

# Cultivating Friendships



By Gael McInnes

## **D**o you keep in touch with friends?

Class reunions, photo albums, long-time friends -- thinking about such things awakens memories and stirs emotions. The past is a kaleidoscope of promises, failures, victories and embarrassments! Sometimes we want to forget the painful memories.

Unfortunately, some people let a poisonous root of bitterness over disappointments or broken relationships grow into resentment, or nurse a grudge over past hurts. Bitterness can bring with it jealousy and dissension, but it only consumes the individual who holds it.

There is a time to remember. Mistakes should not be repeated and commitments made must be fulfilled. However, memories of special events can encourage us and move us to action.

"One of the most precious gifts God has given us is the ability to remember. There are plenty of hurts and disappointments in life that we

should forget. But good memories become a treasure chest of priceless reminders of relationships shared and joys experienced."<sup>1</sup>

That's where friends come in. Friendships make life enjoyable and difficult times bearable. Friendships are tested and strengthened by hardships. "There are 'friends' who destroy each other, but a real friend will stick by in all situations."<sup>2</sup>

"Walk with the wise to become wise. Associate with fools and we are likely to get into trouble and make foolish decisions."<sup>3</sup>

I'm sure you have experienced good friendships, but also encountered 'so-called-friends' who have used and possibly abused you. "A true friend is loyal."<sup>4</sup>

Truth guides loyalty. What is your source of truth? Mine comes from the Word of God, the Holy Bible. This book is filled with inspirational ways to help me become a loyal friend. My loyalty to God and his loyalty to me guide me through the conflicting demands of human relationships.

## Happy Reunions

In the past year I have attended a number of reunions and met up with many friends who have played a significant part in my life.

A recent visit to Australia saw me meet with my retired Chief Flying Instructor. Ken<sup>5</sup> and his wife moved to New South Wales last year to be close to their children. They are both in their early eighties, but have settled in well and have become part of their community already. They are friendly and active people.

Ken encouraged me when I was undertaking my Private Pilot's Licence (PPL), and having problems with learning to land. He took over from another instructor, and had a lot more faith than I did in my capabilities. Completing my PPL set me up with much more confidence to tackle further adventures in my life. I got involved in flying competitions and continued to fly for pleasure for over twenty years.

This confidence eventually led me to take up post-graduate nursing and university studies, with success: all because of Ken's belief in my abilities.

I also visited two other long time friends in Melbourne. Kate<sup>5</sup> is a 'pen-pal' of 55 years. We connected at age 10-11, through a request Kate made to the 'National newspaper of the country', for a Christian girl who was interested in collecting stamps. It did reach *The New Zealand Herald* and my Bible class teacher cut it out and offered it to one of us. I accepted and we have been friends ever since.

We first met in our early twenties,

*My flying instructor's belief in me and encouragement helped me complete my Private Pilot's Licence. This set me up with much more confidence to tackle further adventures in life*



and have done so on regular occasions as we have traveled to each other's countries. Kate and her husband have five children, one named after my elder brother, because they liked the name. We correspond by email now. Our mutual Christian faith and interests in Guiding and Girl's Brigade kept us connected. We have also walked similar spiritual paths. We can pick up our conversations where we last left off. It's wonderful.

Beth<sup>5</sup> is another friend of forty two years. Her husband to be, Keith<sup>5</sup>, and I were working for the Anglican Church at Lockhart River Aboriginal Mission in Northern Queensland. Beth came up to join him and they were married there. I was their bridesmaid. Again, our Christian faith and similar interests are what has kept our friendship going.

Even though Beth and Keith are now divorced, I have kept in touch with both. God has guided me through the maze of personal dilemmas in their situation. I did not take sides. They have remained friends too. I was able to spend time with Keith as well as Beth, as he now has advanced cancer and his time is short. We were able to say our goodbyes. I'll be there for Beth and her three children when Keith dies.

I have also attended my Church's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, my Nursing 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee, the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the New Zealand Christian Writers' Guild and a family 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee. You can imagine the chatter of many voices as we recalled the 'good old days'. It's these friendships that help make life enjoyable.

### Friends in need

Throughout my fifty years working as a nurse, I have met many hundreds of people, delivered countless babies, and taught hundreds of students of nursing, but I have only made a few special friends. They are the ones I have worked closely with over the years. We have supported each other through many a trial and illness. We make sure that we connect regularly. The fact that life seems to be moving so rapidly these days, and seems to be crowded out

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## REUNION



with work and other activities, is all the more reason that we need to make the time to cultivate friendships.

Friendships make difficult times bearable. The biblical book of Job tells the story of Job, a man of God, a prosperous farmer who tragically lost everything – his children, servants, livestock and herdsman. He became physically sick – covered in boils. In his grief and illness, three of Job's friends came to visit him, but Job wasn't up to talking. They sat with him, in silence for seven days!<sup>6</sup> Could you do that?

When a friend is sick it is important to 'be there'. Friends in need don't have to have all their questions answered, as much as they need to have someone listen. Make a point to be with those in pain, but let your presence be your strongest statement. Don't give up on your friends, and don't use them to your advantage. Cultivate your

friendships and become a loyal friend; keep in touch by email, a note, a phone call or text message.

*"It was only a brief little note,  
Or a word that was prayerfully spoken,  
Yet not in vain, for it soothed the pain  
Of a heart that was broken."<sup>7</sup>*

Are you cultivating your friendships and keeping in touch?

### References:

1. *Our Daily Bread* 16/08/2007
2. Proverbs 18:22
3. Proverbs 13:20
4. Proverbs 20:6
5. Fictitious Names
6. Job 2:11-13
7. *Our Daily Bread* 09/07/2008



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