

Sermon Series: P.E.A.C.E. – the goal of godly care

#4 The P.E.A.C.E. model of care

Imagine that you could go to the local supermarket and buy Friendship Soup from the shelves. What ingredients would you expect to find that make for good friendships?



Today's new mums know that their kids will learn about friendship through Bluey. His tips are: laugh together, talk together, and stick together in good times and bad. Bluey also reckons some friends are worth saving your last smoothie for.



In the ancient Greco-Roman world, during which the New Testament was written, friendship had very formal categories:

1. **Virtue friendships** – True or virtuous friendships were between equals, characterized by trust, goodwill and loyalty.
2. **Civil friendships** – Civil friendships were based on pleasure and common interests to make society more agreeable.
3. **Utilitarian friendships** – And thirdly, Utilitarian friendships were task-based, centered on common needs or causes; to get something done on your “to-do” list (Aristotle despised this type of friendship¹).



Each type included common rules, including how correspondence should take place between true friends.² And those rules reveal how Paul's Epistle to the Philippian Christians bore the marks of a friend writing to friends in a time of need.³



Looking at Philippians chapter 1, we see how in the opening address **Paul doesn't call himself an "Apostle"** and doesn't separate himself out from his co-workers as he does when addressing a moral issue or when

¹ Aristotle, Cicero and Plutarch all had much to say and write about the formality and importance of friendship. Patron/client type relationships were sometimes called “friendship” in the marketplaces too.

² Gordon Fee, Prof. Emeritus in NT studies at Regent, Vancouver, revealed New Testament e.g's.

³ Paul wrote this letter from a prison, most likely in Rome. See Acts 16 for the circumstances of the beginning of their friendship.

teaching. Instead, here it is just “Paul” with Timothy. This is a friend writing to friends. And, as we will see, Christian friendship is much more than sharing a laugh and sharing a smoothie. Pastoral friendships lead to grace and peace.

Note Paul’s words to his friends in verses 3-11 seek each person’s wholeness and connectedness to God, not just their happiness. Paul says:

3 I thank my God every time **I remember you,**
4 constantly praying with **joy** in **every one of my prayers**
for all of you... It is right for me to think this way about
all of you, **because you hold me in your heart...**



I **long for** all of you **9** And **this is my prayer,** that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight **10** to help you determine what is best, so that **on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11 having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.**

Some of the original Greek words used bring out the deeper qualities:

- **Partnership** – *Koinonia* in vs. 5 means partnership or **shared participation**. It is often translated as “fellowship”, but meant much more than sharing tea, coffee and conversation after a service. It was often a marketplace word too, expressing binding loyalty. Paul and the Philippian Christians were joint partners and participants together in the grace of God and in the mission of telling the Gospel message to others.
- **Joy** – *Charas* in vs.4 is the **language of joy**. Paul is not merely happy about their maturity and conduct as Christians, their wellbeing brings him a deep sense of joy in his prayers. Joy, unlike happiness, is unswayed by changing circumstances, based on deeper ties.
- **Affection** – *Splagchnon* in vs.8 expresses affection and **tender care**. It’s a love that is borne deep down in the guts, in the intestines. Jesus expressed such compassion for those he called “sheep without a shepherd” in Mark 6. It’s a love that hurts when the other is in need.⁴
- **Sacrificial love** – *Agape* in vs.9 is the same word for love that describes the sacrificial love of God for us in Christ. Paul’s prayer is that Christians will love each other by putting the needs of the other first.

The basis of Paul’s rich relationship with the Philippian Christians was something more than loyalty between equals, more than mere civil fidelity, and beyond mere common task and duty. The basis of peace⁵ and wellbeing he

⁴ More than a decade had passed since Paul first visited Philippi

⁵ Philippians 4:7

prayed for was the common ground of the cross of Christ.⁶ But such pastoral love didn't take place without intentionality and action.

In this sermon series we've been promoting some simple and practical actions for Christians to take up to help maintain care and unity in the church. The acrostic P.E.A.C.E. spells out a **practical model** of pastoral care, one to another.

P is for Prayer

Each of us can pray for others in the church, as Paul did for the Philippians. Jesus' great prayer for his disciples in John 17 is another good example of what to pray when praying for others. Imagine if everyone of us prayed for at least one other person regularly: i) that they would be confident in Christ and all he has done for them, and ii) that they might grow to mature and united faith and living. **Can you commit to this for one other person for a time?**

E is for Encouragement

The first "E" of the acrostic P.E.A.C.E. is "Encourage". It is the most used verb in the New Testament relating to what Christians should do. Paul says, "My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding..." (Col. 2:2). He urges the Thessalonians to live together with Christ, saying, "...encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thes. 5:10-11). The Greek word "*Parakaleo*" means being called alongside. It's the very word Jesus used when describing the Holy Spirit.⁷ With the help of God, we can exhort, counsel, comfort, and strengthen one another in faith and hope. **Can you encourage someone's faith today?**

A is for Available

How good would it be if you felt confident that you could call on someone in the church when you were in need of help? Families of inner-city dwellers are often far away. City neighbours are often very private. I've asked many clergy who say they feel they have no-one to call when in need. As an act of pastoral care, you could choose to offer your availability to another person, for an agreed time, so they know someone cares enough to listen in tough times. **Can you make yourself available for a time to one other person?**

C is for Contact

The C in the acrostic is for **Contact**. When did someone last call you just to ask how you're travelling in your walk with Jesus? It may seem a bit

⁶ Philippians 2:1-11

⁷ John 14:26

confrontational to cold contact someone, but what if someone here agreed to receive your regular call to check in and keep you on point with Jesus? It was much more difficult for Paul to do that for the Corinthians while in prison, with no phone, and no mail service. So important was such contact he sent a person with his letter. **Could you see yourself offering to contact someone here regularly?**

Lastly, E is for example

Perhaps the most subtle action is E **for example**. No-one wants to put up as a good role model of Christian care. Yet Paul knew how his humble attitude and lifestyle, for example, would show others the way to follow Christ (see 1 Thes. 3:9). In Phil. 2 he writes about how humility like that of Christ needs to catch on in community. **Can you see yourself acting as an example of faith for the sake of others, with God's help?**

P.E.A.C.E. – Paul believed that God's peace was at hand for every Christian community if only the people would participate willingly. E.g., in Philippians 4:5-7 he writes:

Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

And in Ephesians 4:2-3 we read:

...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bear with one another in love and make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Why not make the P.E.A.C.E. acrostic part of your practice of pastoral care one to another in our church community? Warren Wiersbe writes in his book on Philippians about how he views Paul's three-fold love for Christian friends – "I have you in my mind, I have you in my heart, and I have you in my prayers."

Such an attitude accompanied by prayer, encouragement, availability, contact, and example would indeed lead to a peace-filled church today.