

Friends

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Dear brothers and sisters, I have been struggling lately with the idea that I have no true friends. I've had and have friends to me that I wasn't or aren't a friend to, I've been and are a friend to some that weren't or aren't friends to me, but I haven't had a true friendship since my mom was one in my childhood.

Of course Christ is my friend, in spite of me, I should add. But I'm talking about fellow earthly human being friends.

Of course Ana is my earthly human being friend, but only as one part of our relationship, as we also have the romance and the passion and the partnership and the association and the co responsibility of the kids, etc. She is many other things to me and me to her.

An only-friend is what I'm lacking and the more I searched for answers, the more I realized that I need to become a good friend first. But what is a friend?

Let's begin with the obvious human orthodox worldly place to find out, the dictionary:

According to an old book of the American Heritage Dictionary:
Friend, n. Is a person whom one knows, likes and trusts.

According to Wikipedia, one of the most updated places to look on line, "friend" does not exist. However you can choose between "Friends", the series, which premiered on NBC on September 22, 1994 or "Friendship".

Friendship is the cooperative and supportive relationship between two or more people.

According to Ambrose Bierce's Devil's Dictionary, "friend" does not exist either, but "friendship" does:

Friendship, n. A ship big enough to carry two in fair weather, but only one in foul.

Now my favorite way of better understanding a concept or a meaning: Quotes! I'll read a few found under the friend subject, in alphabetical order:

"A friend is one who believes in you when you have ceased to believe in yourself." Unknown

"A friend to all is a friend to none." Aristotle

"A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out." Walter Winchell

"Before you put on a frown, make absolutely certain there are no smiles available." Jim Beggs

"Fate chooses our relatives, we choose our friends." Jacques Delille

"Friends are a rare commodity these days." Don't remember

"Friendship is always a sweet responsibility, never an opportunity." Kahlil Gibran

**"It is a better compliment to be trusted than to be loved."
George McDonald**

"My goal in life is to be as good of a person my dog already thinks I am." Unknown

"Love is blind; friendship closes its eyes." Unknown

"Perhaps the most delightful friendships are those in which there is much agreement, much disputation, and yet more personal liking." George Eliot

**"Shared joy is double joy and shared sorrow is half sorrow."
Swedish proverb**

"The best way out is always through." Robert Frost

"The holy passion of friendship is of so sweet and steady and loyal and enduring a nature that it will last through a whole lifetime, if not asked to lend money." Mark Twain

**"The ornament of a house is the friends who frequent it."
Ralph Waldo Emerson**

"True friendship is never serene." Marie de Sévigné

"We need old friends to help us grow old and new friends to help us stay young." Letty Cottin Pogrebin

And now let's check out what the Word of God has to tell us today. Because I'm talking about earthly human being friends with its many imperfections, I'll go to the Old Testament, before our Lord Jesus came as human.

Proverbs 27:6

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful"

Wounds From A Friend?

"Friendly fire, ain't" Murphy

And kisses from an enemy?

Friends and enemies. Are you a friend or enemy? How can we tell which from which? Some things are rather obvious. Some are not so obvious.

Back in the 1970's, Pepper Rogers, coach of UCLA's football team suffered through a very poor season. He came under intense criticism and pressure from alumni and fans. Things got so bad that he felt as if all his friends were gone. "My dog was my only true friend," he said. "I told my wife that every man needs at least two good friends and she bought me another dog."

Milton, playing the flute back here has three, by the way.

Someone said, "**Nothing in the world is friendlier than a wet dog.**" Isn't that the truth?

Hettie Green was an infamous millionaire. She lived in seclusion and became a virtual recluse. She had only a few friends and an ugly dog that kept biting the few friends she did have. One of them said, "You've got to get rid of that dog." Hettie refused. She said, "**That dog loves me and he doesn't even know how rich I am.**"

Hmm, could that be a clue as to what a true friend is? He or she loves me whether I'm rich or poor or whatever!

The story is told that during his days as president, Thomas Jefferson and a group of companions were traveling across the

country on horseback. They came to a river, which had left its banks because of a recent downpour. The swollen river had washed the bridge away. Each rider was forced to ford the river on horseback, fighting for his life against the rapid currents.

The very real possibility of death threatened each rider. After several had plunged in and made it to the other side, the stranger asked President Jefferson if he would take him across the river. The president agreed without hesitation. The man climbed on, and shortly thereafter the two of them made it safely to the other side.

As the stranger slid off the back of the saddle onto dry ground, one in the group asked him, "Tell me, why did you ask the president to take you across the river?" The man was shocked, admitting he had no idea it was the president who had helped him. "All I know," he said, "is that on some of your faces was written the answer 'No,' and on some of them was the answer 'yes.' His was a 'Yes' face."

Could it be that the person who becomes a friend or perhaps a "best" friend is the person who has a "yes" face?

A "yes" face to me indicates someone who is there for you. They are supportive, regardless of the pain and suffering you are experiencing. They are even supportive when you fail or sin. They want to help you, bless you, lift you up, build up, not blister or burden you.

Rodolfo 2:22 "Love me more when I deserve it the least because that's when I need it the most"

Now, seriously, don't you wish everybody had a "Yes" face?

Here are some scriptures that indicate a "yes" face to me.

Rom. 12:10 "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves."

Rom. 12:13 "Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality."

Rom. 12:14 "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse."

Rom. 12:15 "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."

Rom. 12:16 "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited."

Rom. 12:17 "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody."

Rom. 12:20 "On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Rom. 14:1 "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters."

Rom. 14:19 "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."

Rom. 15:1-2 "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up."

We all need to be in the positive mode and mood of building

people up. The “yes” mode of being helpful.

Gal. 6:2 “Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.” KJV

Gal. 6:9-10 “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

Eph. 4:29 “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Eph. 4:32 “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

These all are “yes” scriptures. They deal with being positive or positively good and kind to others! And that’s the way of Christ. And for the most part, that’s the way Christ dealt with people while on earth, with the exception of the scribes and the Pharisees. Otherwise, Christ was a friend to sinners. He demonstrated a “yes” face to sinners in the sense of loving them.

For example, remember the woman caught in adultery in John 8? Jesus was the only “yes” face in the bunch. He was the only person who did not want to stone her or condemn her to death. He was the only person who truly loved her. He loved for herself and not for himself.

To a lesser degree Jesus showed his “yes” face to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. Why? Because Jews had no dealings with Samaritans, much less a woman. But Jesus took the time to

visit with her and talk to her about living water.

Jesus also showed his "yes" face to the Pharisee named Nicodemus in John 3. Most of the time did not show a "yes" to the Pharisees, but with Nicodemus He took the time to talk to him about being born again.

Jesus showed his "yes" face to a group of people at a wedding in Cana of Galilee in John 2. What was Jesus doing at that party anyway? He was invited. Why? Because He had a "yes" face and a "yes" spirit about him. I don't know that Jesus was the life of the party, but He certainly put life into the party by changing the water into wine. AND YOU CAN TAKE THAT ANY WAY YOU WANT!

Jesus showed his "yes" face to a demon possessed man Luke 8. The man was probably thought to be totally crazy by the neighborhood but in reality, he was possessed by many demons. He wore no clothes and lived in tombs. No doubt, the people were afraid of him. But Jesus demonstrated his "yes" face and cast out the demon. Jesus demonstrated mercy and not fear or reluctance.

Jesus showed his "yes" face to the multitude that followed Him in Luke 9, Matt. 14, Mark 6, and John 6. It was late in the afternoon and the disciples wanted Jesus to send the crowd away. They essentially said, "Hey, Jesus, it's time to eat. Those people need to eat and we need to eat."

And what did Jesus say? He said, "You give them something to eat." That was Jesus' "yes" face showing. They said, "We've only got fives loaves of bread and two fish." And Jesus gave thanks and then gave the disciples the food and there was enough for over 5,000 people. The Father in heaven said, "Yes!"

Jesus showed his "yes" face again when 10 lepers showed up,

asking for mercy in Luke 17. They said from a distance, "Master, have mercy on us." And Jesus did. Jesus smiled, showing his "yes" face and said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were healed.

When most people would not have had anything to do with people like that because they were dirty, stinky, and diseased, Jesus showed his "yes" face.

Jesus was a friend to sinners. Jesus was a friend to most people. And wounds from a true friend can be trusted.

Heb. 12:6 "The Lord disciplines (or perhaps wounds at times) those he loves..."

James S. Hewett tells of a neighbor he had who was trying to put a TV antenna on his roof, but was having a terrible time. Hewett decided to give him a hand. He went over and took with him his best tools and soon had the antenna up. His neighbor asked him what he made with such fancy tools. Hewett replied, "Friends, mostly."

How do you make friends? You be a friend to others. You do what you can to befriend others. Before you ever wound a friend, you first do something good to a friend or for them.

Proverbs 27:6

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful"

Wounds from Jesus can be trusted. Can wounds from you to others be trusted?

My son Rodi and I have discussed and argued over many things, many times. But I have always told him and I tell him now that I

love him and always will. And that I will not hold anything against him. I am his father. And my wounds to him can be trusted.

What I have said to him, the advice given to him, or the reprimands that I have given can be trusted because I love him. And you are the same with your children. BUT CAN OUR WOUNDS TO ONE ANOTHER BE TRUSTED? In other words, do they come from a heart of love?

But an enemy multiplies kisses. Who does that sound like? Sounds like a Judas and his kiss or kisses could not be trusted. Some people are not trustworthy. They are liars, backstabbers, and betrayers.

CONCLUSION -----

Here's a cute story about developing friendship to close our thoughts with. A preacher is writing, telling about his two daughters.

When our two oldest girls, Shannon and Sandi, were in High School I was pretty certain that neither would live past their eighteenth birthday. If they didn't kill each other there was a very good possibility I would. When they were little they were cute but in their teens they were always fighting about something - usually clothes.

One Saturday afternoon while their mom was gone for groceries I was reading in the family room and WWII began - over a pair of jeans. And they weren't even new! Just some only torn, smelly, frayed, blue jeans.

I counted to ten thousand, backwards, three times - just hoping it would all just go away or that Donna would come home. It didn't and she didn't so I decided I would have to act.

Their punishment would have to be one that they would remember for a long time. And the fact is that they do remember - it comes up every Christmas and family get-together. I make sure of it!

I made Shannon and Sandi sit on two kitchen chairs, facing each other, about one foot apart. Then I set the timer on the oven for fifteen minutes and told them that they had to look at each other - in the eyes - while smiling for the entire time.

They didn't think that their punishment was too bad until I said, "If you look away from one another or quit smiling, even for a second, I'll reset the timer we'll start over."

Both Shannon and Sandi looked at me like I was insane and I probably was a little crazy right then.

Anyway, I stood there in the kitchen and watched them grinning at each other until the corners of their faces began to ache and the anger in their eyes melted. The last five minutes they kept their eyes open and grins up with their fingers. Both faces were contorted into a mask of weird gleeful surprise.

When buzzer on the oven sounded and they were released from the grinning prison it was with a solemn prophesy. I told them that someday they would be friends and they would love each other.

Well, over ten years or so have passed and today they are friends, they love each other, enjoy getting their families together. And they still remember their aching faces and burning eyes.

Hey, I should try that some day with these two...but they are so silly that they would probably start laughing within the first minute.

Living in a family isn't always easy - there are times we don't get along so good. Even in church there are moments of anger and frustration.

It's important to remember that what holds us together is mightier than what pulls us apart.

Let's learn to get along here because some day we will live in mansions right alongside one another.

Please look around to your brothers and sisters here. Who knows? God may even suggest you sit and grin at each other in heaven till you get along!

So maybe my joke verse just needs a twist:

Rodolfo 2:22

"Love THEM more when THEY deserve it the least because that's when THEY need it the most"

Let's pray:

God, we thank you for your words and for the wounds we receive as your loved ones. Let us be good friends to those around us and let us make significant differences in their lives by loving them as you teach us to love and by rebuking, challenging and confronting those lost and by caring, visiting, listening and helping those in need. Help us be the friends you made us to be. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord, amen.

God bless you all!