



Real Friends

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

- They say, “Friends help you move. Real friends help you move bodies.” While I don’t think Solomon would approve of the example, based on this proverb he would agree that the sentiment is in the right spot. As we go through life we all experience our share of “fair-weather friends,” who are fine hanging around when life is good, when the drinks are on us, when our friendship makes few or no demands, only to flee the moment that trouble comes. The prodigal son in Jesus’ parable found out the hard way that “wealth brings many friends, but a poor man’s friends desert him” (Prov. 19:4; Luke 15:13-16). But when someone sticks with us through the tough times—through the unemployment and the divorce and the cancer diagnosis—then we can be certain that God has given us something special. Solomon says that “a [real] friend loves at all times”—not just when we’re lovely or acting loveable.
- But does that mean that in order for someone to be my friend they’ve got to not only be loyal to me, but take my side and agree with every choice I’ve made? Not at all! Later in Proverbs Solomon reassures us that “wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses” (27:6). Nor does being a friend necessarily mean that we have to fix and solve everything. Being a friend is often just a matter of “being there.” Job discovered that sometimes the best friends are the ones who keep their mouths shut and sit in the dust and are willing to silently hold our hands and suffer with us (cf. Job 2:11-13; 16:2-5). Truly there is a time to be silent and a time to speak (Eccl. 3:7).
- Among God’s best blessings many of us would include the gift of family because “friends are fleeting, but family is forever.” Yet it shouldn’t surprise us that family dynamics change over time, that’s only natural. Brothers and sisters move away. Sons and daughters get married. The children have families of their own. But should difficulty or disaster comes upon those who share our flesh and blood, that’s when it’s time to shine, that’s when it’s time to put aside the busyness and the extracurriculars and the excuses and rededicate ourselves to what is truly important. In fact we can’t do otherwise and still call ourselves Christians. The Apostle John writes, “Anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).
- But whether we are surrounded by many friends or few. Whether they be fickle or faithful. Whether we have siblings galore or we’re the last one left, we have this comfort: we have “a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Prov. Eccl. 18:24). We have our Savior Jesus, our brother in the flesh, who not only calls us his friends but cemented his friendship with his own blood shed on the cross. Whatever trials and heartache may come, we can rest assured that he will remain ever-faithful and true to the very end. He promises, “I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). What a friend we have in Jesus!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, in your mercy you established a relationship with me, even when I knew and loved you not. By your sacrifice you have made me a friend of God. Fill me with the same spirit of self-sacrifice and boldness that I may be a true and supportive friend to those I know and love. In your name I pray. Amen.