

## What are Friends For?

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

I guess this Seeds for Growth article grows out of our intensified sense of need we described in the HI-LYTER. Perhaps it's true you never realize the true value of something until you do without it for awhile. Here in Nashville we have done without close friends for nearly a year now. Believe us — we are coming to realize the true value of friends. We're also realizing the importance of having your spouse as your closest human friend. Yes, Christ is our very best Friend who will **ALWAYS** be there **no matter what**. But we need earthly friends as well (friends with skin on), and our spouse should be #1 on the list.

**What are friends for?** They are for “talking things through” with when you are confused or are facing a perplexing decision or scary situation. Friends give us perspective as they reflect back to us our thoughts and feelings — as they engage us in back and forth conversation, helping us articulate our concerns and alternatives — as they bring in another point of view (Proverbs 19:20).

We particularly remember the couple we went to see nearly twelve years ago when we were thinking of investing our lives in ministry to couples. We “talked it through” with them and subsequently launched GTO Family Ministries. Incidentally, that couple has helped us “talk through” the various stages of our ministry since that time.

We often “talk things through” with friends as we see them on a regular basis, as a part of friendly conversation. Sometimes, however, we are in crisis and need to call a friend when something urgent faces us which we can't work through on our own. We **ALL** need friends we can call on to “talk things through”

with. Isolation and loneliness result when we don't, as well as a lot of unwise, un-thought-through choices. We all need this kind of friends. God gave you and your mate to one another to be just that — best friends.

**Friends are for “talking things through” with when you're confused.**

**What are friends for?** They are for **coming along-side** and **helping** when you need help. Sometimes we are faced with things we just can't accomplish by ourselves. Maybe it's a task to perform; maybe it's a situation to face; maybe it's a relationship to confront. Whatever it is — it may be too much for us to accomplish or face alone. We need a friend who comes alongside and helps us do what we can't do by ourselves. **Nobody** is completely self-sufficient in everything! At some point in our lives we all stand in need of help! Pity the person who has no one to stand alongside and help when those times occur (Ecclesiastes 4:10).

Have you ever said, “The Gillogly's seem to move an awful lot”? We have! At 20 we lost count — and that was years ago. We remember two faithful friends who came alongside and pitched in on several of those moves when we really needed help (we couldn't afford to have someone move us or to pay for help). Those friends invested days helping us move with nothing in return but some soda pop and a sandwich — and, of course, our gratitude!

As friends, we need to be on the alert for those in need of help without always insisting that they ask us first. When we are in need, let's not

be **afraid to ask for help** when we need it. Our friends may not know we have a need unless we communicate it to them. Although this is hard for our pride to admit, asking friends for help is part of the give and take relationship of which true friendships consist. Friends are for helping in times of need. Paul tells us in Rom. 12:13 to “*Share with God's people who are in need.*” The Apostle John asks us how the love of God can be in us if we see someone in need and don't help (“*have pity on them*” — I John 3:17).

**Friends are for sharing your joys and sorrows.**

**What are friends for?** They are for **sharing** your **joys** and **sorrows**. We all have both (or will) — and they both demand sharing. Have you ever had something wonderful happen to you and couldn't find anyone to share it with? That's almost as lonely a feeling as being in sorrow over a loss and having no one to come alongside to encourage you. Now when we have just suffered a loss and are in grief, we do not need a “friend” to come along and tell us what we need to do to “feel better” or to “fix it.” Friends who try to “make you feel better” are sometimes just trying to correct an uncomfortable situation for themselves — they are not at ease with our grief and want us to feel better so **they** can feel better. We need to check this often unconscious motive when we quickly offer advice to those who are hurting.

No, true friends come alongside and hurt with you — they share your grief! It hurts them too! They don't even have to say a word — they are just there **WITH** you *sharing in your*

loss. That alone is encouragement! Jesus, our very best Friend, “*bore our griefs and carried our sorrow*” (Isaiah 53:4). Paul says that God comforts us *so that* we can comfort those in **any trouble** (II Corinthians 1:4).

We particularly remember **our** church family at New Hope Church in San Diego who shared with us our “valley of sorrow” during Bette’s cancer treatment. We couldn’t have made it through without them! They also rejoiced with us when Bette was pronounced WELL. How blessed we were to have friends like that!

We all suffer losses (or will) and we all experience times of rejoicing (or should) — in these times we need friends with which to share. We are commanded in Romans 12:15 to “*Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*” **We need friends with whom to share both.**

**What are friends for?** They are for **holding us accountable** and for **spurring us on** toward growth in our Christian lives. When we go astray (we all do to some degree from time to time) or are just plain wrong (we all are from time to time), we need a friend to come alongside and gently, but firmly, show us. Proverbs 27:17 describes it this way: “*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*” And in Hebrews 10:24 we are urged to “*consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*” Real, true friends

aren’t just “yes” men/women — they tell us the truth in love, even when it is hard to do and when it hurts us both. Proverbs 27:6 says “*Wounds from a friend can be trusted*” — trusted to be for our good!

We have valued the couples on our Board of Directors over the years. They have encouraged us when they saw us headed in the right direction and they have said “Whoa, stop!” when we have been headed down a dead end. They have been good friends to us in holding us accountable.

This is something we are all too rarely asked to do by friends. But it is one of the most distinguishing marks of a true friend. It is one thing we as friends NEED to be willing and ready to do for those we consider friends whether they ask us or not. **It is what friends do!**

**Friends are for spurring us on toward growth.**

**What are friends for?** We know they are for a lot more than what we’ve mentioned, but it’s a good start. We **ALL** need friends with whom to “talk things through.” We **ALL** need friends to help us in time of need. We **ALL** need friends to share our joys and sorrows. And we **ALL** need friends to love us enough to hold us accountable in our Christian walk. Both love and obedience are necessary

characteristics of a good friend. Proverbs 17:17 states “*a friend loves at all times.*” Do we have friends who love us and are obedient to the Lord in their relationship with us? We **ALL** need such friends! **We need to be such a friend to our mate!**

How do we get friends? Many say we **CHOOSE** them. Others say they choose us. **Both choices** must be made in true friendships; otherwise you have one-sided friendships which are unhealthy for both parties. We will never have true friendships unless we, ourselves, are true friends. That’s a great way to start, by the way, by being a friend to someone else. If you are fortunate, when you choose to be a friend to someone, they too will make that choice to be a true friend to you as well. **WE ALL NEED FRIENDS!**

Jonathan and David were great friends! They talked things through together (I Samuel 20). They came alongside to help one another (see I Samuel 19 and 20). They shared their joys and sorrows with one another — They were two **men** who could even **cry** together. (Did you get that? **They were two men who could cry together** — I Samuel 20:41.) And they were accountable to one another. They made a covenant together to always be friends (see I Samuel 18:3 and 20:16,17). **They are our examples of how to be the kind of friend God calls us to be!**

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