

# Friends

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” ~Jesus

Over the years I have had many friends, both before and after I became a pastor. True friends are a blessing like no other. They are there to celebrate when times are good, and to lift each other up in difficult times.

The Quakers people are called “The Society of Friends.” In its essence, if we take earthly friendship and give it a spiritual dimension, it is an apt description of the church.

Friends are there for each other no matter what. If people part because of difficult circumstances, and one then tries to hurt the other, those are the deepest hurts.

The duel of Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr is a case in point. They had worked together as law partners but had become fierce political rivals. So on July 11, 1804, they drew pistols and Hamilton was mortally wounded. Burr became a famous villain. A friendship gone bad.

Vice President, Hubert Humphrey, said long ago, “The greatest gift of life is friendship, and I have received it.”

Find friends dear reader, who have common interests and aims. Find Christian friends who love God and want to know him better. They can lower your blood pressure, lift you to new heights, and at the very least provide for some wonderful moments in the day.

The best friends do not try to change us. They accept us for who we are, and we journey on together. Unhealthy examples of friends are those who might lead us in the wrong direction, or cause us to hurt ourselves or others.

Albert Camus, a French philosopher and writer had friends, for he knew what they were supposed to be. He wrote “Don’t walk in front of me... I may not follow; don’t walk behind me... I may not lead; walk beside me... just be my friend”

A friend walks beside us, and does not trample over us or try to pull us back. They are there next to us, across the table, in the same boat so to speak. If we are fortunate, we can count on one hand the close friends we have had over the years. We can have many friends, but the close friends we trust with our deepest thoughts. We can laugh with them, be blessed by them, and give those same gifts to them as well.

“Friendship,” says noted Christian and Professor C.S. Lewis, “... is born at the moment when one man says to another “What! You too? I thought that no one but myself . . .”

It is born when we discover that someone actually thinks like we do, reacts to life in a common journey of give and take, and will provide a safe place for all conversation. Not all friends will agree with us on

everything. But in the essentials, trust, honor, and even matters of faith for Christians, a true friend will always find common ground.

The gift of laughing together is a blessed gift of friendship. Said the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, "It is one of the blessings of old friends that you can afford to be stupid with them."

Friends in the highest sense of the word laugh with each other, not at each other. And when we do happen to laugh at each other, we know it is good fun, for the moment when it comes our way will come sooner rather than later.

What a blessing are the funny things we find to share with friends. What gifts are timeless and eternal moments of uncontrollable laughter based on the common thoughts we have grown to know as friends!

Friends also offer companionship for the journey. Christopher Columbus did not discover America by himself. The Pilgrims did not set sail for a new world by themselves. Most inventions came about with friends or others around supporting the inventor.

That's one thing the church provides. We have a common journey, and that companionship as we travel is a time to feed, support, and challenge one another to be friends in Christ Jesus.

Poet Henry David Thoreau must have had some close friends. How else could he write these words?" Friends... they cherish one another's hopes. They are kind to one another's dreams."

The greatest friend we can ever have is Jesus Christ himself. He takes the earthly idea of friend and lifts it to its highest point. He gave everything for us, including his life, and can make it possible for us to live forever. In fact, he died for us on Calvary, and rose again to be with us forever. One of the clearest expressions of who Jesus is, along with Mighty Counselor, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Redeemer, and King, is the simple title of friend.

Let us be that to one another. And celebrate the Friend of Friends!

**"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."~ John 15:13**