

# *Friendships Don't Fail*

## **WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY**

Last in a five-part series

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*Proverbs 18:24 (NIV)*

<sup>24</sup>One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin,  
but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

*Acts 16:1–5 (NIV)*

Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek. <sup>2</sup>The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. <sup>3</sup>Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. <sup>4</sup>As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.

<sup>5</sup>So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

*1 Corinthians 4:14–17 (NIV)*

<sup>14</sup>I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. <sup>15</sup>Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. <sup>16</sup>Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

<sup>17</sup>For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

*Philippians 2:19–24 (NIV)*

<sup>19</sup>I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. <sup>20</sup>I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. <sup>21</sup>For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup>But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. <sup>23</sup>I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. <sup>24</sup>And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

*2 Timothy 1:1–5 (NIV)*

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

<sup>2</sup>To Timothy, my dear son:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup>I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. <sup>4</sup>Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. <sup>5</sup>I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

*Friends are patient, friends are kind. Friends do not envy, friends do not boast, friends are not proud. Friends do not dishonor friends, friends are not self-seeking, friends are not easily angered, friends keep no record of wrongs. Friends do not delight in evil but rejoice with the truth. Friends always protect, always trust, always hope, always persevere.*

Last summer, we looked at the ministries of Paul and Timothy, focusing on the younger man's support of the great apostle's work. This time, we want to get a sense of their personal relationship, their friendship, for it endured over many years and, to our knowledge, never failed.

We first meet Timothy on Paul's second missionary journey in the early 50's AD. Luke, the writer of Acts, tells us that the two met in Lystra, in southern central Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), where local believers spoke highly of the young man. And so,

Paul decided to take Timothy with him as a companion and co-worker in Christ. We wish we knew more about the back-story of these two men. Paul had visited Lystra on his first missionary journey a few years before. Perhaps that is when Timothy and his family came to Christ. Or, perhaps another Christian evangelist had been to Lystra.<sup>1</sup>

We would like to know more, but we do know that Paul once wrote, “I have no one like him . . . like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel” (Philippians 2:20-22). Or this: “Timothy, my son whom I love” (1 Corinthians 4:17). Timothy is mentioned throughout Paul’s correspondence and there is no hint of any break or discord, such as there was between Paul and Barnabas, just before Paul began his second journey (Acts 15:36-41).

Unsurprisingly, given the years they worked together, Paul came to know Timothy well. In the letter, 2 Timothy, Paul urges Timothy to:

. . . continue with the things you have learned and found convincing. You know who taught you.<sup>15</sup> Since childhood you have known the holy scriptures that help you to be wise in a way that leads to salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.<sup>16</sup> Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character,<sup>17</sup> so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good. (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

Because of his mother, Timothy had evidently been steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures from a very early age. Paul reminds him that those sacred writings were given to teach him and help him truly live out the Good News. As an aside, we also need to remember that the writings Paul refers to in these verses is not the entire Bible, but only the Old Testament, for he is writing only 30-35 years after Jesus’ death and resurrection.

So comfortable is Paul with Timothy that he is ready to send Timothy to the Corinth so that he might be a role model, as Paul would be if he were there: “Therefore I urge you to imitate me.”<sup>17</sup> For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church” (1 Corinthians 4:16-17).

Enduring friendships require care, humility, grace, patience, and more. Essentially, and here is the key, lasting friendships require the Christian virtues. Thus, friendships between disciples of Jesus should be a mark of our discipleship, as was the friendship of Timothy and Paul.

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. As in most things Christian, putting friendship in the context of discipleship changes our understanding. Just consider the NT images of Jesus as friend. The words “friend” and “friendship” appear at critical moments in John’s Gospel. For example, in John 15:12-17, Jesus instructs his disciples that they are to love one another and that “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Jesus goes on to say that he calls the disciples his friends because he has confided to them everything that God the Father has confided in Jesus. Do your friendships with other Christians differ from your friendships those who are not Christian? If so, how?
2. Paul and Timothy’s friendship and ministry persisted, but we can be sure there were some rough spots along the way. In your experience, what sorts of problems do friendships run into? What role do you think forgiveness plays in getting rocky friendships back on track? Why is true forgiveness so difficult for us? Have you ever lost a friend because of your own pride . . . or because neither of you were willing to be the first to bury the hatchet? How can we get better at forgiving? How

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<sup>1</sup> There were Christian evangelists working in these first decades after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Apollos is one, whom we first learn of in Acts 18.

do we go about learning that forgiveness is something positive, not a sign of weakness?

## Daily Bible Readings

*This week: More on Timothy . . . and Paul*

**Monday, Acts 16:1-5** Paul meets Timothy and decides to take him on as a helper.

Timothy undergoes circumcision so that he is more acceptable to the Jews.

**Tuesday, 1 Thessalonians 1:1** Timothy is still with Paul and Silas.

**Wednesday, 1 Timothy 1:1-11** Timothy's purpose in Ephesus

**Thursday, 1 Timothy 6:3-16** A warning about false teachers and a direct warning to Timothy

**Friday, 2 Timothy 1:8-17** Timothy is not to be ashamed of the testimony.

**Saturday, 2 Timothy 2:14-21** Some direct instruction for Timothy

An archive with more than 700 of these studies can be found at  
[www.scottengle.org](http://www.scottengle.org)

## Scott Engle's Bible Classes

### Monday Evening Class

We are studying the gospel of John.

Meets from 7:00 to 8:15 in Piro Hall

### Tuesday Lunchtime Class

We are studying the book of Samuel.

Meets from 11:45 to 1:00 in Piro Hall

*About the weekday classes:*

Join us whenever you can. Each week's lesson stands on its own. This is very "drop-in." Bring something to eat if you like. Bring a study Bible.

On occasion Scott must cancel class, so if you are coming for the first time, you can check [www.scottengle.org](http://www.scottengle.org) to make sure the class is meeting.

### Scott's 10:50 Sunday Class in Festival Hall

This is a large, lecture-oriented class open to all ages.

Our current series: *The Messiah Comes to Middle Earth*

Coming up on March 18 & 25: *Jesus Comes to Jerusalem*

There are still a few spots open for the October 2018 cruise to Israel with Robert Hasley, Pam White, and Scott Engle. For more information go to [www.scottengle.org](http://www.scottengle.org).