

LIFE MATTERS – What Matters Most – “Friendship”

Proverbs 17:17, “A true friend loves at all times.” Proverbs 18:24, “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

Friendship does matter. A famous children’s character said this, “*If you live to be a hundred, then I want to live to be a hundred minus one day, so I never have to live without you*” (Winnie the Pooh). The value of friendship is seldom known until it’s lost. But sadly there are many people who don’t have any friends to lose. Francis Bacon said, “*There is little friendship in the world, and least of all between equals.*”

Friendship matters most because friendship is a *heart matter*. Friendship is one heart in two bodies! Even God appreciates friendship. He spoke to Moses “**face to face, as a man speaks to his friend**” (Exodus 33:11). And Abraham was called God’s close friend (2 Chronicles 20:7). In John 15:14 Jesus says, “**You are My friends.**”

A friend is a person with whom you enjoy mutual affection and regard. It is someone you love dearly and trust; a close companion or confidant (Genesis 38:12). Perhaps the most famous friendship in the Bible was that of David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:1–4). Even though they lived 1000 years before Christ, these men displayed true Christian character. They were always “**kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another**” (Romans 12:10). In this gracious relationship, the friendship was founded on deep love and then sealed with a covenant. “**Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul**” [1 Samuel 18:3].

If you would like to build on a sure foundation of friendship, like David and Jonathan did, you must love your friends for their sake rather than your own. Jonathan was even prepared to give away his authority of succession to His father’s throne to David. And as a friend *who stuck closer than a brother*, he was always there when things got tough and even life threatening. Jonathan warned David of his father Saul’s plot to kill him.

Whenever Saul sought David’s life, Jonathan interceded on behalf of David, and Saul would reinstate David to his good favour. This kind of loyalty was proven time and time again as he warned David of Saul’s threats of vengeance. Friendship truly mattered to Jonathan!

The tragic end for Jonathan came when he, his father King Saul, and two of his brothers were slain by the Philistines. When David heard of this he mourned and fasted, and he composed a lamentation in which he poured out his grief over the death of his dear friend. Because David loved Jonathan so much, he treated Jonathan’s lame son with kindness and consideration. But the final act of love and respect came when David brought the bones of Jonathan back and buried them in the tomb of Kish. In doing this David honoured the covenant they had made, and recognised the loyal, unselfish love of his dear friend.

Proverbs 27:10 tells you to never abandon a friend... either yours or your father’s. David never abandoned Jonathan – even after death! The covenant that they had made together did not end with death. Isn’t this the same as the covenant we have with Jesus? He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. A friend who willingly gave up His life for us, and has promised to never leave us or forsake us! What a friend we have in Jesus! A true friend is like Jesus, he is the one who walks in when the rest of the world has walked out.

Someone once said, “*Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart.*”

But how do you make friends? And how do you keep them?

Here are some suggestions:

[1] Always be ready to make a friend, whatever the situation, and however unlikely the person may be.

[2] Be genuinely interested in other people. Have a “there you are” attitude, rather than one that says “here I am.”

[3] Don't be possessive of your friends. Introduce them to others – share your friendship. The best way to keep a friend is to give them away.

[4] Regularly keep in touch with your friends. Friends are like plants, they need to be nurtured. Many people lose a friend through a sheer inability to walk over and greet them.

[5] Don't expect more of your friends than you know they can offer, or afford.

[6] Appreciate your friends for who they are, not for what they can do or give to you.

[7] Never abandon a friend – no matter what they may have done. Yours is a ministry of reconciliation and not judgement. Treat your friends the way you treat your best pictures, and place them in their best light.