

## *Friendship*

*“A faithful friend is a strong defense: and he that hath found such an one hath found a treasure. Nothing doth countervail a faithful friend, and his excellency is invaluable. A faithful friend is the medicine of life; and they that fear the Lord shall find him.”*

Apocrypha Ecclesiasticus 6:14-16

There may be someone here that feels that they do not have even one good friend. The spirit of God, a God of love, reaches out even to you. Approach God in prayer and He will provide for you a true friend. The Gospel of Mark records the words of Jesus,

*“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them”* Mark 11:24.

### **A Friend**

God has created each of us according to His own image. He has given each of us our personalities and our natures. He knows each of us by name.

Each one of us needs at least one good friend, a friend to confide in, a friend to share sorrows and concerns, a friend to support and encourage us, a friend who brings joy and happiness into our lives. A friend is trustworthy, honest, loving and encouraging.

A true friend accepts us for who and what we are; a true friend helps us in our walk of faith. Walking side by side, at times even leaning upon each other.

### ***“A faithful friend is a strong defense”***

We may have friends both in faith and out of faith. We may find unbelieving friends in our neighborhoods, school, or even at work. We want our best friends however to be those who are in faith. Not only are they able to be our friends but also strengthening and uplifting us in our lives of faith.

Believing friends are trusted brothers and sisters with whom we can share our most personal and private matters. They offer us advice and correct us when we stray. We are able to speak to them of our temptations and weaknesses. We are able to speak of those matters that trouble our conscience. Most importantly we are able to hear from their lips the forgiveness of all sins. They are sealed vessels, never sharing our transgressions with others.

*“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up”* Ecclesiastes 4:9,10.

***“He that hath found such an one hath found a treasure”***

Seek friends from God’s Kingdom and of all ages and stations in life. Do not overlook your brothers and sisters, your parents or the even the elderly.

We find friends in doing the work of the kingdom, camp-work and youth-work, congregation projects, kitchen-work and cleaning. Some have even met their spouse-to-be at camp. If we have found even one good friend we have been blessed. Do we look at our friendships as treasures, something of great value to be prized and cherished?

We do not need to look far however, our own family provides friendships. Friendships within the family are to be cared for and cherished. When we care for our family relationships and consider them special, we develop friendships with our siblings and parents. It is a gift to be treasured when we are able to speak of our most private and personal matters with our parents. They have many years and experiences of life that they are able to relate and understand our own struggles and difficulties. It is especially great to be able to share our joys, plans and anticipations with them.

Elders also have many experiences to share that have happened throughout their lives. By visiting with them we find how they are able to encourage us and assist us through different stages of lives. While visiting them, we are able to assist them, even encourage them and bring joy into their lives.

***“Nothing doth countervail a faithful friend his excellency is invaluable”***

Countervail means *compensates or makes up for*. We could rewrite the verse to read, *there is nothing so precious as a faithful friend, and there is no way to measure their value or importance*.

We see an example of a true friendship in the lives of David and Jonathan. Jonathan, the son of King Saul, was a loyal friend of David’s. King Saul in his unbelief envied David and even attempted to kill David a number of times. Jonathan helped David escape the wrath of King Saul, his father. He sided with David in matters of what was right and wrong and matters of God’s will.

*“And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”*

1 Samuel 18:1.

Jonathan’s friendship for David was immeasurable. During one of the times that King Saul planned to kill David, Jonathan told David of the plans and offered to assist David.

*“Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee.”* 1 Samuel 20:4.

The most precious matter between Jonathan and David is that they were able to support each other in their lives of faith. While Jonathan's father King Saul pursued David, David avoided him by fleeing into the wilderness. Jonathan went to meet David in secret and first wished to encourage him.

*“And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.” 1 Samuel 23:16.*

### ***“A faithful friend is the medicine of life”***

There are those who do not have many friends or even one good friend. Many of us have experienced times in our lives when it feels that we also do not have even one good friend. Things have gone poorly with our peer group. We have quarreled and rumors have been spread. Christian freedom has been broken.

Although there are times when we know the reason for our feelings of loneliness, other times we are uncertain why we feel the way we do. . During times of these kinds of feelings we want to remember that Jesus is a friend of all, even to the lonely. We can put all of our worries and cares on Him. We can care for our faults and offenses that we have knowledge of and restore our friendships by preaching the gospel to one another.

It is also important that we reach out to those who do not have many friends. We want to include them in our activities and even encourage them many times to participate. Jesus taught all of us the Golden Rule,

*“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.” Luke 6:31.*

Often in our lives we need a true friend. Perhaps you have memories of a time or times that a friend has gone out of their way to ask, “how are you?” or “how are things going for you,” you remember how much it meant to you. We can share these experiences during our discussion.

I remember a time at haps when one older friend invited us younger guys to come into the home and to join in the singing. He could have criticized or rebuked us in a harsh way; rather he lovingly invited us in. I remember another time when I was under heavy and difficult temptations and did not feel I could continue in faith when a friend came to me and asked how my matters were. I was able to speak openly to him and be freed from those matters that were troubling my conscience.

Both of these times along with others stand out in my mind. It is our desire to also serve others as well. We do not know when we will make a difference in someone else's life. We want to unselfishly serve each other, saying a kind word, encouraging one to be part of the group, and asking, “how are matters”?

*“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” Galatians 6:10.*

***“They that fear the Lord shall find him”***

Our best friends are those that are in faith. Being united by the same spirit enables us to experience true and meaningful friendship. God will provide for each of us a believing friend.

*“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*

John 13:35

Much of our time is spent trying to better our lives temporally, going to school and to work. Much of our free time is spent doing those things that interest us.

Having a true friend also takes time. Time to listen to their plans and problems. Time to consider their interests and ambitions. Time to seek them out when they may be wavering or withdrawing, perhaps life’s struggles have begun to take their toll.

Having a true friend is priceless, a friend to share your school and work life, a friend to share your dreams and adventures, a friend who seeks you out during times of need. To have a friend you must also be a friend.

**Caring for this priceless treasure**

The enemy of souls would desire to break true Christian friendship. How is this done? He plants small seeds of discontent or causes us to dwell on our friend's weaknesses or faults. In doing this, the love between us is tried. When we begin to focus on our friend’s weaker points or be easily offended by their words, we become bitter and envious, we elevate ourselves and begin to see them differently and drift apart.

Although we might hear that “A true friend overlooks their friends faults,” a true friend cannot and will not overlook a friend’s faults to the point of excusing sin or wrongdoing. We want to offer correction to our friends. We do not want to talk behind our friends back. We do not want to hurt them with our words. We want to put the best construction on all that they do.

We could lose a friend by leading them into temptation. Enticing them to listen to worldly music, to attend sporting events or the theater, are only a few examples. Neither do we want to encourage them to be disobedient to authorities or parents. Rather, we want to encourage them to be obedient.

When disobediences come, or we have disagreements that result in quarrels and angry words are spoken, we want to put them away in the name and blood of Jesus. Through the power of the gospel the friendship is preserved.

## **Thankfulness for friend**

Without friends, our lives would be lonely and lacking. Without friends, our lives could seem meaningless. Without friends, we may find ourselves in destructive behavior. For these and many other reasons we want to cherish and care for our friendships. We want to reach out to them and protect them, we want to love them and care for them.

A believing friend is truly a gift from God. Being united by the same spirit believing friends are able to share their true joys and sorrows, and most importantly preach the gospel of the forgiveness of sins to each other.

*“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” 1 John 1:7.*

Let us always remember to thank God for our friends.

James Jurmu