

## How to Keep an Old Friend

Recently, some old friends have called or written just to say hello. Our world often gets so busy that nurturing friendship is one piece of business we let slip by. I read a small book a few years ago, entitled *The Tyranny of the Urgent*, by Charles E. Hummel. The premise put forth read, "Don't allow the urgent things take the place of the important things in life." So often the non-important things that scream for our attention won't matter next year, sometimes next week or even in the next hour. Friendship is not always urgent, but it is always important. Friendship is one of those things that we should not take for granted. We should (speaking for myself) work harder on keeping those friendships that we sense are evaporating into mere memories. Don't quickly assign yourself to someone's past when God still wants us to have a future with them!

Let's discuss ways to keep an old friend:

### I. Go out of your way to speak to your friend!

Often I feel that my call will be a bother or annoyance to someone. I have the tendency to think well, if they need me they will call me. If someone is hurting, they often feel the same way, i.e. they don't want to annoy. We must be willing to take the initiative at times. *"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity"* (Proverbs 17:17).

*"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country"* (Proverbs 25:25).

Sometimes the seemingly random call with bless them beyond measure. Have you ever just picked up the phone, called an old acquaintance and said, "You were on my mind and today I prayed for you"? Don't be surprised if that person says something like "You'll never know how much I needed to hear from you." Many times when God is putting someone in your thoughts it is because He wants you to encourage them. *"But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day..."* (Hebrews 3:13). The word exhortation comes to us from the Greek word: *parakaleo*, which means: 1) to call to one's side, call for, summon 2) to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort 3) to receive consolation, be comforted 4) to encourage, strengthen 5) to teach. The basic root is where Jesus extracted the name for the Holy Spirit: "Comforter." Listen to what Jesus said He, (the Holy Spirit) would do: *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"* (John 14:26). May God help us in our friendships to teach, bring things edifying to our friend's mind, and remind them of the teachings of our Lord.

### II. Welcome a wounded friend into your fellowship.

The great Apostle Paul had to encourage the church in Corinth to forgive and welcome the erring brother who had sinned but was now willing to repent and be right with God. We ought to be aware that if God forgives someone, we should also. *"So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow"* (II Corinthians 2:7). A serious problem is going to occur in a brother who is not accepted back into fellowship. A sense of hopelessness will come into his psyche; the exact wording of inspiration is "swallowed up" the word in Greek is: *katapino* meaning 1) to drink down, swallow down 2) to devour 3) to swallow up, destroy.

I have known people who have been saved from tragedy because a friend called on them and they were strengthened to go on and not give up. *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2).

### III. Be more willing to be a friend, than to have a friend!

The Bible says, *"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother"* (Proverbs 18:24). Instead of pouting that all your friends have deserted you and you give up on friendship, stop! Don't become bitter; become better at being a friend. In the process of sowing and

reaping, you will have friends be a friend to you in return. If you plant corn, you reap corn. If you plant grapes, you get grapes. If you plant tomatoes, you get tomatoes. If you plant love and friendship, it will come back one hundred fold.

Find a need and fill it! Find a needy person and without their solicitation, give them a word of kindness and encouragement. *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again"* (Luke 6:38).

Be a friend! Someone probably needs to hear from you soon.

- Pastor Pope -

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