



ENCOURAGER Vol.2

“He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.” 2 Cor. 1:4 (The Message)

The Human Connection

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Jackie was thankful when the old man on the back pew scooted over to give her his favorite spot. She and Rick had only been attending for a couple of months, but had been impressed by the friendliness of such a large church. Jackie had been an elementary teacher before she and Rick married last year, so tardiness had always been her pet peeve. Sitting there in the pew, she started to feel guilty. Jackie realized she had missed the greeters whose warm welcome always made her feel at home. (They must have already taken their seats she surmised.)

new sales job in a city two hundred miles away, leaving her behind to sell the house. The move could not have come at a worse time. Their finances were in shambles. Rick had been laid off from his job three months ago. Things were tight. Jackie knew the church had a class on personal finance but Rick would not consider going since they weren't tithers. 'Who could afford to tithe anyway with car payments, student loans, credit cards, and a mortgage?' What she really needed was a job.

Jackie had heard of two openings at the county school board office, but had let her professional wardrobe slip when she stopped working. With so many people still reeling from the effects of the recession, last week the women's ministry had announced the opening of a new Free Clothing Depot. The fashionable lightly used apparel came in all sizes and would have been perfect for business attire. Sadly, Jackie was out of town last weekend and arrived too late today to hear the second announcement.

The pastor's message on forgiveness was quite touching. Jackie wished Rick could have heard it. Lately,

they squabbled all the time over finances. As the congregation rose to sing the final song, Jackie knew she should respond to the altar call. There would be someone at the front who could pray with her; but instead she stood stoic, thinking she had too many problems for them to address. Jackie had been meaning to make an appointment with the Pastor. Instead, Rick had convinced her that a he was too busy to hear her concerns; and that she should keep their dirty laundry at home.



As the organ music played, Jackie shook a few hands on the way out of the sanctuary, thankful she had missed the "Happy Clappy" at the beginning. She dreaded going home to fix lunch and eat alone. With such tight finances, she wished the nice couple sitting in front of her had asked if she could join them for lunch. Jackie knew after her little tiff with Rick in the church parking lot a few weeks ago what this couple must be thinking.

(Story continued)

'It was as if Jackie were a three pronged plug trying to fit into a two pronged socket.'



A couple sitting two rows up had always given Rick a firm handshake and a warm hug of encouragement to Jackie. Today however showing up without him left Jackie feeling uncomfortable. Rick accepted a

Rick had accepted a

Human Connection Cont'd

God really did something special...
when He blessed me with a
friend like you.



An awkward sensation of aloneness followed Jackie out the door. How could she now be experiencing such emptiness after just reconnecting with God? She didn't know it, but what Jackie really longed for was a God

with skin on. It was as if Jackie were a three pronged plug trying to fit into a two pronged socket. She needed an adaptor. Jackie needed someone to help her make a human connection in a church she had come to love .

What Is A True FRIEND?

"True friendships at some point requires that we climb out of our boxes and face each other."

Some say "friends are the family we choose." Proverbs 17:17 tells us that "A friend loves at all times and a brother is made for adversity. "

Friends are there for us when we lose our way or fall from grace. These close companions can become a source of extreme joy and give a sense of belonging. Still, what makes a really good friendship?

These days with Texting, Face-book, Email, and Twitter it's rare to have many opportunities for face to face encounters. With instant everything perhaps technology has taken away the hard stuff

face to face meetings require. Things like responsibility and accountability.

As we "talk through our boxes," inhibitions are lowered. Words we might have thought twice about saying to someone in person, often slip through our fingers more easily as we type them.

Don't get me wrong. The internet can be a great tool for connection. (Obviously, you're reading this newsletter.) However, true friendship requires that we climb out of our boxes and face each other.



Brothers Of Another Mother:



In the single chapter book of Philemon we find Paul writing to his Christian brother thanking him for the love and encouragement he provided. In verse seven Paul states that his friend Philemon refreshed hearts.

Several years ago a bunch of Christian guys met together in our home on Thursday nights for a time of Bible Study, Prayer, and Fellowship. Over those three or four years, a core group of men stuck together and we still keep in touch today. We often refer to ourselves as the "Brothers of Another Mother." I have two brothers that love me, but they each live far away. The book of Ecclesiastes reminds us in 4:9-10: "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to

help him up!" I'm very thankful for these five or six guys who have been there for me over the years. These days the Lord has blessed me with several other brothers I can call on during my times of need. These guys are faithful to always help me out and take me before our Father in Heaven.



Christian Friendship, THE BASICS:

I recently read an excellent article by Jerry and Mary White entitled, "Strength of Christian Friendships." This couple points out five essentials to consider.

(1) **Prayer:** Jesus taught and demonstrated this action that should exist among friends. I've found it's one thing for a friend to tell me he's praying for me, but when he bows his head and prays with me on the spot, his prayer is so energizing.

(2) **Accountability:** A close

Christian friend has the right and responsibility to hold me accountable for my actions. However, do we know our friends well enough to determine if what we see is a deep rooted problem, sin, or a small irritant?

(3) **Confrontation** can only come after we've established a viable relationship. First we must learn to help and serve each other. We all lead busy lives, but if a true friendship is to develop, time and energy is required. We need to

develop a sensitivity of what our potential friend's needs are. The authors point out that we need to watch for clues in normal conversation and be quick to offer practical help, give a special gift, or provide more specific prayers.

(5) **Having Fun.**

(6) **Teamwork in a Spiritual Battle.** Camaraderie develops between people engaged in a demanding project or effort? Are there projects, games, or planning activities that you and your friend could work on together?

The lighter side of Friendship



"You're the only couple we know where we like both people! It's like getting bonus miles on our friendship!"

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"Just once I'd like to meet someone who wasn't a fair weather friend."

FACTS ON FRIENDSHIP:

1. Don't worry about knowing people just

make yourself worth knowing.

2. Friendship is a responsibility...not an opportunity.

3. If you cannot think of any nice things to say about your friends, then you have the wrong friends.

4. Make friends before you need them.

5. If you were another person, would you like to be a friend of yours?

6. A good friend is one who neither looks down on you nor keeps up with you.

7. The best mirror is an old friend.

8. A friend is never known till he is needed.

"

Once in a lifetime you find a **friend** who touches not only your **heart** but also your **soul**

Once in a lifetime you **discover** someone who stands **beside** you, not over you.

Once in a lifetime if you are **lucky** you find someone as I have found you.

Very special people we can be **ourselves** with, **talk** with, **laugh** with, **hope** with and **believe** with...

True Friendship



Weekly Challenge: Become a Winter Friend

A winter's friend comes now and then
 to turn your grey skies blue
 like a special angel from up above
 sent down to comfort you.
 Your winter's friend will hold your hand
 and make you smile again
 brush away your tears, kiss your cheek
 and your broken heart amend.
 Your winter's friend will call you up
 spend late nights on the phone
 and knows when to take a step back
 when you feel like being alone.
 You'll meet together, laugh and sing
 off note a tune or two
 a little secret that you'll keep
 between the two of you.
 But seasons come and change
 and spring will rearrange
 so you winter's friend must melt away
 just like the snow caps do.
 And here comes your spring friend
 a brighter day anew,
 and as sure the sun will rise
 seasons change to no surprise.
 And one day when you're sad and blue
 your winter's friend will be there for you.