

# FRIENDS...(part I and II)

Friends are a vital part of our lives. There's an old song that says "I get by with a little help from my friends". Even beyond the words to that song is the biblical truth "A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity". In other words, friends are a part of God's plan for our lives. Friends (godly ones) can help us walk out God's plan for our lives. In this two part series we will look at friends and talk about the importance of having the right friends.

There are all kinds of people that join together by faith in Jesus. As followers of Jesus we have the opportunity to meet and make friends from all different walks of life. Consider the scripture below:

## Luke 8: 1 – 3 NLT

**Soon afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby towns and villages, preaching and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him,<sup>2</sup> along with some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons;<sup>3</sup> Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's business manager; Susanna; and many others who were contributing their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples.**

Look at some of the women's name mentioned below. Consider how different these women must have been. Their common ground was that they followed Jesus and pooled their own resources to support His Ministry.

**Mary Magdalene** – from who has had cast out 7 demons. This is a woman who knew some torment and suffering in her life.

Jo Anna, whose husband was the Business Manager for Herod.

Susanna, who we know nothing about

We find Mary Magdalene, the woman formerly tormented by demons in the same company of Jo Anna whose husband was a business manager (a business professional if you will) and they are also joined by Susanna whose life didn't even warrant a description. This passage alone speaks to us about the variety and diversity that can be in our friendships

It can be valuable to have friends with similar backgrounds and hobbies. There is nothing wrong with that. But it's limiting to exclude people who aren't "just like you". You can add value to your life by being willing to associate with all believers whether they have a "past" or not. God's plan is fulfilled in our lives as we embrace all followers of Jesus and reach out to those who don't believe just yet.

It is through these friendships that we experience joy. We experience joy even as we share the hard times of life together. There is great benefit in having a godly friend to share your burdens and pray with and for you. The word says as we love one another our joy will be full. The Word also says the joy of the Lord is our strength. Our joy is increased as we interact with those of like faith.

# JOY

Godly Friendships increase our joy

The joy of the Lord is your strength.

Luke 1:39-45 NLT

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town <sup>40</sup> where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. <sup>43</sup> Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? <sup>44</sup> When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. <sup>45</sup> You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."

As Mary and Elizabeth talk with one another their joy is increasing. The joy of what God is doing in their lives is increasing as they share and encourage one another.

Have you noticed how one of the first things Mary does right after accepting her assignment from God is that she goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth? She could have announced the news to her town or stayed all by herself. But, she goes into the presence of her cousin a trusted friend. She goes to visit a woman who that older than her. It is important to have friendships with women of all ages. It's wrong to exclude younger or older women – all women can learn from each other. There is much for a younger woman to learn from an older woman. This shows us today that we need relationships/friendships in our lives. These friendships help us stay on God's course for our lives.

Luke 1: 8 NLT

One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. <sup>9</sup> As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup> While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying.

<sup>11</sup> While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. <sup>12</sup> Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. <sup>14</sup> You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. <sup>16</sup> And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, <sup>18</sup> and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly."

<sup>18</sup> Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."

**<sup>19</sup> Then the angel said, “I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! <sup>20</sup> But now, since you didn’t believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.”**

**<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the sanctuary, wondering why he was taking so long. <sup>22</sup> When he finally did come out, he couldn’t speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary.**

**<sup>23</sup> When Zechariah’s week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home. <sup>24</sup> Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. <sup>25</sup> “How kind the Lord is!” she exclaimed. “He has taken away my disgrace of having no children.”**

Here we have Elizabeth an older woman. Her husband was at the temple doing his work there – and “got in trouble’ so to speak for not responding properly.....he ended up not being able to speak.....

You think but all he did was say, “How can I be sure? I am old and so is my wife?” He was in unbelief in the “midst of his circumstances....he was in the house of God serving God but yet did not believe.....

Think about how many times we are in unbelief due to our circumstances? For Elizabeth and Zechariah their issue was their advanced age. It can be anything that “bugs” us. Perhaps it’s our finances, relationships, jobs, children or a lingering illness etc. Our circumstances can get in the way of our faith.

Zechariah was right there in the house of God in the midst of unbelief. Pray about that for just a moment. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where there is unbelief in your heart. Sure you may be busy like Zechariah serving God – volunteering at church and yet there is a place where you don’t trust God.

Pause a moment and pray.

Write down any areas of unbelief:

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Ask God to forgive you for your unbelief. After you’ve repented God ask God to increase your faith so that you can believe Him in all areas of your life. Remember faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God. (Read Romans 10).

# FRIENDS...(II)

Our relationship with God through Jesus Christ gives us peace. Our relationships with other believers also give us increased peace. There is peace and unity in our fellowship with believers of like faith.

## PEACE

Jesus says (see below) that He wants us to have peace in Him in the midst of living in a fallen world. The plan of God for every believer is that we live in peace – His peace.

### **John 16: 33 NLT**

**I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”**

In this fallen world Jesus makes it clear that we will have sorrows and trials. He Word further makes it clear that we can have peace in Him and that our relationships with others can assist us in walking through trials and walking in faith. Take for example the relationship between Ruth and Naomi.

Ruth and Naomi’s relationship was based on God & covenant. The book of Ruth is only a few chapters. Please take some time to read it right now to become better acquainted with their story.

### **Ruth 1: 1 NLT**

**In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a severe famine came upon the land.** (Hardship- part of the trials and tests we face in life)

### **Ruth 1:20 NLT**

**“Don’t call me Naomi,” she responded. “Instead, call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me. <sup>21</sup> I went away full, but the LORD has brought me home empty. Why call me Naomi when the LORD has caused me to suffer<sup>1</sup> and the Almighty has sent such tragedy upon me? (Heartache-emotional brokenness that we all go through on occasion)**

In the midst of all their circumstances they started their relationship with covenant. Our friendships need to operate with covenant not the world’s system –covenant brings peace. Covenant is a guarantee that we will do things God’s way.

### **Ruth 1:16 -18 NLT**

**But Ruth replied, “Don’t ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. <sup>17</sup> Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!” <sup>18</sup> When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.**

Please understand that this covenant was not made after a 1 day relationship. Sometimes we end up brokenhearted over relationships (friendships, business relationships, marriages, and even extended family relationships) because we have not done our due diligence. Sometimes, we jump in there and make promises not understanding what we are doing.

The best friendships (godly ones) will be developed over time. This happens when you get to know someone slowly. When you spend time with me and have an opportunity to share and to see that the other person/s are trustworthy. You don't want to "give your heart" to everyone. Be selective – trust is of extreme importance.

Pray and consider your relationships right now. Are there people who have "let in" too soon? Are you willing to change this and allow relationships to develop prayerfully and over time?

Write some specifics:

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As we develop godly friendships one of the benefits is that you'll receive godly wisdom, encouragement and a sense of peace that you're keeping good company. In the case of Ruth and Naomi – as Ruth served Naomi and encouraged her – Naomi's outlook began to change.

As Naomi saw that there was "hope again". Remember Naomi had lost her husband and sons. She was surrounded by death and in the midst of famine. She ended up moving just to survive. She was understandably distressed. Ruth stood by Naomi and went out into the fields to "glean: for food. All of these efforts began to encourage Naomi. Yes, she had great loss and tragedy but she saw through Ruth's efforts that life was going to continue and she was going to be able to enjoy again.

In fact, Naomi got so encouraged she began to help Ruth. She said Ruth I know Boaz he can be our family redeemer. You can marry him. Here's what you need to do.....

Ruth followed Naomi's instructions to the letter. To make a long story short Boaz ends up marrying Ruth. That's right the widow woman Ruth who was so poor she had to clean married one of the richest guys (Boaz) in town).

You can see here how godly relationships bring peace and joy into our lives. Seek out godly people to befriend. God will bless those relationships and bring increased peace and joy into your life.

Read what happens next in Ruth and Naomi's life. See below:

**Ruth 4:13 NLT**

**So Boaz took Ruth into his home, and she became his wife. When he slept with her, the LORD enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. <sup>14</sup> Then the women of the town said to Naomi, “Praise the LORD, who has now provided a redeemer for your family! May this child be famous in Israel. <sup>15</sup> May he restore your youth and care for you in your old age. For he is the son of your daughter-in-law who loves you and has been better to you than seven sons!”**

**<sup>16</sup> Naomi took the baby and cuddled him to her breast. And she cared for him as if he were her own. <sup>17</sup> The neighbor women said, “Now at last Naomi has a son again!” And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.**

How has Naomi’s outlook changed as a result of her relationship with Ruth? Do you recall a time where a good friend or relative encouraged you? Are you willing to open yourself up to godly people so that you can forge the kind of relationships that you want to have in your life?

What are the things that hinder you? Are you too busy? Are you afraid you’ll get hurt? Are you shy? Record these things below:

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Pray over the items that hinder you. Ask God to give you a fresh outlook and perspective. God is able to bring change into your life. Ask God to make you willing to do what you need to do.

God’s desire for our lives is to be in relationship with Him and then to be in relationship with other likeminded people. Having the right relationships will bring increased joy and peace into your life. Having the right relationships will also help you walk out God’s will for your life.

Consider how Mary was strengthened in her assignment through Elizabeth’s encouragement. Consider how Ruth sacrificed to serve Naomi. Consider also how her service ended up blessing both Naomi and Ruth. Ruth ended up getting married and having a baby. The baby was named Obed. Obed ended up being the grandfather of King David. God’s plan unfolds through the lives of people. We all need to be lined up with the right people so that God’s good plan will come to pass in our lives.

**My Prayer for You**

I pray for you right now in Jesus Name that you will have many godly friends in your life. I pray that those relationships will strengthen and encourage you in your walk with the Lord. I pray also that you’ll be willing to strengthen and encourage others. I thank the Lord that His good plan for your life is coming to pass and that He will make every rough place smooth and every crooked place straight. I pray He’ll make a way for you where there seems to be no way. **AMEN**

Thank you for taking this time to study God’s Word. God always honors His Word and will bless you for your efforts. He promises to reward those that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11). If you’d like to get this 2 part DVD series on Friends you can do so by visiting [www.monicaspeaks.com](http://www.monicaspeaks.com).

Shalom,  
Monica