

# **Hello, Goodbye: The Art of Making New Friends**

## **Harmony in Friendships series #1**

### **Bill Aumack**

Hello, everybody. Pastor Chris is sick. He wanted to be here desperately. I told him, "Don't you bring that crud here and share it with all of us." So he said, "Great. Now you have to preach." So that's a mixed bag there. But I got to give props to Pastor Chris because he wrote most of the sermon. He did the heavy lifting and I just get to deliver it. So it's kind of the inception of sermons, right? Pastor Chris' sermon delivered by Bill. So we'll see how this goes.

Alright. Let's start out this morning with a couple of questions. Let's do a show of hands. How many of you find it easy to make friends? How many of you find that to be just absolutely terrifying? Okay. Introverts are here. You know, I thought I made friends pretty quickly because you guys know my background. We moved a lot. I had to make friends. And I thought I was, you know, decent at making friends. Maybe not, you know, world-champion friend-maker. but you know, I got by. Linda puts me to shame because she makes friends with everybody everywhere she goes. Now you guys know that she has MS and now most of the time she's in a wheelchair and so she volunteers over at Rancho Los Amigos Hospital helping with people that have been newly diagnosed with trauma or injuries or strokes or diseases that are gonna limit their mobility, helping them with resources, showing them that life's not over, life continues. And to do that, she calls a service here and down, they call Dial-A-Ride and they come with a big van and can take her in her motorized wheelchair so she can get around the hospital and help other folks. And she'll come back at the end of the day and have made new friends on the 15 minute bus ride across town. She'll be telling, "Hey, I met Susie Q and we were talking about her family and I'm like, who's Susie Q? Well, I met her on the bus today." And in the 15 minutes across town, she learned about her history, where she was born, how many kids they had, what they're all doing. She knows.... it's phenomenal, right? And for some of us, making friends is just crazy easy. And for some of us, maybe a little tougher, a little tougher. And that's okay, that's okay.

So let's keep going here. How many of you today are looking forward to catching up with your friends today at church? Yeah? How many of you hope nobody talks to you and you're gonna leave out of here with like flames on the carpet behind you after the last amen, right? I know you're here. I know you're here. Okay. And let's talk about our groups of friends. We're gonna talk more about this, but our friends kind of come in layers. And you got folks way out there on the fringe, kind of acquaintances, maybe workmates, the guy that lives five doors down in the neighborhood, you recognize him, but they're not really friends, not those. Then you've got friends and then you've got close friends. So in your friends group there, how many of you have like five close, five good friends, five good friends? How many of you have 10 good friends? 20 good friends? Okay. Right? That's about average, I would say, for how this goes with other people.

And let's just think about those. You don't have to raise your hands, but how many of you, how many of your friends are from work? How many of your friends are from the neighborhood? How many of your friends are from school? Maybe you've known them since school days and you're still... friends. All the young people raised their hands for that one. Right? It's good to think about our friends. How many of your friends are Adventist? Or how many of your friends are Christian? And how many of your friends are not Christian? Maybe they're atheist or Muslim or Buddhist or, you know, some other faith. It's good to think about our friends.

And today we're starting a sermon series called Harmony in Friendship. And we've hidden, not very well, we've hidden a song title in each of the sermon titles. And the sermon, the song titles may be easier for you to find if you're closer to my age instead of closer to a young person's age. But today it's "Hello, Goodbye: The Art of Making New Friends. You know, harmony, we got to put a song title in You guys are all looking at me like, why? All right. You know, and not everybody we meet becomes a great friend. Right, there's people we meet, they're acquaintances, but they don't make it into our friendship circle. And that's okay, but it's kinda hard to identify what a friend is. The Encyclopedia Britannica states that friendship is a state of enduring affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust between two people. In all cultures, friendships are important relationships throughout a person's lifespan.

Okay, so get out your sermon notes. We're gonna go through some things here. Our first question is, should we even make friends? Is this biblical, right? Or should we just all, you know, run away to the hills and live in caves and be hermits? Okay, so what does the Bible say about this? We're not gonna have time to read all these texts, but this is your homework to go home this afternoon. We got five texts, not too many. Make sure I read them to you right and we're doing this right, okay?

Number one, we were created for community, right? In the beginning, who did we have? Adam, Eve, and God, right? So we had a little community there. And we know that Genesis 2:18 says it's not good for man to be alone. So we created Eve, right? We're created for community. We're supposed to have community. We're supposed to have some friends. We're not supposed to be hermits in a cave.

Number two, we should have a sense of belonging, a sense of belonging. Ephesians 2:19, I'll read that to you and then we'll look up some of the next ones. Consequentially, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household. Now, this comes from the New Testament. They're specifically talking about the Jews and the Gentiles and how we shouldn't be strangers how we should be coming together and belonging together. And the same thing can apply to us today, right? We're not Jews and we don't consider everybody else Gentiles, but it's kind of the same situation, right? We're Christians and we have non-Christian friends. Everybody should be able to come and belong. Everybody should have a sense of belonging here in God's house, amen?

Number three, share the joys and the challenges. Let's look up Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. This is a passage we're probably pretty familiar with. We use it from time to time. You've probably heard it before. Give me an amen when you get there, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up, but pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken, right? Well, we've heard this before, right? It's good to have friends, we help each other. Have you ever seen a rope under stress, you know, and it starts fraying and it starts cracking and giving away and eventually complete failure,

right? But when the rope is woven together with other strands, it lasts longer, it's stronger. That's the way we are to be with our friends, okay?

Number four, friends encourage and keep you accountable. We don't like that word accountable. That's like a four-letter word. Nobody wants to be accountable. Hebrews 10:23 to 25 says, let us hold on swervingly to the hope we profess for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day approaching. Verse 24 is the key one here. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward what? Love and good deeds. Love and good deeds. And don't give up meeting together. It's good to come together, to meet together, to see your friends, to get encouragement from your friends. "hey, man, I'm struggling with this." And have your friends help boost you up and encourage you.

Last one, number five. We are called to share Jesus with others. Luke 16:9, now Luke 16 is the parable of the shrewd manager. We talked about this not that long ago, right? And the manager works for a rich man, but he's sloughed off. And there's a whole bunch of people that owe the rich man money. And the rich man says, "manager, I'm tired of you. I'm firing you." So the manager calls in all these people that owe money and say, hey, you owe this much money, cut it in half. And say, you only owe this much. And cut it down, you only owe this much. And the manager says, ah, I commend you for your shrewd behavior because now people owe you favors. And when I fire you, you've got people you can go to to help you out, right? And look at what, as Jesus tells this story, what he says, Luke 16, this starts in verse 8. Says, the master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in their dealings with their own kind than are the people of the light. Verse 9, I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Now we could preach a whole sermon series on that one verse because there's a lot in that verse. But for today, we just say, God tells you to use your worldly wealth, your temporal wealth, the stuff that you can't take to heaven. Use your money, use your time. Maybe a friend's car breaks down. Let him borrow your car. Use your house, invite people over to make friends. And if you do that, what happens? What'd it say? You'll be welcomed into eternal dwellings. You're gonna be welcomed in heaven because you use the things that God gave you to make friends. And hopefully while you were making friends, you

told them about Jesus at some point, right? Nobody wants to go to heaven and leave all their friends behind. That would be sad, right? We want them to go with us. So we need to make friends and it's very biblical to make friends.

Kate Murphy wrote an article, "Do Your Friends Actually Like You?" It's in the New York Times in August, 2016. And so they featured this article and it explored our current confusion about friendship. "Ask people to define friendship and even experts who research friendship and you'll get an uncomfortable silence followed by an ur or an um, Friendship is difficult to describe, said Alexander Nehamas, a professor of philosophy at Princeton, who in his latest book, called *On Friendship*, spends almost 300 pages trying to define what a friend is." Does that sound like a professor you want to take a class from? 300 pages trying to define what a friend is. But "he says, it's almost easier to say what it is not. And at foremost, it is not instrumental. It is not a means to obtain a higher status or wrangle an invitation to someone's vacation home or simply to escape your own boredom. Rather, Mr. Nehamas, says, friendship is more like beauty or art, which is appreciated for its own sake. Ronald Sharp, a professor who teaches a course in the literature of friendship added, it's not about what someone can do for you, it's about who and what the two of you become in each other's presence. The notion of doing nothing but spending time in each other's company has, in a way, become a lost art. People are so eager to maximize the efficiency of relationships, they have lost touch of what it is to be a friend."

That's a sad statement on our society, that we've lost touch of what it is to be a friend. Some of the things that friendship is, true friendship is selfless and giving, right? True friendship is selfless and giving. You give of your time, you give of, you know, you may help when it's time to move, right? How many of you, your friends move and he calls you up, hey, come help me move, right? It's great to be older, can't anymore, back hurts, right? When you're 20, man, you had to go huff the couch down the three flights of stairs. True friendship is also there through the good times and the bad times. You know, in our cancel society sometimes, somebody gets in trouble and maybe they really did something they shouldn't have done. You know, they're getting prosecuted in the court system, you know, they really screwed it up. And a friend sticks with them and says, you know, I'm here to support my friend and we'll try and cancel the friend. "Ahhh, I can't

believe he's sticking next to that guy." That's what friends do. That doesn't mean it was okay what the guy did, okay? But your friends stick with you. They don't abandon you when times get bad. And, you know, a question you may be thinking of is, yeah, that's easy for you to say, or that's easy for Linda to say, it's easy for her to make friends, it's hard for me to make friends. And making friends takes time. Remember, we talked about this last month. Jesus spent a lot of time with the crowds and he poured into the crowds and he preached and he healed and he even fed them on occasion. But he really pours into the 12. And even with the 12, he's got three, Peter, James, and John that get extra treatment. And that's a pretty good average number about how many friends you can have and how many close friends you could have. You can't have too many close friends because you don't have enough time physically to pour into them. You just, you can't. You can't have 25 close friends. You just don't have that kind of time. So it does take time as we work through and we become friends and we talked about the layers. You start out as an acquaintance. And then you start getting a little bit closer to them and they might become a friend. And maybe they end up in that inner circle. They make it all the way to becoming a good friend. And that's okay, right? But sometimes people stay in certain areas too. Sometimes they stay acquaintances. They don't ever make it to friends. Sometimes, you know, it can all happen. And that's fine. There's nothing wrong with that. But we just need to be aware of who's in our inner circle that has influence in our lives, okay?

So let's talk about a couple of things about what friendship is. Friendship is authentic and real, right? You may be able to fake it for a little bit, but we sniff out fakes pretty easily, right? Humans are pretty good at detecting fakes, okay? So you have to be authentic and real. What happens in a friendship if your friend doesn't tell you the truth? A lot of times you don't remain friends anymore, right? That can be the end of the friendship. They weren't truthful. Couldn't trust them, right? Have you ever had a friend betray your trust? You know, that's the end of many relationships and friendships, okay? So, and that leads us to forgiveness, which we'll be talking about in two weeks. But, you know, we have to be authentic. We have to be real. We have to make sure that our friend's values largely line up with ours. You don't have to agree on everything. Linda and I don't even agree on everything, okay? But we agree on the key things, right? We agree on the things that matter the most.

Number two, we have to find commonality with others. Ask them, what do you like to do? You like sports? You like a certain TV show? Star Trek versus Star Wars? I don't know. Maybe they like fitness. I go to the gym and work out. Maybe they like politics. Somebody out there must like politics. Whatever it is, maybe they like to cook. Maybe they like to bike ride. Maybe they like to work on cars. Maybe, you know, whatever it is. Read books. Find out what they like to do. And once you figure out what they like to do, then do some of those things together or talk about those things, okay?

Number three, if you want to make friends. Listen with intent and ask questions. You know, it takes us about two years to learn to talk. We all learned to talk when we're about two years old. It takes about 50 or 60 years for us to learn to shut up and listen. And listen with intent and ask questions, you know? When somebody says, hey, you know, I like to bike ride. What kind of bike you got? Is it mountain biking? Is it road biking? Is it BMX? But you know, what do you like to do? Ask questions, get to know them a little bit, okay?

And sometimes you just have to be with your friend. They're going through a hard time. Guys, I'm talking to you. Shut up. It's not always the right time to solve the problem. You've had a friend that says, I just, I got to this spot and then my life's a mess and I don't know how I got here. And you're thinking, I do. See back there, when you made that decision there, back there, you zigged when you should have zagged. And you zigged and you ended up here. If you'd have zagged, you'd have been over there. You'd have been great. But you zagged and you're here. What's the problem? Don't say that. Don't do that, right? Just be with your friend. Just hang out. Just listen to them. Just spend time with them.

And of course, you can always try something new with your friend. You don't have to do the same stuff all the time. You can try something new. Maybe they like to do something that you've never tried before. They like to ice skate. Uh-oh, right? We're gonna go ice skating. You know, or whatever it may be, okay? And try something new with your friends. You'll find out how people act in adversity sometimes, right? As we try to do something new and different, we have a hard time. But you know, we can do those things and just look for places to be

authentic and to be real, to talk to people. I know every time I get stuck in a line at a store or waiting for something, I try to talk to the person behind me or in front of me or something, just try to get to know somebody a little bit, try to be friendly, just try to say hi. Most of us are aggravated because we're standing here in this stupid line anyway, so let's see if we can make it go a little bit better.

But there's a little acronym you can use, sometimes this helps us, and it's called Ford. Some of you may go, I'm not a Ford fan, I'm a Chevy guy. Okay, but you can remember the word Ford, okay? You can remember the word Ford. And so here's things you can do that'll help you make friends, Ford. First thing is ask about their family. When you ask about somebody's family, they are more than happy to tell you, right? And they will tell you about their kids and their grandkids and mom and dad were pioneers that came across on covered wagons, you'll learn all kinds of stuff about people, okay? Ask about their family. Number two, ask about their occupation. What do you do? I'm a welder. What do you weld? I make parts for spacecraft. That's kind of cool. What spacecraft? Just ask questions. Ask about their recreation. What do they like to do? What's their hobbies? I collect stamps. I didn't know anybody still did that. Can't remember the last time I got a letter that had an actual stamp on it, right? Ask about their recreation. What do they like to do? And lastly, ask about their dreams. If money wasn't an option, if time wasn't the problem, what would you love to do? What would be great? This is a great way to get to know somebody. It's easy. Just remember Ford. Chevy's better, but remember Ford. Just kidding. Just kidding. Don't want to start a war.

The trick is to say hello, ask some questions, get to know somebody as that friendship develops. Maybe you'll have an opportunity to share your faith. Maybe you've got an opportunity to tell somebody about Jesus and make a difference. I always consider myself pretty lucky because I had three really close friends. Unfortunately, cancer has taken two of them in what I consider to be way too early. Not to second guess God, but to me it felt too early. And one of those was Randy Hill. And we looked kind of similar and people would sometimes say, call us brothers. And eventually we just started going with it. One example is when we were moving out of our house, he was helping and he came over after work and the mover comes in and says, your brother's here. Now I have a brother. He lives in San Jose. He doesn't look anything like me because he looks like dad and I look

like mom. So we don't look alike. And how would they know my brother was here? And why would my brother be here? You know, like 6-800 miles away. And just then Randy come walk in. I go, oh, that brother's here. Yeah, that's my brother. We're here, right? And when he passed, they had his funeral up at Rose Hills. This is the Sky Chapel. That's a big one with the cool roof with all the cool wood in it. And the place was packed, packed. Every seat was full. People were standing around the side. There's a little balcony. There were people in the balcony. There were people in the lobby. There were people outside that couldn't get in. You'd have thought we were giving away free food. Yeah. And I realized that Randy wasn't just my brother. Randy made everybody feel like he was their brother. What a great thing to say about somebody. Maybe that when our life is over, somebody would say about us. He was a great friend. She was a great friend. She made me feel loved. He was always there when I needed him. I don't know what better way we could leave this life. Hopefully we can all be good friends.

So a reflection. What holds you back from making new friends? Now some of you raised your hands. It's terrifying to make new friends. I sympathize. I get it. But God has asked us to make friends so that we can share his word. I don't want to be there on Judgment Day and say, Lord, you know, I wanted to tell somebody, but man, that was really scary. Right? I want to say, I told all these people, they're all with me. Right? I think that's where we want to be.

Challenge this week. Go and meet somebody. Grocery store is calling. Target is still there, ladies. Go and meet somebody, apply the forward principle, make a friend. And maybe it's, you know, the uncle there, but maybe it's at work where he'll meet somebody. Maybe it's your neighbor that you could meet and make a friend. Maybe it's a family member that you could make better friendship with. I mean, just because somebody's your family member doesn't really mean you're friends, right? And that's cousin Joey, he's kind of weird. You're not necessarily friends, but maybe cousin Joey needs a friend. Maybe the guy down the street needs a friend. That's our challenge this week.

Let's bow our heads for prayer. Heavenly Father, help us to be great friends. You came and you showed us how to be a good friend, how to pour into the 12 disciples and into the three. Lord, help us to have some friends that we can pour

into and that are pouring into us as well. Lord, because we were made for community and we're made to be together. We're not meant to be lonely and scared. And some of us are, and that's okay. It's a feeling, it's okay. But Lord, give us the strength to step out in courage and make some new friends and find somebody that can help us, that can pour into us and we can pour into them. And we'll have a friend so that we can have somebody to help us when we fall down and we'll be there to help them when they fall down. Lord, you know our hearts, you know our needs, and I know that you have put us all in a place where there's somebody who needs to know about you. Help us to reach out to those people, Lord, so that they can have the opportunity to know what a gracious and amazing, forgiving and loving God you are. Be with us this upcoming week, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.