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# THE COMPANY

# WE KEEP

IN SEARCH OF BIBLICAL FRIENDSHIP

Foreword by Ed Welch

Jonathan Holmes

"A wonderful primer."  
— Alistair Begg

"A solid, fresh way of re-thinking  
all of your relationships."  
— Tim Lane, co-author,  
*How People Change*

# An Unlikely Friendship

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## Current Landscape of Friendship:

Some sobering statistics regarding friendship:

- **Alan McGinnis**, author of *The Friendship Factor* estimates that only \_\_\_\_ of men have real friends.
- In a recent survey, \_\_\_\_\_ people have not spoken with someone about something of importance within the past 6 months <sup>1</sup>
- Rates of loneliness in the 1970s: \_\_\_\_\_
- Today: over \_\_\_\_\_ among middle-aged/older adults<sup>2</sup>
- *Significant health factors associated with friendlessness:*
  - *USA Today* tells us that people with no friends increase their chance of dying early by 14% <sup>3</sup>
  - In a study of 3,432 heart attack survivors \_\_\_\_\_ had low social support which resulted in lower mental functioning, worse quality of life and more depressive symptoms<sup>4</sup>
  - *Huffington Post* says having few friends is the equivalent health risk of smoking \_\_\_\_\_ cigarettes a day
  - One meta-analysis claims that loneliness increases the risk of early death as much as smoking or being 100 lbs. overweight<sup>5</sup>
  - "Although isolation is an important risk factor, having \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> Jacqueline Olds & Richard Schwartz, *The Lonely American: Drifting Apart in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/to-beat-the-blues-visits-must-be-real-not-virtual-1464899707>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.usatoday.com/story/life/weekend/health/2014/03/14/loneliness-friendship-health/6391403/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://time.com/3449778/heart-attack-social-support/>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://theconversation.com/why-addressing-loneliness-in-children-can-prevent-a-lifetime-of-loneliness-in-adults-76248>

doesn't always prevent loneliness – and being alone doesn't always cause it.”<sup>6</sup>

O Best way to combat depression? <sup>7</sup>

\* 50-70: face to face interaction with friends

\* 70+: face to face interaction with family

- **Bernice Neugarten** of the University of Chicago writes that most people choose their friends and lovers between the ages of 22 and 28.
- Psychologist **Stuart Miller**: “The older we get, the more we accept our essential \_\_\_\_\_.” <sup>8</sup>
- **Thayer Prime**: “[Thayer] starts to dock new friend candidates as they begin to display annoying or disloyal behaviors. Nine times out of 10, she said, her new friends end up from 30 to 60, or little more than an acquaintance.”<sup>9</sup>

## Friendship as the foundational relationship for society

Why is friendship is on the decline?

*There was no cinematic blowup: it just evaporated. I believe I disappointed or annoyed or let Dan down in some way, and he chose to end the friendship rather than to confront me. Dan and I haven't spoken for over a year, save a cool encounter at that same mutual friend's holiday party.*

<sup>6</sup> <https://theconversation.com/why-addressing-loneliness-in-children-can-prevent-a-lifetime-of-loneliness-in-adults-76248>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/to-beat-the-blues-visits-must-be-real-not-virtual-1464899707>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.mensjournal.com/magazine/print-view/do-men-suck-at-friendship-20140422>.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/15/fashion/the-challenge-of-making-friends-as-an-adult.html>.

*Men no longer know how to fight. Don't get me wrong—we know how to confront strangers when they cut in line at the butcher's or block the door on the subway. What we don't know how to do is have the kind of unpleasant talks that articulate feelings to real friends...Instead, we either shrug off the slight or end the friendship.*

Towards the end of the article, Schrank surmises about what went wrong, and how it might be put back together. He concludes:

*I would love to say that I am psyching myself up to stop caring about what is expected of me and sit down and hash things out with Dan. I would be lying, though.*

*Imagine it. I'd have to call (and that's already a nonstarter because then I'd be using a phone), but imagine anyway. I call Dan and say: 'I feel sad that we had a falling out. I care about you. I would like us to be friends. What did I do wrong? Come on, yell at me. I can take it.' Not happening. Dan has two children and a wife, a staff, innumerable obligations; he's a busy man. I care about him too much to fight with him. So no, I'll never reach out to him and say all that stuff.*

*But Dan, if you are reading, let it be known: I miss you, man.*

## **An Unlikely Friendship**

<sup>15</sup> And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."<sup>16</sup> But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God."<sup>17</sup> Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."<sup>18</sup> And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more. (Ruth 1)

## 1. A Friendship Must Cost You Something

- a. **Paul Miller:** We can easily forget that all Ruth's triumphs of love are done while she is single, without marriage prospects. In fact, her greatest triumph is embracing singleness as a way of caring for someone in a seemingly dead-end relationship.

## 2. A Friendship Must Be Centered Around Something/Someone

- a. **Paul Miller:** Ruth puts God, not love, at the center of her love for Naomi. The form of her poem with God at the center, mirrors the shape of her heart.

### 3. A Friendship Must Point to Something/Someone

**a. Paul Miller:** What [Naomi] needs is lifelong physical help and companionship; she needs someone to die for her. She needs a savior. Ruth sees to the core of the issue and acts in her heart by binding herself to Naomi for life. Naomi has said, in effect, to Ruth and Orpah, 'You have to save your life. In order to have your life, you have to lose me. My life is over.' Ruth responds with, "No, my life is over."

**b. Scott Sauls:** Whereas "modern" friendship asks, "What can this person do to make my life better?" a Gospel-centered friendship asks, "What can I do to make this person's life better? What can I do to 'enhance her glory,' to help her be and become all she can be, as the person God created her to be and to become?"<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <https://scottsauls.com/2014/08/taking-friendship-new-level/>.

Notes



Thoughts:

