

“What’s a friend for?”

April 2011

Hymn “What a friend we have in Jesus” VU 664

Scripture *John 15: 9-17 (Good News Translation)*

I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you. The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them. And you are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because servants do not know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I heard from my Father. You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures. And so the Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name. This, then, is what I command you: love one another.

Prayer Let us pray – Ever present One, help us to see you in our friends and in all the people we meet and in the hands that we touch. Enable us to know you, and to serve you in our world. Amen.

Lesson The dictionary defines the word “friend” as “a person who is attached to another by feelings of affection or personal regard.” When we think of a friend we think of someone who is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, understanding, forgiving, and encouraging. A trusted friend can help us find God’s purposes for our life.

Professor John Bond at Newcastle University points out that advances in medicine combined with healthy relationships can contribute to extended happiness. He says that “Even people with serious degenerative illnesses like Alzheimer’s can retain their well-being for a long time if they have good relationships with the people around them. In the end, it’s your friends and family that count most.”

Each of us is a unique individual. We all have our own stories and our own history. In our appearance, our gifts, and our life, we are different from everyone we meet. But we are joined together in many ways. We are united by language, culture, customs, and pleasures. We are also united in our human condition. Each of us suffers, hurts, and grieves. Each struggles with the storms of life and the winds of adversity.

In a recent *Soft Edges* column, Jim Taylor describes his feelings when he was forbidden to drive after heart surgery. He found it difficult to ask for help, even from his friends. He confesses, “Somehow, I have absorbed the message that the highest human virtue is to be ruggedly independent. Real men, it seems, not only don’t eat quiche, they know how to use a chainsaw or an arc welder; they do their own oil changes and rewire basements; they drive.” He notes an opposing view later in the column, “I have been known to argue that a truly isolated individual can never be fully human. Our relationships make us who we are. Sometimes I think of relationships as a kind of invisible web of energy, linking us together.” He goes on to conclude, “I seem unable to

shake off my dependence on independence. Why do I find it so difficult to depend on others?"

Sometimes we just are not ready to disturb our friends with our problems or our needs, but a true friend will be ready to listen and, if requested, to help.

C. S. Lewis notes that "True friends don't spend time gazing into each other's eyes. They show great tenderness toward each other, but they face in the same direction, toward common projects, interest, goals, and above all, to a common Lord."

Discussion Who are the friends you can count on?
Who are the friends who can count on you?

Prayer Let us pray – O God, we thank you for our friends. You have brought wonderful friends into our lives. Let our friendships honour you as we walk in the footsteps of your son. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

George Bishop – Spiritual Life Chair