

Possibilities of Friendship

by J.R. Miller

True friendship is a lasting blessing that enriches our lives, encourages and draws out the good in us, and is a pious bond that cannot be broken.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 18:1

Topics: "Friendship", "Unselfish Love"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the timeless nature of friendship, illustrating its necessity for human hearts across all ages. He reflects on the unselfish and faithful friendship between Jonathan and David, highlighting that true friendship is rooted in selflessness, support, and a shared faith in God. Miller warns against superficial friendships that seek personal gain and encourages the pursuit of relationships that uplift and inspire. He concludes that true friendship is immortal, leaving lasting impressions that endure beyond physical separation or even death.

Transcript

The subject of friendship never wears out. Human hearts are the same in all ages. We all need love. There is a story of a captive in the Bastille, long immured in a lonely dungeon, whose heart, craving friendship in some form, found it in a little spider which was in his cell.

Even Jesus felt the need of human friendship, His heart reaching out for sympathy and companionship. There is no one who does not need friends. The busier one is, the more one is living for others, the richer, deeper, and purer one's life is, the more does one need a friend, or a few friends, in whose shelter to rest, from whose sympathy to draw strength and renewal. Friendship is one of the earliest cravings of the new-born life, and one of the latest to die; infancy and old age alike hunger for love.

It is important that the friends we have--shall be true and worthy. It is better to live in solitariness all one's days--than to take into one's life a friend who is not good, whose influence will mar and soil one's purity of soul.

There are many helpful hints in the beautiful friendship of Jonathan for David, for those who are choosing friends.

It was a unselfish friendship. Jonathan was the king's son. What could the shepherd-boy do for the prince? What advantage could come to Jonathan from having this country lad for a friend? Jonathan was rich, high

in rank, and older than David. There was no possible benefit that might come to him, from having the ruddy youth for a friend. Had it been David who desired to make Jonathan his friend, it would not have seemed such a unselfish affection, for the king's son might be of great advantage to the ambitious shepherd-boy. As it was, however, the friendship was entirely unselfish and unselfish. Jonathan loved David--for David's own sake. His eyes saw in the blushing lad--beauty, nobleness, excellency of character, true bravery of soul, the elements of fine manhood, the germs of all those traits which, later in the story, shine out in such splendor in David.

Unselfishness is a quality of all true friendship. There are many people who will be your friends--when they see some advantage in it for themselves. They cling to you with intense devotion--when you can give them pleasure, help them toward the achieving of their ambition, or be of advantage to them in some way. This is the world's friendship. It seeks, not you--but yours. It is very sad to see one deceived by such friendship, giving the trusting love and confidence of a loyal heart into the icy clutches of such unworthy selfishness.

If you would have a friendship that will never fail you, that will be true through all dark hours, that will come only the nearer to you in adversity--seek for a friend who cares for you for yourself, whose friendship is unselfish and unselfish.

Jonathan's friendship was faithful. It would not have seemed strange that in the moment of David's victory, Jonathan admired him and was drawn to him. Generous natures are always charmed by noble deeds in others. Many sudden friendships, however, are short-lived. Many young people form attachments of this sort, which unclasp amid the toils, struggles, ambitions, hardships, and trials of real life. It was the glory of Jonathan's friendship for David--that it stood the test of most trying experiences.

It soon became apparent that David was the nation's idol. The people sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." It was this that turned Saul's friendship for David--into bitter hate. But Jonathan's friendship stood the test. He was willing to see his friend exalted to honor, though that honor eclipsed himself. Soon Jonathan knew that the friend he had taken to his heart, was to sit on the throne that was his by right of succession. Yet even this did not affect the friendship of his loyal heart. He loved David so that he rejoiced in David's exaltation over himself. "You shall be king, and I shall be next unto you," he said, with loving heart. He knew that David had never sought the crown--but that it was by God's will that it was to be his; and he bowed in submission, and was glad. The world has never shown anything, even in friendship, finer than this.

There was another test. Enemies of David sought by misrepresentation and calumnies, to destroy Jonathan's regard for him. Saul himself darkly hinted that there was treachery in David toward Jonathan. Yet even these calumnies did not start in Jonathan's mind, a shadow of doubt concerning David. On the other hand, he bravely defended his friend in his absence. He sought to conciliate his father, assuring him of David's sincerity, recounting his noble deeds. He even imperilled his own life in pleading with his father for his friend. Thus in all its testings, Jonathan's friendship was proved constant.

Jonathan's friendship was helpful. There is friendship that is fine in sentiment, lavish in compliment, profuse in words--but that never proves its sincerity by real helpfulness. Jonathan showed his friendship for David, in many practical ways. He defended him in his absence. He secured his escape from Saul's plot. He helped him in his lonely exile, by faithfulness, by encouragement, by personal kindness.

Helpfulness belongs to all true friendship. Its central desire is not to get--but to give; not to be ministered unto--but to minister. Friendship can be formed on no other basis. Ordinarily it is in little ways that

friendship's richest help is given. There may come times, when it will cost most deeply to be a friend. Misfortune knows no rank, and the most prosperous may be in straits through which only munificent help can carry them; and then friendship must not fail, whatever the cost may be. For the greater part, however, the help we need from our friends is not money, not anything that costs much. We are not suitors for charity. We do not want our friends to carry our burdens for us, unless we are actually fainting under them. No noble person wants a friend to do for him--that which he can do for himself.

But we all need and crave sympathy, human kindness, cheer, fellowship--as we go along life's hard and weary road. This small coin of love is the brightener of every life which is blessed by a rich friendship.

Another thing about this friendship was, that it had a pious basis. Both of these men loved God, and believed in Him. Three different times they made solemn covenant together, appealing to God to ratify their covenant. Friendships should always be knit with a threefold cord: two human hearts--and God. True friendship binds hearts and lives together in virtue, in purity, in honesty, in godliness. When a professed friend wants you to join him in sin--flee from him. Young people should seek as their friends--those who love God and follow Christ, those whom they will want beside them when they are dying.

We should choose friends whom we can take into every part of our life, into every closest communion, into every holy joy, into all consecration and service, into every hope, and between whom and us, there shall never be a point at which we shall not be in sympathy. We are too apt to let our friendships be dependent on the drift of life about us. We keep open door, like the street car, to give hospitality to all who come. We do not always choose our friends wisely. This is not dealing wisely with ourselves. We must be courteous to everyone we meet--but we may not make every neighbor, a friend.

Jesus prayed all night before He chose his twelve. We should never make a friendship over which we have not prayed. We ought to accept only the friendships which will bring blessing to our life, which will enrich our character, which will stimulate us to better and holier things, which will weave threads of silver and gold into our web of life, and whose every influence upon us will be a lasting blessing.

There is a holy, invigorating, elevating influence, like an atmosphere, which belongs to every true friendship. It is harder to do wrong and easier to do right--when we have a friend who expects beautiful things of us. A pure, rich friendship, is like warm spring sunshine, as its glances fall upon our life. Whatever possibilities of good there are in our life, are encouraged and drawn out by the nourishing warmth of a rich and worthy friendship. There are noble and beautiful lives--which owe all they are to a pure, inspiring friendship.

Someone asked Charles Kingsley, "What is the secret of your life? Tell me, that I may make mine beautiful, too." His reply was, "My godly wife." She who came into his life in early youth as wife and friend, by the impact of her noble soul on his, inspired and built up in him a manhood than which none more royal, ever grew on this earth. Let the woman who accepts the holy place of wife, learn what power is hers, what she may do for the man who has chosen her from among all women, if only she rises to the full dignity and glory of her privilege.

True friendship is immortal. The friend may go away out of your sight--but does not, cannot, go out of your life. You may be separated by continents or by oceans--but your friend is with you so long as loyal affection dwells in your heart. Every memory of him is precious, and stirs its own proper emotion. Even death, does not take him out of your life. Death has a strange power. It sweeps away the faults and blemishes, and brings out the hidden beauties, the half-forgotten tendernesses, the hitherto unrecognized

loveliness; and we see our friend now at his best, his true self--no longer in the dim light of human passion--but in the warm glow of love. Many a time our godly friends are more to us when they have gone from us into heaven--than ever they were when they walked with us in the midst of earth's strifes, competitions, envyings, and rivalries. Their influence over us abides perpetually. The impressions they made upon us when they were with us, stay forever as part of our character. Everything they ever touched is sacred.

One tells how he saw in the private treasury of Windsor Castle--a great gold peacock sparkling with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds, which had been brought away from some rajah's palace; and close by it a common quill pen and a bit of discolored cloth. The pen had signed some important treaty; the bit of cloth was the fragment of a flag that had waved over some hard-fought field. The two together were worth a halfpenny--but they held their ground beside the jewels; for they meant successful effort and heroic devotion for the interests of the kingdom, and therefore were laid up in the treasure-house of royalty. So it is with the holy and sacred mementos of friendship. You may have things of great money value in your house; but if there is an old letter, a book, or a flower which the dead hand plucked, or some most trifling thing that belonged to the friend now in heaven--it is easy to tell what, in the list of your treasures, you prize most highly.

We can never lose a friend. His touches on our life, will never fade out. His words, will stay always in our heart. The impressions he made upon us, will never be effaced. When he came into our life, and the friendship grew up between him and us--the threads of his being became inextricably entangled with the threads of our being, and they never more can be disentangled. The bonds of friendship are inalienable.

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