

“Days of Isolation” – *Just Sayin’!*

The Bible states in the book of Genesis that it’s not good to be alone. So, what does it say about someone who always seems to be alone? What inference can be made when someone doesn’t really have a true friend in their life? Does it mean that one is to blame for relational isolation? Could it be assumed that maybe they’re too broken, cranky, self-absorbed or even too strange to be worthy of friendship? What does it mean to be a friend? What does it take to actually have a friend that is closer than a brother? Why are some people blessed with a host of friends while others couldn’t scrape one up if they had a million dollars? Why is it that you can spend an entire lifetime giving of yourself in service to others, but in the end not have a friend who could give you the time of day? How can a person have thousands of acquaintances in life and hundreds more claim to be friends on social media, but not have a single person in the world to call up and say “do you have time to be my friend?” Does the indictment of isolation belie one’s value or worth? So many questions. But just as it is in life, the answers are as rare as a friend indeed. Those questions and ponderings whirl through my mind as I struggle with life in this pandemic isolation.

I spent a lifetime providing favors and helping others in accordance with the teaching of Christ to “do unto others...” I helped people move. I gave people money when they were in need without ever expecting to be repaid. I shoveled the snow off the sidewalks of a multitude of neighbors just because I could. I provided free, home repair services for folks who couldn’t afford to hire a professional. I volunteered my time to help build numerous homes and cabins with never a thought of asking anything in return. I dedicated my life speaking into the lives of thousands of students as a teacher in a public high school. I was always available to serve as a shoulder to cry on when a student or co-worker was facing a personal challenge. I was there to encourage, support and provide a word of hope for many a soul in this world. I’ve stood beside a host of individuals at the lowest time of their lives when they were in need of a friend. I’ve kneeled beside the deathbed of many a soul when a friend called to say that a loved one was at the end of their days. I gave of myself wholeheartedly whenever anybody asked. That’s the way I was raised. That’s what my faith and my Lord required. But maybe I was never the kind of friend I should have been. As I cry out to the Lord from this state of isolation, I ask, why do I suffer within this shadow of loneliness?

The religious folks would say, “That’s why you need to get involved in a church. We’re here for you.” That might be true for some folks, but not for everyone. I spent decades involved in various church assemblies - serving, giving, tithing and staying involved. For what? To be abandoned and forgotten as I sit in this prison of isolation? Oh, sure, many a church leader loves and appreciates all that you do, as long as you’re doing; as long as you’re serving; as long as you’re supporting; as long as you’re giving. But what happens when normalcy comes crashing down and your heart cries out for someone to stand by your side or to even take the time to call to see how you’re doing? Many of us have discovered what happens. You find out who your friends really are. When the world comes crashing down as it has during this pandemic, it places the majority of friends, foe and institutions into survival mode. It’s no longer about friendship or even relationship. In survival mode most of the world turns toward self and loses concern for other’s outside of their most intimate sphere of influence. It’s imbedded within the very DNA of our human nature. Survival, or self-preservation are centered within the very foundation of human frailty.

So, you might be wondering where all of this is going. Through it all, I have found that there is only One that is truly a friend. No one else and nothing else matters. It's not about friends, or religion, or even the church. There is only One that will carry you through the loneliest and most difficult challenges of life. There is only One who sits beside you in the prison cell of isolation. There is only One who will always have your back – Who will never leave you or forsake you. There is only One and His name is Jesus. He is the Lord and Master of life when you ask Him into your heart. He is Savior, Redeemer and *Friend*. I pray that He is carrying you through these most difficult days of isolation and loneliness. When your world is filled with solitude, and as silence fills your heart, remember that Jesus is just a prayer away. I wrote this poem twenty years ago and it is more applicable today than it was back in Y2K. I pray it encourages you to lift your eyes and pray to the only Friend you will ever need. The only “true Friend” you will ever have.

“Shadows in the Night”

I see the rays of the golden sun at the close of another day –
 While the warmth of light that emanates, swiftly slips away.
 The once blue sky lined with clouds, is swallowed in the night,
 Anxious awe fills the heart, while shadows supplant the light.
Darkness ebbs to distant light, as stars begin to shine,
 The moon ascends above the trees, where shadows redefine;
 A silhouette of brokenness, where branches seem to stretch—
 Shadows of a sullen world, toward the lightness of a crèche.
I hear the sounds that emanate from the stillness found within,
 The serenity of the locust strain, will still the hearts of men.
 The blissful song of the nightingale, can send a message clear;
 To the soul of one whose silence, will allow the heart to hear.
The cricket's cheerful symphony, cries out within the shadows,
 A means to share a precious verse, throughout the living meadows.
 The message sent within the night, is seldom, crystal clear,
 As we seek retreat for a weary heart – sweet reflections bring a tear.
Within the coolness of the evening breeze, absorbed within the night,
 Solace from the searing heat, and this journey's weary plight.
 A time for rest... to meditate... to reflect upon the day,
 Dreams, the only sustenance as I strive to find the Way!
The journey of a thousand miles is filled with many branches,
 We walk this trail in solitude, as alone, we take our chances.
 So I scan the far horizon, as I trudge along the way—
 Searching for a special hope, to guide me through each day.
I see the light, I hear the sounds, yet, I feel this heart grow old.
 Struggling to travel on, while hopes and dreams grow cold.
 To journey on with no one near, to share throughout each day,
 Engulfed within the shadows, I must lift my eyes to pray!

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