tells us that Epaphroditus was known for his work among the sick in Rome. It is said that he and others would try to help people that most others would not even dare go near. In other words, he put everything on the line for Jesus, in order to fulfill the Great Commission. For this man, nothing in this life was more important than doing the will of the Lord. Even if doing what God required cost him everything!

(**Note:** Wouldn't it be a blessing to have a team of people like Epaphroditus in our church? Men and women who knew no greater goal in life than to be obedient to the will of the Savior! Sadly, for many, service hinges on convenience! Even simple, easy things like going to church is too much for many people! Who among us has a heart like Epaphroditus? Who has a heart that beats in time with the Master's heart? Who has a heart to see people saved and the work of God done in this world regardless of the personal cost? Few, very few! But, you and I can become that kind of believer, if we desire to! God has plenty of work available to those who will give Him all they have and are and trust Him to use them for His glory!)

B. There Is Bravery In His Sacrifice - When the Bible says "*not regarding his life*" it means literally that he "*gambled his life*". That phrase means, "*to throw aside, to throw down*". It speaks of "*voluntarily hazarding one's welfare and exposing oneself to danger*". It was a term used to describe "*gamblers*" who "*threw their money down and exposed it to the danger of loss*." It could mean "*to place everything on a roll of the dice!*" In fact, many times as a gambler would throw the dice, he would say "**Epaphroditus**". He was asking Aphrodite to look favorably upon his wager. In other words, Epaphroditus willingly gambled his life for the cause of Christ! He put his life on the line to see Paul's needs met and to see souls brought into the kingdom of God.

Pioneer missionary Jim Elliot, who gave his life for Christ trying to reach the Acua Indians of South America, said, *"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."* Epaphroditus knew this and lived by this motto! He put everything on the line for Jesus!

(**ILLUSTRATION** In later years, groups of Christians know as "**Parabolani**" or "*The Gamblers*", which comes from the same word translated "*not regarding his life*", were known for their work among the diseased and dead. They would help those ravaged by the plague and they would bury the dead bodies of those taken by illness. Others would not do this, but these believers, inspired by the selfless sacrifice of Epaphroditus willing placed their lives on the line for Jesus!)

(**Note:** Where are the gamblers in our day? Where are the saints of God who will allow nothing, be it comfort, convenience or cost

stand between them and doing the will of God? My, how we need some brave believers in this day! People who are willing to “*deny themselves, take up the cross and follow Jesus*” is what the church needs today!

Friend, when you “*throw down your life*” for Jesus, you are not gambling your life away in a game of chance. No! Our God is a Sovereign God! He will take your sacrifice of love and service and He will bless it for His glory and your eternal good. He will give you treasure in Heaven, Matt. 6:19-21, Rom. 8:18, 2 Cor. 4:17. When you risk it all for Jesus, you can be certain that you will win every time! Are you a brave Christian? You can be! Put it all on the line for Jesus. Hold back no longer, but go full bore for Him and let Him worry about the consequences!

Conclusion: Php 2:29 tells the Philippian believers to hold Epaphroditus “*in reputation*”. This phrase means “*to prize and consider precious*”. Epaphroditus was to be prized and considered precious. Why? Because people like him are like fine gemstones. They are rare and of great value!

Do you know what Calvary Baptist Church needs? Not money, this is God’s boat and He knows how to keep it afloat! Not prestige in the community. You can look for many to disparage this church as the days move forward. Why? Because we are out of step with the world and we don’t intend to change! Not political influence. This world and all that is within it will burn one day. What we need is people who will commit themselves to be like Epaphroditus! We need men, women, boys and girls who will put everything on the line for Jesus, who will hold nothing back. We need a church filled with Christians who are Balanced in the walk; who are Burdened for others and who are Brave enough to give their lives for Christ. Give us that, just that, and God will use to touch our world for His glory!

Where does this message find you this evening? If the Lord has spoken to your heart about these matters, why not get before Him this evening and get that thing straightened out and settled today? Epaphroditus was a lovely Christian. He lived up to his name. We can be lovely Christians too, if we also live the kind of life he lived.

Philippians 2:30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: hoti dia to ergon Christou mechri thanatou eggisen, (3SAAI) paraboleusamenos (AMPMSN) te psuche hina anaplerose (3SAAS) to humon husterema tes pros me leitourgias

Amplified: For it was through working for Christ that he came so near death, risking his [very] life to complete the deficiencies in your service to me [which distance prevented you yourselves from rendering]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Lightfoot: for in his devotion to the work, he was brought to death’s door, hazarding his life, that he might make up by his zeal and diligence the lack of your personal services to supplement your charitable gift.

KJV: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

NLT: For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while trying to do for me the things you couldn’t do because you were far away. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Wuest: because on account of the work of Christ he drew near to death, having recklessly exposed his life in order that he might supply that which was lacking in your sacred service to me.

Young’s Literal: because on account of the work of the Christ he drew near to death, having hazarded the life that he might fill up your deficiency of service unto me.

because he came close to death for the work of Christ: hoti dia to ergon Christou mechri thanatou eggisen, (3SAAI):

- 1 Cor 15:53; 16:10
- [Philippians 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Philippians 2:19-30 Worth Imitating](#) - Steven Cole
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Because - [term of explanation](#). Paul now explains why they are to hold Epaphroditus in **high regard** when he returns to them. The

reason is he almost gave his life for the work of Christ gambling with his life to minister personally to Paul, who himself was suffering in prison.

Came close (1448) (**eggizo** from **eggús** = near) means to move nearer to a reference point, to be at hand or nigh.

Death (2288) (**thanatos** from **thnesko** = to die) refers to physical death, of separation of the soul from the body.

For the work of Christ - Not "his works" but the works of Christ. See related topic -**click** for discussion of what constitutes a "**good deed**" in the sight of God.

Work (2041) (**ergon** from **ergo** = to work) refers to toil as an effort or occupation.

Risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me : paraboleusamenos (AMPMSN) te psuche hina anaplerose (3SAAS) to humon husteremates pros me leitourgias

- Phil 2:17,27; 1:19,20; Mt 25:36, 37, 38, 39, 40; Acts 20:24; Ro 16:4; 2Cor 12:15; Rev 12:11
- Phil 4:10,18; 1Cor 16:17; Philemon 1:13

EPAPHRODITUS' COMMITMENT HE WAS A "GAMBLER"

Brian Bill - The word for **risking** means to "hazard, to throw aside one's life, or to gamble." In fact, this word became a noun with the formation of a group of Christians in the third century. They called themselves the "**parabolani**," the gamblers, after this verse of Scripture and in honor of Epaphroditus. Whenever and wherever a plague hit, these gamblers would rush in to take care of the sick and bury the dead. They were willing to risk their lives to live out the Gospel. I was talking to a student recently who was with a group involved with street ministry. She told me a story of setting up a tent in a really bad part of town next to a liquor store. There had been a shooting in that very location several days before. They sang and shared the Gospel and provided soup and did so knowing they were at risk. She said that they did it because that's what Jesus would do. God calls us to be gamblers and said if you want to "gain your life you must lose it for my sake." (Matthew 10:39) Jim Elliot, who lost his life as a missionary in Ecuador, wrote this haunting words just before his death, "He is no fool to give up what he can not keep to gain what he can not lose." Whether it is taking the Gospel to a dangerous place or hugging a little girl with HIV, what good is the Gospel without a few gamblers?

Guzik - In the days of the Early Church there was an association of men and women who called themselves the gamblers, taken from this same ancient Greek word used in not regarding his life. It was their aim to visit the prisoners and the sick, especially those who were ill with dangerous and infectious diseases. Often, when a plague struck a city, the heathen threw the dead bodies into the streets and fled in terror. But the gamblers buried the dead and helped the sick the best they could, and so risked their lives to show the love of Jesus.

Risking ("having gambled with his life" -Lightfoot)(3850) (**paraboleuomai** from **parabolos** = venturesome, reckless) literally means to throw aside (**para** = aside + **ballo** = to throw), hence to expose to danger, be careless, rashly expose oneself to dangers, to be venturesome, reckless. To have no concern for.

Gilbrant on **paraboleuomai** - In classical Greek this verb is used to denote "venturing" in the sense of an action that brings risk to the one doing it. It appears in a Greek inscription describing an attorney who "exposed himself" to life-threatening danger by taking his client's cases all the way up to the emperor (Bauer). This kind of person is willing to "risk everything" for the sake of the interests of others. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

In the present **context** it means **Epaphroditus** was willing to die. In those days when you visited prisoners held by the Romans, the visitor was often prejudged as a criminal also. Therefore the visitor exposed himself to danger just by being near those who were considered dangerous. This word came to also be used in the sense of playing the gambler or playing dice because high sums were often at stake. In a sense Epaphroditus was gambling with his life for the sake of God's kingdom. The word was used in the papyri of one who in the interest of friendship had exposed himself to dangers as an advocate in legal strife by taking his clients' cause even up to emperors.

Paraboleuomai was later used of merchants who for the sake of gain exposed themselves to death. The word was used of a fighter in the arena who exposed himself to the dangers of the arena. In the post-apostolic church there were societies of men and women who called themselves "**the parabolani**" or "**the riskers or gamblers**". They risked their lives by ministering the sick and imprisoned and they saw to it if possible that martyrs and sometimes even their enemies would receive an honorable burial. In Carthage during the great plague of 252AD, Cyprian, the bishop, showed remarkable courage, taking on himself the care of the sick and urging of his

flock to nurse them and bury those who died from the pestilence. Cyprian's conduct like a light in the darkness contrasted to the practice of the pagans who threw the corpses out of the plague-infested city and actually ran from them in terror! Such is the transforming effect of the gospel.

Barclay adds that **paraboleuomai** was "a gambler's word and means to stake everything on a turn of the dice. Paul is saying that for the sake of Jesus Christ Epaphroditus gambled his life." ([Philippians 2 Commentary](#))

Constable - 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. "He says Epaphroditus gambled with his life, but won, because God was there and 'had mercy on him.'"

Life (590) (**psuche** from **psucho** = to breathe, blow) refers to whole person particularly inner, immortal person who lives in the mortal body. It describes the breath of life as the vital force which animates the body and shows itself in breathing. Dichotomists view man as consisting of two parts material and immaterial, with spirit and soul denoting the immaterial and bearing only a functional and not a metaphysical difference. Trichotomists also view man as consisting of two parts, but with spirit and soul representing in some contexts a real subdivision of the immaterial. In the latter view psuche contrasts with **soma** = body, and **pneúma** = spirit (see 1Th 5:23).

To complete what was deficient in your service to me - In other words first Paul acknowledges that the saints of Philippi had ministered to him (providing for his need - Php 4:18), but Epaphroditus provided what they could not - a personal touch - words of encouragement, prayers, etc. This reminds me of an old advertisement slogan "Reach out and touch someone!" We can give someone funds to help them through a difficult time of need, but we should not do so thinking that funds are sufficient to minister to them. To show them a personal touch (listening ear, encouraging word, intercessory prayer, etc) is just as significant in God's grand scheme of ministry. **When was the last time you reached out and touched someone?**

To complete (378) (**anapleroo** from **aná** = up or as an emphatic + **pleroo** = to fill) means to make complete, to fill up the measure of (sins to the limit - 1 Th 2:16). To fill up or supply a deficiency. Used figuratively of a fulfilled prophecy (Mt 13:14), of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, who supplied what was lacking to the saints at Corinth (1 Co 16:17), of fulfilling (obeying) the "law of Christ" by bearing one another's burdens (Gal 6:2), of the measure of the sins of those who hindered Paul, et al, from speaking to the Gentiles (1 Th 2:16). In the present context anapleroo means that Epaphroditus made up for Paul's absence from the saints at Philippi and thus represented Paul who was absent from them, because of his confinement to chains. Epaphroditus was able to do what the Philippians could not do: be physically present to minister to him.

Deficient (5303) (**husterema** from **hustereo** = to lack, fall behind) means a deficit as that which is behind or that which is lacking)

Service (3009) (**leitourgia** from **leitourgeo** = to be a public servant, to perform religious or charitable function, to minister) generally used of a servant of a superior and suggests a function to be discharged or a necessary service to be rendered.

Leitourgia is the word Paul used to describe himself as "being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and **service** of your faith." (see **note** Philippians 2:17)

PHILIPPIANS 2:30 - INTRODUCTIONS

READ: Philippians 2:19-30

For the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me. — PHILIPPIANS 2:30

I thought it was a misprint when the schedule at a Christian men's conference noted 2 1/2 hours for introductions. But the time was correct and it turned out to be the most meaningful part of the weekend for me.

Instead of giving our own names, jobs, and family information, each man introduced someone else. Some presented longtime friends, and others told about someone they had met only the night before. Every introduction was an affirmation, with special attention given to the uniqueness and value of each individual.

The apostle Paul was a great "introducer" who spoke highly of his colleagues in the faith and ministry. His letters are dotted with the names of men and women to whom and for whom he was deeply grateful. He affirmed Timothy as a person of proven character, who "as a son with his father" had served him in the gospel (Philippians 2:22). He also praised Epaphroditus, who almost died because of his unselfish devotion to Christ and his service to others (v.30).

In a world dominated by put-downs, let's resolve to master the art of building others up by what we say to them and about them.

Such "introductions" can be one of the most important things we do each day. —David C. McCasland

Help me, Lord, to reassure and strengthen
Others by what I speak today;
I would always try to be affirming,
As I meet with friends along the way. —Hess

Our day's work isn't done until we build up someone

PHILIPPIANS 2:30 True Sacrifice

READ: Philippians 2:17-30

For the work of Christ [Epaphroditus] came close to death, not regarding his life. —PHILIPPIANS 2:30

Teenagers amaze me. So many of them love life with grand passion and face it with unrelenting optimism. Sometimes they demonstrate the Christian life in ways adults can only hope to emulate.

Such is the case with Carissa, a teen who loves soccer, basketball, friends, family, and Jesus. In 2000, her mother was diagnosed with cancer. Carissa was just 12 years old, but she began helping to care for her mom.

During the next few years, Carissa often fed her mom, dressed her, and helped her do anything she couldn't do for herself. "It was so hard to learn," she said. "Can you imagine, a mother and daughter literally changing roles? I truly learned to be a humble servant."

Sometimes, while her friends were out having fun, Carissa was helping her dad to take care of her mom. She continued to do so until the summer of 2004, when Carissa and her family said goodbye to Mom for the last time. As Carissa puts it, "God took her home and made her perfect."

Carissa reminds me of Epaphroditus, who sacrificially cared for Paul's needs (Philippians 2:25-30). What examples of caring, love, and compassion! Not all of us, of course, could set aside our lives to give as they did. But their sacrifice can teach us all about the value of servanthood. —Dave Branon

True greatness does not come to those
Who strive for worldly fame;
It lies instead with those who choose
To serve in Jesus' name. —D. De Haan

When you do little things for others, you do big things for Jesus.

Brian Bill on friends - A Friend's a Friend Forever...

We've spent these last few minutes learning about Paul's friends Timothy and Epaphroditus. Word Net online dictionary defines the word friend "as a person you know well and regard with affection and trust." It is closely related to the words love and peace. In the Bible it implies a "reciprocal relationship." Dr. Wilfred Funk has said that the warmest word in the English language is "friendship" while the most bitter is "alone."

Solomon tells us to be very careful how we pick our friends:

"A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. (Proverbs 12:26)

Our friends can influence us for good and for bad:

"He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm." (Proverbs 13:20)

Paul told the church at Corinth that friends can compliment us or corrupt us:

"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.' (1 Cor 15:33)

Let's see if we can come up with a working definition of the word "friend."

F aithful

A friend is faithful. Samuel Coleridge wrote, "Friendship is a sheltering tree." They are loyal to you and support you through good times and bad. The writer of Proverbs wrote:

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. (Proverbs 17:17)

R eal

Timothy had a "genuine interest" in their welfare; a friend is the real deal. You know their heart as well as their head. They are realistic. They know your upside as well as your downside and like you anyway! Erma Bombeck stated, "A friend is someone who thinks you are good egg, even though you are a little cracked." They desire your best and will work with you to bring that out.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." (Prov 27:17)

I nvested

A friend is invested in your spiritual growth. As the old Michael W. Smith song says, "A Friend's a friend forever, if the Lord's the lord of them." They are willing to say the hard things that will help you on your spiritual journey. They tell you the truth, even if it hurts.

"Better an open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses. (Proverbs 27:6)

E ncourager

A friend is your biggest cheerleader. They praise you and value your victories. They use words to build you up and when they speak you listen.

"Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel. (Proverbs 27:9)

N eeds

A friend thinks of your needs as much as she thinks of their own needs. They realize that friendship is a team effort and are willing to walk the road with you through the mountains and valleys of faith. Solomon wrote the words that were on the front of our wedding invitations:

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! (Eccl 4:9-10)

D ependable

Walter Winchell said: "A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out." A true friend does not bail on you and would never kick you when you are down.

"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)

We will come back to this verse in just a minute. But first, I have a few questions.

How about you, Friend?

As you listened to that list of characteristics of a friend, did you feel encouraged or bummed out? Do those words describe you? Are you a good friend? Chuck Swindoll suggests five questions to ask ourselves to see how our friendship factor rates:

What are the limits of my friendship? Do I use people or lay down my life for them? How much do I know of sacrificial love?

What is my impact on others? Am I a change agent for godliness in my friend's life? Are they a deeper disciple because of me?

Do I take the risk of openness, or is there a carefully constructed wall around my life that no one can penetrate?

Am I an initiator of love, or am I waiting for others to earn my approval or to reach out to me?

How am I helping my friends realize their potential in any or every area of life? Are they more fruitful because of me?

Action Steps

Let's end out time today with a call to action.

If you want to have friends you must be a friend. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "The only way to have a friend is to be one." It is the lesson I learned in the mountains of North Carolina. If I wanted to make friends, I needed to make a few changes in the way I related to people. I needed to listen more than I talk. I needed to talk less about myself. I needed to ask more questions. If you are a little intimidated in starting conversations with people here is a great acrostic that Pastor Dick shared with me: FIRE. Asked about their family, their interests, their relationships, and their experiences. I guarantee you that if you ask a person about these four categories you will get them talking. By the way, Pastor Dick is our new executive pastor and will be in his office in mid-July.

Get involved in the women's or men's ministry. Women do a great job in building long lasting relationships. My wife has a group of friends that support her, love her, and when she needs it, confront her. Women, if you have wanted to make friends, get involved in

the women's ministry. They have Tuesday morning Bible studies, "Gatherings," and informal times of relationship building. They also have a program called "Apples of Gold" that pairs younger women up with more mature women for mentoring.

Men, we struggle in this area don't we? We have been raised in America. We are men! We grunt about sports, the weather, and about the stock market. We have been taught that to make it on our own. Our Rambo complexes hurt our relationship capacity and, as a result, we are lonely. Guys, get involved in the men's ministry. Come to the men's breakfast held once a month. Get in a small group or a Bible study with a couple of other guys. Get accountable to another guy. Take a risk and be relational! Join the men's ministry for a Peoria Chief's baseball game July 9 or attended Promise Keepers at the end of July.

Serve, serve, serve!!! In a recent poll, the Barna group found that friendship was an extremely important factor in church growth and success. One of the findings is fascinating: members with best friends at church are more satisfied with their churches and more engaged in various ministries. This doesn't surprise me at all.

Some of my best friends are the incredible servants on the student ministry team. We serve together, pray together, and dream together. This summer we are going to be involved in a missions project called "Ten Tons of Love." Pontiac Bible Church's goal is to collect 20,000 pounds of Bibles, Christian books, magazines, CDs, tapes, and curriculum and deliver a truck to a ministry in Bulter, IL called "Love Packages." Go through your basement and bookshelves and clean house. Get involved and serve. Serve somewhere this summer. Join the "Promise Land" team, the multimedia team, the worship team, the greeting team, the decorating team, the landscaping team, or the hostess team. You will be surprised at how quickly you make friends when you faithfully serve.

4. Think of others need ahead of your own. I believe this attitude must be an intentional act of the will. You must be actively seeking out needs to meet and looking for opportunities to consider others better than yourself. Remember Paul's words earlier in chapter two:

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Phil 2:2-4)

I experienced an amazing example of this attitude on Wed morning. I joined Pontiac Christian School's junior high class for an end-of-the-year kickball game. The seventh graders were down two runs and it was the last inning. The bases were loaded and I stepped to the plate with dreams of grandeur running through my head. The ball was pitched and I kicked what I thought would be a game-winning homerun and felt a "pop" in my leg. I took two steps and collapsed. Jason caught the ball and we lost. What moved me was the students were more concerned for me than for the outcome of the game. The moral of this story? Don't play kickball when you are almost 37!

Find the faithful Friend named Jesus. In one conversation, Jesus changed the rules of the friendship game. Let's listen in as He talks with His disciples:

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. (John 15:12-15)

No longer disciples, but friends! Jesus proved the depth of His love for them by laying down his life.

Jesus was faithful. He promised he would be with us ... "always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

Jesus is real. He was a "friend of sinners and tax collectors." (Matthew 11:19)

Jesus is invested. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

Jesus is our encourager. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." (Phil 4:13)

Jesus thought of our needs above His own. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor 8:9-10)

Jesus is dependable. Jesus is the friend that "sticks closer than a brother." (Prov 18:24)

Let's look at this verse again: "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother." The term "come to ruin" means to break in pieces by a blow." Life is going to hit you hard and friends will forsake you. Friends will disappoint you and sometimes leave you out in the cold. But, there's good news. I love the Geico Insurance commercials. There is one that asks, "Can your glue do this?" and there is a baby grand piano hanging from the ceiling. That is a great picture of the word "sticks." It means to cleave or adhere to. Jesus will stick with you through thick and thin. He will never bail, bully, or back bite you. You can trust Him and He will never let you down. Jesus Christ is that friend that sticks closer than a brother.

I Knew You'd Come

Since it is Memorial Day, I'd like to end with a story I read about recently. Two friends grew up together in the early part of the twentieth century. When WWI broke out, they enlisted together, trained together, and fought together. They found themselves separated in the heat of a fierce battle. One lay critically wounded in the open battle field, the other huddled in a bunker with his commanding officer. He requested permission to try to reach his injured friend but was denied because it was too dangerous. In fact, the officer said it would be suicidal. When the officer turned his back, the soldier bolted out of the bunker and started running across barbed wire and dodged bullets whizzing all around him. He staggered back into the foxhole with his buddy who was now dead. He had been shot multiple times and lay dying next to his friend. The officer was both angry and deeply moved. "What a waste," he blurted out. He's dead and now you are dying. It just wasn't worth it." The man replied with his dying breaths, "Oh yes it was, Sarge. When I got to him, the only thing he said was, 'I knew you'd come, Jim.'"

The sweetness of sacrifice permeates true, rich, lasting friendship. Jesus said "greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:12)

The words to an old hymn speak of Jesus' sacrifice:

"I've found a Friend, O such a friend! He bled, He died to save me; And not alone the gift of life, but His own Self He gave me! Naught that I have mine own I call, I'll hold it for the Giver, My heart, my strength, my life, my all are His, and His forever." (I've Found a Friend, Small)

Do you know Jesus Christ as your friend? Have you placed your full trust in Him for the forgiveness of your sins? Have you surrendered yourself to Him to be the leader of your life? Remember, the Bible makes it clear that if you are not a Christ-Follower you are not His friend. Jesus said "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters." (Luke 11:23) I love the way Eugene Peterson translates this verse: "This is war, and there is no neutral ground. If you are not on my side, you're the enemy; if you are not helping, you are making things worse." (Luke 11:23, The Message) And how do we know we are Jesus' friends? He said, "You are my friends if you do what I command." (John 15:13) Do you have a desire to obey Jesus? Do you want to please Him in all your ways? Or are you indifferent to His instructions?

We are going to end this morning by singing a song called "Once Again." The bridge will be our prayer this morning – "Thank you for the cross, my Friend." If Jesus is not your Savior, tell Him you need Him as your best friend.