

THE COST OF FRIENDSHIP

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"It takes a long time to grow an old friend." — John Leonard

We're a "right now," kind of people. And I wonder if this has bled into the arena of friendship. I think most of us know that friendship is a beautiful place to land. We want that. But lots of us are also lonely. Maybe it's because we've assigned a role to a human that they were never intended to fill. Maybe we've just moved and barely had enough time to drop our couch into the living room, much less pour out our hearts to a new face. But it's possible we've just underestimated the cost — and what a delight that would be! Because that — we can do something about.

Some of the people dearest to me in life are under no obligation to stick around. But day after day, year after year, I count on them. Consistently and exceptionally, [our traveling companions matter](#). And they do not appear out of thin air or casually constructed conversations.

Great friendships are costly. Like anything worthy of depth and value they aren't cheap, or casual. They last... because investments have been made that build relational equity rich with history and understanding, shared moments and common

cares. They thrive because life was poured out for it. There's a cost — though “cost” is not likely the word anyone who pours out their hearts to another would call it.

So what does it cost?

1. **The cost of time.** History is the natural result of time. And while we don't have it in spades, we can't really know a person without time. Because the mere articulation of words takes a second... and words build into stories, into histories, into memories. Time may very well be one of our greatest gifts in a season when it's hard to come by.
2. **The cost of convenience:** getting things our way all the time isn't reality. And our availability doesn't always match the availability of our people. I meet up with some women once a month, and there are frequent evenings when I leave exhausted before I get there. If we hadn't made the decision to show up as a rule, I bet we'd have only spent a fraction of the time together that was required to know one another the way we do. And honestly, once a month is a launching point.
3. **the cost of being sharpened.** [Sharpening](#) is wildly beneficial, but can be deeply grating. It isn't easy to hear we've blown it, or to strengthen our blades... iron on iron isn't definably comfortable. And some of the “I see ____ in you,” moments of deepest encouragements can only be found when we've been willing to share our vulnerabilities. Enter #4...
4. **The cost of vulnerability.** It is not easy to allow access to the deeps of our hearts. And not everyone should have access. There are some things I hold closely, because trust hasn't been earned. But if it has... be willing to be known. And a dear friend? They won't leave when you blow it. They won't run when your story gets hard.

It should not shock us that relationships are costly. **Jesus offered his life — yes, to satisfy justice, but this would not be necessary if he did not ultimately want a relationship with us.** When Paul said goodbye to the elders of the church of Ephesus, it was with weeping and grieving and hugs... and it is with certainty that there was a cost to his investment into them. When I called a friend this spring in tears over a loss, it cost her something to weep with me. It cost her something to stay on the phone and speak truth. Relationships may required those casual awkward conversations to kick

off — have the awkward talk! But let's not be surprised when we give up our time, or be occasionally inconvenienced. Let's press into depth and life and love and let's be willing to take on the cost of friendship.