

## **Study Guide: Thank You for Being a Friend**

Sunday, October 3, 2021 | Shawna Boren

### **Focus Scripture:**

Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

—Phil 2:1-4

**Topics:** Community, Relationships

### **Short Summary:**

In this sermon, Shawna Boren addresses the question: how do we practice friendship in our culture? She identifies common cultural practices that serve as roadblocks to friendship and then provides five relationship builders that will open up opportunities for cultivating connections with others.

### **Extended Summary:**

How do we actually practice friendship, as we have been talking about in this series? First, we must address some of the roadblocks that impede us in our ability to be friends. One of the most significant impediments today is technology. For instance, technology has trained us to place a high value on efficiency over patience, and because we expect results immediately, we carry this expectation into our relationships. The problem is that meaningful human interactions are never efficient. The second roadblock is busyness. We need to build margin in our lives to spend with one another so that we can waste time together. Meaningful friendships are developed over time and if we are too busy we will not develop them. A third roadblock is past hurts that we have experienced in previous friendships. Because friendships are messy, we have all been hurt or disappointed and we have to deal with that baggage in order to develop meaningful friendships.

To avoid some of these roadblocks, it's helpful to identify a few basic things that we must avoid. These are the seven friendship busters that Paul Eddy has developed:

1. Unclear expectations
2. Gossip
3. Betraying confidentiality
4. Possessiveness
5. Controlling/smothering behaviors
6. Competitiveness and negative comparisons
7. Quid-pro-quo arrangement

In contrast to friendship busters, there are some simple friendship builders. The first is knowing and caring. Knowing entails getting inside the other person's point of view so that we know them for who they are. Caring is about truly showing up for the other person and responding to their needs.

The second friendship builder is initiation, which is a contrast to being passive. It means that we are pursuing connections where we are present in such a way that others feel greeted, welcomed, worthy, accepted and belonging.

Our third friendship builder is cultivation, which involves being consistent as a friend, and even being the kind of friend that will work through conflict.

Safeguarding, the fourth friendship builder, is about being a safe space where others feel free to be vulnerable, as they sense that they can lower their shields of protection.

The final friendship builder is one-anothering, following the biblical challenges to love and support one another, as Christ has loved and supported us. We are called to live loved, to give away what we have received.

We recognize that this is a huge challenge in our culture, but we do not need to become relationship experts overnight. We only need to take steps in the direction of making friends and see what the Spirit does to open doors of connection.

**Reflection Questions:**

- How have the common roadblocks to friendship impacted your relationships?
- What past hurts continue to haunt you and keep you from taking steps to building friendships?
- What do you find the most challenging about the friendship builders? What comes the easiest to you?
- What do you need to change about how you relate to others?
- What is the Spirit leading you to do in response to this message?