

THE TRUE MEANING OF FRIENDSHIP

2011

This morning as I walked on a street shaped as a horseshoe, I met two elderly women who were heading in the opposite direction. We greeted each other and moved on. We met again on the other side of the horseshoe. The short and chubby one said to me: "Oh! We meet again!... We're friends now... My name is Chris!" "And my name is Johanna!" said the tall and skinny one. I didn't want to be rude, so I gave them my name too. But honestly, all I wanted to respond was: "Sorry ladies, but before we can call ourselves friends, we'll have to know a little bit more about each other, don't you think?" Obviously, these ladies had only good intentions in mind and I certainly appreciated their kind gesture, but I believe that the word 'friend' cannot be said or taken lightly. It's a precious gift God gives us on this earth to make it even more enjoyable.

I have many acquaintances but very few friends; my husband being the closest...on this side of heaven!.. People I meet occasionally but are still of good company fit in the first category. Our conversations are mostly superficial since we don't know each other well enough to share on a personal level. But these acquaintances may eventually become good friends of mine.

Generally speaking, building and developing new friendships takes time. A certain vulnerability from the parties involved is a must in order to be able to share on a personal level. Trust is surely the key ingredient for building a friendship and is usually not something that is built overnight. Commitment and patience are also important in building long and lasting friendships which are made of people that stick with you through thick and thin, watch your back and pray for you. They are trustworthy and dependable individuals who will accept you just the way you are. I have experienced such friendships, still have them, and I am very grateful for them. Occasionally though, a new friendship will develop instantly into a meaningful one.

It was on Thanksgiving 2002 when I first met my oldest son's mother-in-law-to-be. The moment we were introduced we both felt like we knew each other from Adam! We became friends instantly. I still remember as I helped her prepare the Thanksgiving meal, our conversation swayed to a more personal level in just a short time. We shared, laughed and even cried together. I must say these quick and meaningful friendships do not happen very often in a lifetime, and I feel very blessed to have experienced such an extraordinary friendship that is going on even to this day.

One day I received a magazine from this friend with a little note that said: *I just received this magazine and my thoughts went to you. I hope this will help you to find the proper grass for your garden. Have a great day!* Printed on the front of the card were these words: *A friend is someone who understands your past, believes in your future, and accepts you just the way you are. - Proverbs 17:17.* In the middle of her busy life as a teacher at the time, a wife and a mother of two grown-ups - that still keep her mind occupied - she thought about our gardening project. She's also one that understands my past, believes in me and accepts me just the way I am. Such a wonderful friend she is!

Long distance friendships could be a challenge for anyone but our modern technology surely makes it easier to pursue them. Cell phones and emails keep us connected. I have a friend who travels a big part of the year, so I try to keep in touch with her mostly via emails. Her work brings her to different churches and homes across the country and in different parts of the world. It may sound quite an exciting life but her ministry as a messenger for the persecuted Christians in restricted nations doesn't come cheap. She sacrifices a lot in order to accomplish the mission God gave her. I certainly have a great admiration for her dedication and courage. Due to her

frequent absences, we meet occasionally but when we do, I always come out of our visits with a renewed spiritual energy and genuine camaraderie. Quite a wonderful friend she is!

There are also the longtime friends, the friends we made throughout our childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. Inseparable we were, but then came different schools, different places we moved to, or we got too busy raising our own families. For whatever reason, certain friendships weaned off but others remained. Christmas cards, yearly telephone calls and eventually emails keep us connected. The distant memories of our youth are mostly the foundation of our continued friendship but, hopefully, we will build many more in the years ahead.

I read recently this quote which I think embodies the true meaning of friendship.

'But oh! the blessing it is to have a friend to whom one can speak fearlessly on any subject; with whom one's deepest as well as one's most foolish thoughts come out simply and safely. Oh, the comfort - the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person - having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pouring them all right out, just as they are, chaff and grain together; certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.' Dinah Craik, A Life for a Life, 1859.

© My Walks With God

You may reproduce part of the content of this website for non-commercial purposes only. May not be reproduced or featured on any other websites without permission of My Walks With God. For additional information or to obtain permissions, contact: mywalkswithgod@gmail.com