



where did all my friends go?

The kicker about being alone is that God didn't design us to do this life by ourselves. Spiritual friendships are crucial to our survival! Which is partially why coming off of a Royal Servants trip can be so difficult. This summer may have been a taste of what Christian community can offer, and yet this experience is not always long-lasting. Maybe you have spiritual friendships back home as well that you can continue to find your place in. But maybe you don't - or those friendships have changed. Regardless, you may be longing for your Royal Servants friends, and that is ok and normal. But it is also important to remember that sometimes friendships are seasonal. As excruciating as it can be, saying goodbye is part of all relationships at one point or another.

The early church experienced this -- their reality was that as persecution increased many of them had to flee their lifelong homes and communities and settle in new places. Even though many of them would never see their friends again, the reality was that God was using this dynamic to expand the reach of His Kingdom, and they chose this as something to celebrate. So there was a bitter-sweetness to their experience. That seems to be the tone in which Paul writes our scripture focus for today.

read

Philippians 1:1-14

reflect & journal

1. What clues does Paul give about his relationship(s) to the people of Philippi? What emotions does he seem to be feeling?
2. How does Paul deal with his sense of longing for his friends? He specifically uses words like *thankful* (1:3), *joy* (1:4), and *affection* (1:8). What helps him respond in such a positive and hopeful way in the midst of his loneliness?
3. How would you describe your relationship(s) with those you are missing right now? What emotions are you feeling? How might you also be able to find positive and hopeful ways to respond in the midst of your loneliness?
4. Write out a list of reasons you are *thankful* for your team (could be individual people). Why can you *rejoice* in your relationship(s) with them? What does it mean for you to "...long for [them] with the *affection* of Christ Jesus"?
5. Read Philippians 4:1. By praying this verse for your friends, how might this help refocus some of your own feelings of loneliness? How might this practice help you put to rest the lonesomeness you feel for those you miss so that you can be present to the people who are around you now?

pray

- Write out a specific prayer (like Paul's prayer in 1:9-11) for your teammates as they are home and perhaps lonely too.
- Pray that the gospel will be advanced in your lives and homes as you are spread out from each other.