



## WHO'S IN THE PICTURE?

*They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. (Acts 6:5, NIV)*

I'VE BEEN GETTING A LOT OF PHOTOS LATELY from our Fellowships and their leaders around the country. Honestly, there are plenty of great smiles out there!

Here's the deal, though: To me, these pictures look so much the same. Eight, ten, twenty people all lined up in their golf attire, backs to the clubhouse trophy case. But no matter how nicely they are dressed, or how beautifully they show their teeth, I don't know their names. I have no personal attachment to these people. They are all the proverbial faces in a crowd.

Yet, I know that to those who are in the picture, each person means much to the others. Every one of them could put the same photo on their shelf and say, "These are my friends. These are my brothers and sisters in Jesus."

Today's passage is full of names. To us, reading from a context so far removed in time and place from theirs, these names—other than perhaps Stephen's, if you are familiar with the next chapter of Acts—mean little or nothing. But to those who knew these men, the names meant much. The disciples of Jesus knew that in choosing these men to serve the widows and other needy believers, they were choosing those who demonstrated faithfulness and humility. They would not tire of serving.

God has a way of bringing people together, a way of—as we say under the *N* in the mission of each Links Player—“networking friends together in Christ.” Men and women with unique testimonies of faith and personalized gifts of the Holy Spirit are brought together for service and friendship under the one who is our head, Jesus Christ.

Not every photo in your album or on your tablet will be filled with people who presently bring a smile to your face because of their love for the Lord. But if it is God's desire that “all would be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), then we can count on this: God will expand his kingdom, he will do so among your friends, and you will rejoice in their being found!

## Opening questions: Say cheese!

Who's in your picture of friends you like to play golf with? Which of these stands out today as a true friend beyond the game, and for what reason?

## Chosen for excellence

Read Acts 6:1-6. Why were servants needed among the people? How were these men prepared by God and commissioned by the apostles?

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Read John 13:1-17. What did Jesus do for his friends? What lesson was he offering in this action? (See also Mark 9:33-35.)

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How are friendships advanced when people serve one another?

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## The body of Christ

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. What part do you play in the body of Christ? How do you need to modify your perspective on God's people in order to love other better?

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