



REAL WOMEN!

Friendship Matters 2

R. E. A. L.
Women!
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As in all things, we need to pattern our understanding of friendship on the Word of God. This second installment of "friendship matters" is to help us consider our own friendship skills. Please do not use it to rate your friends friendship skills!

The following scriptures concerning friendship are at times challenging, but if we allow their truths to be planted into our hearts, we will become better friends to those around us.

Proverbs 17:17 declares *A friend loves at all times*. It simply means what it says, at all times. This includes times of sorrow as well as times of joy. When a friend is going through a difficult time, it is helpful to remember what we are instructed in Romans 12:15 *rejoice with those that rejoice; mourn with those who mourn*. It seems quite basic, but it is good advice. Do not forget to really *rejoice* with them as well, too many times when friends are honored, promoted or blessed we become pre-occupied with "what about me?" to really enter into the celebration. If such feelings tempt you, challenge yourself to lay aside these childish thoughts.

Proverbs 18:24 *Some friends play at friendship but a true friend sticks closer than one's nearest kin*. New Revised Edition Here we are challenged to be a faithful friend, even when we are the giver not the receiver.

Proverbs 17:9 *He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends*. NKJV Cultivating loyalty in our heart by closing our mouth is true friendship.

Proverbs 11:13 *A gossip goes around telling secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence*. Learning to govern our tongue is essential in promoting healthy friendships.

Proverbs 27:6 *Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful* or as the New Living Translation states: *Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy*

Some women have trouble telling their "friend" that they have lettuce in their teeth! Let us learn how to communicate truth with grace to our friends. The Holy Spirit is available to teach us all things. If this is a troublesome area for you, ask Him to teach you how to share the truth in love in a way that it can be "heard" by the hearer. We must practice also the grace to be the receiver of such truth as well.

God's Word instructs us to be careful in the choosing of our friends.

Proverbs 22: 24-27 *Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go,*

Lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.

Proverbs 25:19 *Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint*. OUCH!

We will become like those we hang around. One question to ask yourself: How do I feel after I leave their presence? Do I feel uplifted, challenged to grow in the Lord? Do I feel hopeful and encouraged? Or do I feel like I need a spiritual bath, because of the garbage strewn about? Limit your time with garbage "strewers". Watch out because you can become infected as well. Ask God for wisdom in dealing with such persons. 2 Timothy 3 warns us: *You should know this, Timothy that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!*

We must believe that not all friendships are like those warned about above. We find some

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**Friends,
You gotta love
Them!**

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wonderful examples of friendship in the Bible. One of the most famous of these friendships is David and Jonathon. These two young men were brought together when David slew Goliath and was introduced to King Saul. Something about David's person drew Jonathon to him. *By the time David had finished reporting to Saul, Jonathan was deeply impressed with David—an immediate bond was forged between them. He became totally committed to David. From that point on he would be David's number-one advocate and friend. Saul received David into his own household that day, no more to*

Jonathan, out of his deep love for David, made a covenant with him. He formalized it with solemn gifts: his own royal robe and weapons—armor, sword, bow, and belt. 1Samuel 18: 1-4 The Message Bible

Was Jonathon initially attracted to the "hero of the day"? Or was it David's bravery, commitment and faith in the God of Israel that drew Jonathon to him? We don't know. We simply are made aware that this relationship was quickly and deeply established. The proof that is was a Godly relationship was proved time and time again. Jonathon sought to promote

David. Jonathon as a Prince of Israel was a potential heir to the throne. However, he did not covet that position, in fact, he helped save David's life so

David could eventually be crowned king. True friendship love does not seek its own way. For true friendship to flourish and be strengthened it must be modeled on God's description of love. I find it refreshing, revealing and challenging to re-study from time to time God's perspective on what love truly is as found in 1 Corinthians 13. *Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It*

is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Some friends are God's gift to us for a shared season of life. Perhaps you meet during your single years and your friendship is based around the shared events and concerns of that season. You find the love of your life and marry. Your friend remains single, and gradually moves away from the center of your relationship world. You find friends who are married, but have no children, and then you move into the time crunch of parenting and your friends shift a bit again. Because of changing interests and focus friends come and go. We must allow this to occur. Then, God brings those connections that seem to transcend time, place and season of life. Treasure them. They are friends who as Michael W. Smith declares are friends forever, especially when the Lord is the Lord of them.

Written by:

Martha Rodman



Friends

Lyrics by: Deborah D. Smith

Music by: Michael W. Smith

Packing up the dreams
God planted
In the fertile soil of you
Can't believe the hopes
He's granted
Means a chapter in your
life is through
But we'll keep you close as
always
It won't even seem you've
gone
'Cause our hearts in big
and small ways
Will keep the love that
keeps us strong

Chorus:

And friends are friends
forever
If the Lord's the Lord of
them
And a friend will not say
never
'Cause the welcome will
not end
Though it's hard to let you
go
In the Father's hands we
know
That a lifetime's not too
long to live as friends.

With the faith and love
God's given
Springing from the hope
we know
We will pray the joy you'll
live in
Is the strength that now
you show

But we'll keep you close as
always
It won't even seem you've
gone
'Cause our hearts in big
and small ways
Will keep the love that
keeps us strong



Leadership Encouragement

A Word of Encouragement

Thank You



Dear Sisters, I join with the Apostle Paul in His declaration: *Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Philippians 1:3*

What an amazing variety of women you are! Some older, some younger, some just beginning in your ministry, others feeling like you would like to end! But God would like to join me in saying, Thank you. Thank you for staying the course, when you would rather have quit. For bearing the burdens of those around you, when you were having trouble bearing your own. For taking the time to understand when you were crying out to be understood. Thank you. Thank you for giving, when you needed to receive. Thank you for loving, when you needed to be loved. Thank you for caring when your heart ached to be cared for. He saw and says, *Thank you, my daughter.*

I would remind you that where you sowed, there you shall reap. I am watching. I am caring. I would remind you that you are never alone.

The battle rages, but you have stood. Perhaps you feel you have stood shaky, but still you stand. Perhaps you feel you had to stand “on your knees” if you will, but still you stand. The enemy of your soul would taunt you and make fun of you and say, “What a wimp”. You don’t deserve God’s blessing, look at you. But I want you to know that you are still standing and God is smiling. He is saying, “look at my daughter, she is still standing!” I am proud of her. She is an example of a vessel of honor. She brings me glory.

I hear some of you, lamenting, “Oh, that’s not me”. I am a whiner, I wanted to quit, I wanted to throw in the towel”. But, remember, Jesus, *going a little ahead, he fell to the ground and prayed for a way out: “Papa, Father, you can—can’t you?—get me out of this. Take this cup away from*

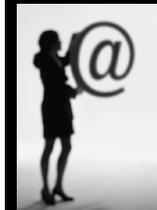
me. But please, not what I want—what do you want? Mark 14:35, 36 Message And that is how some of you have been. Wanting a way out, but accepting the fact that He said “No, my daughter, I want to take you *through* this trial, trust Me.” And, perhaps with not much glamour or glory, you bowed your heart, your will and your soul, and said, “Not what I want—but what you want, Lord”.

Such actions are such a blessing to Him, and soon this season will pass and blessing will come and you can shout, “Surely it has been worth it all”.



Celebrating Him

During these next few weeks we will be celebrating His birth. What a wonderful, joyful time of the year it is. However, for many of you, the stress of doing family, ministry and life can be overwhelming. I want to share with you something that He shared with me this morning. He likes it when we celebrate His birth, and it brings Him gladness when we share our gifts with one another from a pure heart. He does not want this season to be so stressful that we lose our joy, our love for one another or our peace. In fact, He said He would teach us, if we ask Him, how to celebrate the season and actually enjoy it! So my dear, sisters, take the time to ask! He promised to lead and guide us in ALL things! He may suggest you eliminate some “traditions”; or perhaps adapt the ones you have so they may become more meaningful. Ask Him to join you in planning this Season and see what a difference it will bring to you as well as those around you.



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Building Together Across Generations

Gratitude Pays Dividends

The following is the first of a two part article written by Elizabeth Haslet (Darryl and Martha Rodman's daughter) sharing some spiritual parenting lessons and insights she has gleaned since she became a mom January 8, 2007!

Parenting 101

I want to be a good mom. No, let me be perfectly honest in my perfectionist way: I want to be a great mom. I want my child to change the world. Before he was even born my husband and I had dreams of the destiny of Jakin. At the same time I also battled huge mountains of fear: what if I screw up? We aren't talking about a dinner, or a Sunday School lesson, or even a home improvement project. It is a person's life. I am fashioning his memories. His outlook. His foundation. The full measure of fear hit me even before pregnancy: can I do this? Will we succeed in preparing Jakin for his future?

Jakin is now 9 months old. He is a bright, blessed, cute little boy. And the more I know him the more I truly want to be a great mom. Thankfully God has provided me with much wisdom on how to be a parent from my own parents.

Who should we look to for counsel in raising our children? Personally I look to those who were successful in parenting their children to adulthood and who are actively serving the Lord. (Please hear my heart: if you are a parent who is struggling with your child walking with the Lord, that does not mean you have failed as a parent. Each child will reach the age of accountability and make their own choices. Meantime our job is to keep praying for them and trusting the Lord.) In looking for good fruit I was blessed to look no further than my own parents.

My parents have three children. My mom became pregnant 2 weeks after her wedding and I was born nine months after my sister turned 1. My mom is adopted and her adopted mom didn't really teach her much about being a good parent. While a brave woman to adopt triplets at 40, her own childhood was so broken she didn't know how to parent. And at 40, she was tired. My dad came from an abusive childhood, and his parents divorced soon after he left home. So he didn't exactly qualify for "well-trained parent" either. So early in the process mom turned to the best parent-trainer in the Universe: the Holy Spirit.

Lesson One: The Holy Spirit is my 24-7 Nanny 911

I remember stories from my mom (Some read here in Real Women) about how she would ask the Holy Spirit for help and He would answer with practical help and encouragement.

As I cried out to God in the car, soon after becoming pregnant I begged God, "Please let this child always follow you! Please don't let me screw this up!" And I heard Him answer back, "He will not be moved. He will be a rock. He will stand firm in this generation." The Holy Spirit met me even then, with a word for me to stand on. And after Jakin was born and we were learning to be parents I would pray: "What should I do Lord?" Hardly a day or night went by without my crying out to God, knowing he would answer and help me. Sometimes I didn't even ask specifically and He was still there, helping and answering.

Lesson Two: Prayer, the Nuclear Weapon

I wish I prayed more for Jakin. I wish I prayed for Jakin as much as my parents pray for me. But this I know: I pray more for Jakin than I used to, and I want to pray even more for him tomorrow. I want to pray out loud, and I want to pray silently. I want God to give him favor, to move on his behalf, to protect him, to lead him and guide him, to give him good health and great friends. And I want daily, hourly wisdom on how to raise him and what to do when he has a meltdown. "Lord? Is he tired? Scared? Angry?"

My parents prayed for me to find a good husband, even when I wasn't interested in getting married, much less praying for a husband. And I have the best husband in the world. We are almost seven years into this, and the more we look at it we see this is an arranged marriage. If God can answer that important prayer for someone else, then doesn't that inspire you to pray more for your kids? That God hears you and will answer you?

Sometimes I pray the Psalms or specific scriptures, other times I just pray blessing during the night time feedings, and afternoon walks, using every opportunity to petition blessing and help for my son. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, rulers of the darkness of this world." If someone tried to come and take your child you would fight like a tigress to protect her. I challenge you to do the same in the spirit realm. Fight like a tigress on your knees.

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