

March 2003: Friends

by Aaron Greenway

Probably one of the greatest blessings that God has given us is the gift of friendship. Not only has he unselfishly given His Son, Jesus, to be our companion through life, he has also put people in our lives who serve as an encouragement. Friends are those people who listen to our dreams, laugh with us when we are happy and cry with us when life has taken a wrong turn. They are the people who would never dare tell our secrets except to one person, the Father in Heaven they share.

Just recently, someone wrote me to tell me that she had been following my life for almost five years and that I had been on her prayer list. Being a friend of my sister's and one of our ministry associate's, it was a great blessing to get her letter. You never know when someone may be praying for you.

When the tough times come, that is when your true friends are there. The problem can be is that in our life we learn quickly that these are few and far between. So, when it does happen, we realize that the Lord is looking out for us. King Solomon had a couple things to say about friendship:

“A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).

In this world and even in this church it seems as if many folks are jockeying for position and their involvement with you only depends insofar as what you can do for them. I knew of a lady in the church who was hardly ever kind to anyone except to the

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leaders and to anyone who had money and position in the community. If you did not have any of those, you were out of luck. There are also those who will be your friend for awhile until there is a misunderstanding that takes place and then you never hear from them again.

Brothers and sisters, we have no control over what people do and what they don't. But we can do a few things:

One of the things I have always prayed is that God would put those people in my life that needed to be there, creating the best combination of them blessing me and me blessing them. We need people in our lives who will bless and encourage us. This is a basic human need, that companionship, for someone to be kind to us. It is a great blessing when someone takes the time to love us.

The second thing we can do is to be a friend. This does not mean that we can be friends with everyone, because this is unrealistic. My policy has been to stick with those who are a blessing in my life while holding out a hand to those who are not.

The last thing is to remember that only Jesus is the truest friend, the one who has never failed us and will never fail us. He is the closest to our hearts, the One who feels our joys and our pains more intimately than anyone else. Without Him, we would be lost...literally. He truly is the Friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Jesus becomes the model for how we treat others, how we are a friend to others. Our first thought ought not be "What can I get out of this person?" or "How can I take advantage of this person?" but "How can I bless this person?" and soon we will have friends. It will only be a matter of time. We cannot base it on stature, on position, on how much money the person has, or how good looking the person is, but on how Jesus sees that person. Many times, we will find that the most unlikely people will be the greatest blessing. A little old lady tucked away in a rest home somewhere or someone from another country could be your truest friend. Don't let the wrinkles or the skin color fool you? Glamor or the Hollywood image doesn't always go with strength of character. Character rests in the heart of those who have been through deep and hard

circumstances. Those are the people I wish to be with, because when life's road gets bumpy, I need to know they are going to be there. But even if everyone failed me, I know there is One who will always be, Jesus.