

What A Friend We Have In Jesus
August 21, 2016
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John 15:12-16

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
13 Greater love has no one than this, then to lay down one's life for his friends.
14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.
15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" NKJV

Proverbs 18:24 "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" ESV

Today I want to talk to you about something that is probably the most precious thing you possess: A FRIEND!

Friends are like good health; you don't realize what a gift they are until you lose them.

Howard Hughes, the billionaire, once said, "I'd give all my wealth for one good friend."

A friend is someone who knows the truth about you and loves you anyway.

A friend is someone who comes in when the whole world goes away.

A friend is someone who tells you the truth.

Pepper Rogers, coach of UCLA's football team suffered through a poor season back in the 1970's. 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—so she bought me another dog."

A friend is a person who does his knocking before entering instead of after he leaves.

Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie has put together a 5-way test of friendship—5 words, each beginning with the letter "L."

LOVE. A friend loves unconditionally. Friendship is not dependent on performance or perfection.

LOYALTY. Two friends can count on each other to be there for each other, defending them when they are criticized, and remain steadfast in discouraging times.

LISTENING. We all long to have someone hear what we are saying and what we mean beneath the level of words.

LAUGHTER. Without ever laughing at us, a friend helps us to laugh at ourselves.

LONGSUFFERING. A true friend endures the test of our failures and takes the long view, seeing what we will be, not what we've been.

It's Up to You

One song can spark a moment,
One flower can wake the dream.
One tree can start a forest,
One bird can herald Spring.
One smile begins a friendship,
One handclasp lifts a soul.
One star can guide a ship at sea,
One word can frame the goal.
One vote can change a nation,
One sunbeam lights a room.

One candle wipes out darkness,
One laugh will conquer gloom.
One step must start each journey,
One word must start each prayer.
One hope will raise our spirits,
One touch can show you care.
One voice will
speak with wisdom,
One heart can know what's true,
One life can make the difference,
You see, its up to you!

Illus.: "Seventy-One and No Friends"

A minister was visiting in a large city hospital one day when a nurse approached him and asked if he could say a word to a very sick man. He said, "With pleasure, nurse." But when he was escorted to the bedside, the minister said, "But he's sleeping." "No," she answered, "He's not sleeping, he's dying." The minister noticed the name-card at the head of the bed: "Robert Browning, age 71, No Friends." "What does this mean, nurse?" he asked. "Just what it says," she answered. "If he dies tonight we do not know anyone who knows him." The minister bent over the bed and quietly said, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear." In a moment the closed eyes opened and a joyous whisper was heard. "Yes, Jesus is my Savior and the best Friend I've ever had."

“No Friends,” said the card, but the poor man claimed the friendship of the majestic Son of God. Isaiah said it well centuries ago, “And even to your old age I am He; and even to gray hairs I will carry you; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you!” (Isaiah 46:4). NKJV

We’re going to look at the life of Jesus and we’re going to find Him to be the truest Friend anyone could ever have. In John 12, we read about some Greeks who came to Phillip and said, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” John 12:21

This sort of seeking happened continually. The common people were always wanting to see Jesus—to touch Him, to listen to Him, to watch Him as He ministered to the needy.

What was it about this man that drew folks so readily to Him?

1. HE WAS A MAN OF ACTION

He could have preached a lengthy sermon on the dignity of labor, but instead, He worked in a carpenter’s shop.

He could have given us several great discourses on the meaning and value of prayer, but instead, He took time to draw aside to pray.

He could have told us about the worth of women, but instead He took time to speak to a woman— to heal, forgive, and even defend them.

He could have lectured about the virtue of humility, but instead, He washed the dirt from the feet of those who followed Him.

Jesus was a man of action! He still is. That’s why so people are drawn to Him today. He delivers on His promises.

2. HE WAS A FRIEND TO EVERYONE

In Luke 15, we read about Jesus eating with the tax collectors and sinners. And the religious leaders criticized Him for doing so. They didn’t understand that God Himself wants us to be His friends.

And because He was so approachable, folks flocked to Him just so they could be with Him and love Him and spend time with Him.

Isn’t it ironic? Jesus left heaven to come to earth. And when He got here the religious people said He wasn’t religious enough. Almost makes you smile or at least shake your head.

3. HE HAD SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SAY

After He had finished the Sermon on the Mount, there was an interesting reaction to what He taught. In Matt.7:28, it says that the people were “amazed or astonished” at His teaching. In other words, they stood in awe of Him.

They couldn’t get over what He had to say. When He spoke people listened. Why?

- Because He spoke with authority
- Because He spoke the truth—even when it made Him unpopular with some.
- Because He was practical—using everyday illustrations from construction to farming to fishing.
- Because He was positive—88 times He used the word, “Blessed.”
- Because He was loving—His hearers knew He cared about them.

4. HE IDENTIFIED WITH COMMON PEOPLE

He was one of them and they knew it. Abraham Lincoln said, “God must especially love average people because He made so many of them.

There was a common touch that Jesus had and it included everybody. And somehow they all knew it. He knew how to communicate in simple terms so that everybody could understand.

A letter from a friend

I just had to write to tell you how much I love you and care for you. Yesterday I saw you walking and laughing with your friends. I hope that soon you’d want me to walk along with you, too. So, I painted you a sunset to close your day and whispered a cool breeze to refresh you. I waited, but you never called. I just kept on loving you. As I watched you fall asleep last night, I wanted so much to touch you. I spilled moonlight onto your face—trickling down your cheeks as so many tears have. You didn’t even think of me. I wanted so much to comfort you. The next day I exploded a brilliant sunrise into a glorious morning for you. But you woke up late and rushed off to work—you didn’t even notice. My sky became cloudy and my tears were the rain.

I love you. O, if you would only listen. I really love you. I try to say it in the quiet of the green meadow and in the blue sky. The wind whispers my love throughout the treetops and spills it into the vibrant colors of the flowers. I shout it to you in the thunder of the great waterfalls and compose love songs for birds to sing to you. My love for you is deeper than the ocean and greater than any need in your heart. If you would only realize how much I care. I died just for you.

My Father sends His love. I want you to meet Him. He cares, too. Fathers are just that way. So please call me soon. No matter how long it takes, I’ll wait because I love you.

Your Friend, Jesus

5. HE DEMONSTRATED COMPASSION

He looked upon the multitudes and saw them as sheep without a shepherd. The Bible tells us that His heart was heavy because of their sin. He wept over them. He cried to the Father on their behalf.

He stopped once in the middle of a sermon to touch a man who had become physically wrecked.

He allowed children to crowd around Him while others waited.

He listened intently at a late hour while a confused Nicodemus inquired about truth.

He broke all the religious rules by healing on the Sabbath.

He risked His reputation by closely associating with those of questionable character.

He just couldn't help Himself! He cared so much.

6. HIS OFFER WAS UNIQUE

He offered people something that no one else could! SALVATION!

Illus.: "Morse Code Conversion"

During WWII a Belgian soldier was captured by the Germans and placed in solitary confinement. A Belgian pastor was in a cell next to him. There was a wall between them but they soon began to communicate with each other by tapping out Morse Code on the wall. The soldier tapped out the words, "It is hell to be alone with one's self." And the pastor tapped out this reply: "It is heaven to be alone with one's God!" Soon after that the pastor managed to get a Bible to this soldier. Before long the man had found Christ. He tapped on the wall and told the pastor about it. Shortly after that the Germans came to execute him, but before he was led out of his cell, he tapped out the words, "I am going out to life and not to death."

You see, the words of Peter ring true for us today. When we long for someone or something to meet our deepest needs, to whom shall we go? To the government? To the philosopher? To the psychologist? Then to whom shall we go?

I say, let us run to Jesus for He is the Friend of sinners and He has what no one else can offer us—the only way to God!