

Title: **Critical Characteristics of a Christian Influencer (Part 6)**
Text: **Acts 20:36-38**
Date: **March 8, 2026**

Find the sermon manuscript to follow along with online at mercyhillchurch.org.

Big Idea

In our text, Paul gathers the Ephesian elders to say goodbye and encourage them one last time. As we overhear their conversation, we learn what it looks like to be a healthy disciple of Jesus making healthy disciples of Jesus. We see the critical characteristics of a Christian influencer. This morning we see that Christian influencers “make friends” and “say goodbye.”

Characteristic #14: They Make Friends

Paul, in an effort to influence these brothers for Jesus, didn’t just hit-and-run, nor did he merely speak to them about Jesus from afar. No. He cultivated deep relationships with them. He made friends with them. And in the context of that relationship, that friendship—he changed them, he influenced them for God. This is what I would refer to as *influence by way of intimacy*.

What’s Involved in It?

Aspect #1: Vulnerability—You can’t really be a friend with someone if you don’t open your heart and your life to them, if you don’t make yourself vulnerable. Without that, they don’t really know you, and you won’t really know them.

Aspect #2: Sacrifice—“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Any real friendship is going to require this. I don’t just love you when you please me. I love you even when it costs me.

Aspect #3: Commitment—There’s an endurance in real friendship. You’re in it for the long haul. You go the distance with a person.

What Keeps Us from It?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the things that are involved in this kind of friendship (i.e. vulnerability, sacrifice, commitment) are the very same

things that often keep us from it. In other words, the aspects I just outlined are also the barriers.

How Can We Grow in It?

I think the way you grow in this is you really lean into the friendship Jesus has established with you in the gospel. That’s what changes the way you deal with others. You see the way he’s dealt with you.

Aspect #1: Vulnerability—Jesus opens his own heart and life up to us. “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15).

Aspect #2: Sacrifice—We know that, for Jesus, relationship with me is not a relationship of convenience. It is not a “mercenary friendship.” The only thing he gets out of the deal is my sin. But he leans in anyways. And he doesn’t just give a little time or a little money or a little love. He gives his life.

Aspect #3: Commitment—“[T]here is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). Jesus is that friend!

Characteristic #15: They Say Goodbye

Do you want to influence people for Jesus? You’ve got to be willing to leave them *for Jesus* and leave them *with Jesus*.

Leaving people *for Jesus* means that, even though Paul found something awesome here in this community, the mission is bigger than just this little crew. God’s heart is for the world. And when Jesus calls, Paul has to go.

Leaving people *with Jesus* means that, even though Paul has been really important in the life of the Ephesian church, he knows he’s not the Savior. They’ll get along okay without him. He’s not leaving them alone. He’s leaving them with Jesus.

Reflection Questions

- Who is the friend God has used to influence you most for Jesus? Take a moment to thank them today!
- Who do you think God is calling you to move towards in friendship? What steps can you take this week to do so?

W

E

L

C

O

M

E

SCAN TO FILL OUT A



CONNECTION CARD

Give your offering online at mercyhillchurch.org/give or place it in the dropbox at the back.

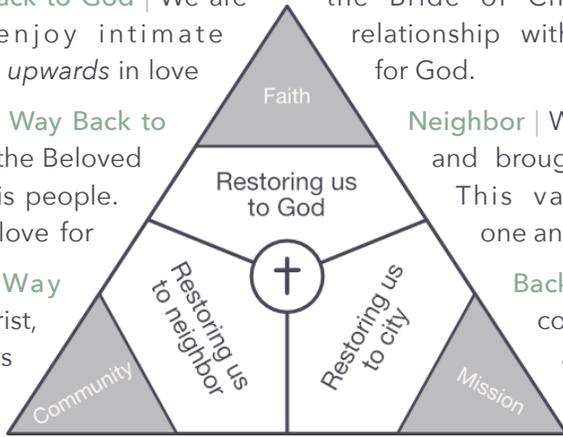
Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.

FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are the Bride of Christ, created and redeemed to enjoy intimate relationship with him. This value presses our church *upwards* in love for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. This value presses our church *inwards* in love for Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal relationship with his people. This value presses our one another.

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his ambassadors. This value presses our church *outwards* in love for the Back to City | We are commissioned by the unbelieving.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



Mail: PO Box 23806, San Jose, CA 95153
Phone: (408) 320-7080
Email: info@mercyhillchurch.org
Web: mercyhillchurch.org



Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Missions Emphasis Week - March 15-22!

Mercy Hill's Missions Emphasis Week this year will run from March 15th thru March 22nd. Here are a few things to look forward to:

- We'll be kicking off the first Sunday of this week (3/15) with a special message from Nick.
- On the second Sunday of this week (3/22) we'll have a guest-speaker bringing us God's Word followed by an international potluck lunch (sign-ups coming soon)!

We hope you can engage with us in this as we learn and grow together to be, ". . . witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@mercyhillchurch.org.

Members Meeting - Today after the Service!

Women's Walk + Talk + Pray - This Saturday (3/14)!

Bags of Love - Donations Needed Next Sunday (3/15)!

All Church Campout - June 26-28

Scan the QR code below for more info and clickable content!

SCAN FOR THE



SUNDAY SIDEBAR

A digital space designed to supplement your Sunday Service experience.