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“The Power of Connecting”

Philippians 1 Small Group Plan

Our culture has taught us to value autonomy and individualism. Even spirituality is often seen as completely personal and private. But isolation can lead to spiritual emptiness. Consider these challenging words about spiritual friendship.

According to C. S. Lewis, friendship is one of the four basic human loves, the others being affection, eros and charity. Long overshadowed by romantic love, friendship is easily undervalued ... The principal reason friendship is so undervalued is probably that too few people have ever experienced a significant, enduring, friendship ...

Friendship is one of God's special gifts to humans. Remarkably, friendship is one of the terms God uses to describe the relationship he desires with us. Friendship is therefore no ordinary relationship. We cheapen it when we reduce it to mere acquaintanceship. The ideals of friendship are worth preserving.

— From **Sacred Companions** by David G. Benner

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Who are you close to and what made them such good friends?
- What in our culture has cheapened and devalued the concept of friendship?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— I THINK ABOUT YOU —

Philippians 1:1-6

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

- Why is it amazing that, at this time, Paul would be thinking of others rather than himself (cf. 2:19-23)?
- What does the phrase “partnership in the gospel” (v. 5) mean?

- How does prayer deepen your partnership with other disciples (vs. 4-5)?
- How does God “begin” in our lives (v. 6)? How does he start? What does he do first?
- What can we accomplish in our “partnership” with other Christians that we could never accomplish alone?

— I FEEL FOR YOU —

Philippians 1:7-8

⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God’s grace with me. ⁸ God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

- The text is clear, Paul had feelings and he expressed them (v. 7).
- What does it mean to say to someone, “I have you in my heart”?
- Why are feelings important to spiritual growth?
- How would you describe their power?
- How does God use them in relationships?

— I PRAY FOR YOU —

Philippians 1:9-11

⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.

- Paul had a prayer plan that he followed. We catch glimpses of it in his letters.
- How did this prayer plan strengthen his ministry?
- Paul prayed for the Philippians to know and understand **God’s love** (v. 9), **God’s will** (v. 10a) and **God’s holiness** (v. 10b).
- Why did they need these three? What would a growing understanding of each of the three do for their personal lives and the Philippian church?
- How do you respond to this statement — “If we don’t know how to love, we don’t know how to live”?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- **THINKING** — Why does our intellectual side need our emotional side?
- **FEELING** — Without a mind shaped by God what are the dangers of emotion?
- **PRAYING** — Share your own personal prayer habits. How do you do it?
- Who has been the Apostle Paul in your life, the one thinking, feeling and praying for you? Briefly describe your feeling of gratitude.
- Close in prayer by thanking God for the friends in your small group.