

## COMMUNITY: Old Friends Are The Best Friends

July 17, 2016

**Ephesians 4:1-4 (NIV)** Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.

**2** Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. **3** Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

**4** For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.

Friends create expedient Christianity or spiritual maturity.

- **Proverbs 12:26 (NIV)** The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.
- **Proverbs 27:9-10 (NIV)** Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice. Do not forsake your friend or a friend of your family, and do not go to your relative's house when disaster strikes you— better a neighbor nearby than a relative far away.
- **Proverbs 18:24 (NIV)** One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Jesus, himself, was tempted with instant gratification.

**Matthew 4:1-11**

- Turning stones to bread to feed his hunger – provision.
- Jumping off the Temple so angels would catch him – power.
- Bowing down to the devil in return for the nations – position.

The kind of friend everybody needs:

- We can call when we're in crisis.
- Look each other in the eye and ask hard questions.
- Loves you as you are, but cares enough to confront.

## THE BLESSING OF OLD FRIENDS.

1. Trust is earned and credibility is established.

**Proverbs 27:5-7 (NIV)** Better is open rebuke than hidden love. **6** Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

2. Strengths are celebrated and weaknesses are protected.

**Ephesians 4:15-16 (NIV)** Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. **16** From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

3. Fear is replaced by security and confidence.

**1 John 4:18-19 (MSG)** There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love. **19** We, though, are going to love—love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first.

How can I invest in long-term relationships?

1. Keep initiating meaningful conversations.
2. Stay in the same neighborhood instead of moving to the bigger house.
3. Serve in your church through the ordinary seasons.
4. Work through conflict in your small group or friendship circle.
5. Change your relational mindset from a sprint to a marathon.