



October 1999

October means Fall. Something inside of me has been saying, *When's Summer*

*going to get here?* It feels like we've been going from one wet day to another. To see October come up means it's past. Life can be like that. Milestones keep passing by and when they do we find we're not where we'd expected to be. What do we do when that happens?

There are times in life to re-evaluate and check up on plans, priorities, and hopes and dreams. The old phrase, *You can't get there from here* comes back to plague us. Fortunately that's not always bad. In fact, within the will of God it's one proof we might be on the right track. Fulfilling the will of God always requires a stroll on miracle ground!

Be that as it may, how do we measure success? How can we be sure that we're on track and getting someplace? How can we be sure we aren't being foolish without God when we know our goal to be foolish within God? A lot of this assurance will come through relationship and the counsel and interaction of others. Somehow we'll never see ourselves as clearly through our own eyes as we will through the eyes of a good friend.

The first glimpses we see through such a mirror can be devastating. The difference between how we look to others and how we think we look is vast. But without such feedback it's impossible to make the corrections in life that will keep us from destroying our destiny. We need friends.

Last month we started looking at the subject of friendship and most of what I shared was negative, tearing down false concepts and expectations. That's because unjustified expectations are the enemy of all relationships.

I remember my first year of Bible college. I purposed to develop some good friendships with both men and women, possibly come out married, and live happily ever after. One major goal I set that first year was to have a friendship developed by my senior year that would be close enough to spend a Spring break together. Be

wary of goals you set without getting God's mind on the subject.

During my first semester I heard about a freshmen girl who took about nine other girls home with her for the Thanksgiving break. I was both impressed and somewhat envious. Then I heard what Paul Harvey would have referred to as *The Rest of the Story*. The girl lived almost within walking distance of Disneyland!

As I digested that piece of information the thought came to me, *Did that girl really have nine friends?* As I continued to keep my eyes and ears open I noticed something else. Those who had the most success taking friends or a group off campus for a weekend had some factors in their favor. Aside from the example above most either had wealthy parents and a house that was almost a vacation resort by itself or they came from a church many people desired to visit. Was I measuring friendship with the wrong yardstick?

Then there were the Friday night dinners. They seemed a fun time everyone looked forward to. It wasn't hard to get into one of these, though, so one Friday I went. The first thing I noticed was that I really wasn't suited to this type of fellowship. There's a high frequency restriction on my hearing that's always been there but it only bothers me in certain settings. One situation is a crowded restaurant. When the hum of conversation rises I can't make out a single word spoken around me. Don't try to whisper to me in a crowded room, I won't get it!

What I did hear was hardly worth the trouble. Perhaps it was just my age as I'd outgrown whoopie-cushions some time back. I was, after all, about 20 years older than most of my classmates. You know what? I wouldn't have traded those twenty years for their youth in any time or circumstance! I returned home somewhat older and definitely more contented. I have a fond memory of that evening, but I never went back.

Another thing I'd been noticing was what happened to friendships that had once appeared so solid. Former classmates or job buddies meeting again after who knows how many years,

*Oh, wow ... remember when ... didn't we ... wasn't it great?...* Okay, so how about meeting for lunch? "Gosh, you know, I'm just so *busy* these days....." Life goes on.

The Scripture, *A man that has friends must show himself friendly...* (Proverbs 18:24a) began to turn itself around within my heart. I saw that every friendship would cost me something. If it was to remain alive and current it would take time and resources to keep it serviced. How many friends do we really want? How many can we afford? What does God really have for us? And doesn't it have to be more than a numbers game; isn't it *quality* we're looking for?

There's something more to it than fame and/ or popularity too. Those who have the gifts that make people want to be around them often feel exploited and wary because they've found by bitter experience that most of the attention they're getting represents taking rather than giving.

The best illustration I've heard concerning the price of fame was told by Ethel Waters. On her way to sing in a Billy Graham crusade she got stranded in an airport. She found herself walking down a half mile of hallway for a much needed restroom stop, and her steps were slow and painful. As she neared the *Ladies Room* a man noticed her plight and had a wheelchair waiting when she came out.

He seemed to her like an angel from Heaven. But prior to his help no less than seven people came up to ask Miss Waters for her autograph! They saw what they wanted of her but failed to notice an elderly woman in deep need of some common kindness!

One of the ways we'll know our friends is that they'll catch some of these needy areas in our lives. They'll see beneath the surface and know whether the real man inside is laughing or crying. If we have such a friend, guard that relationship well, for it's a position of trust. To enter into the life of another gives us an inside track on hurting them far more deeply than a stranger ever could. But we can help them too.

One of the things that builds relationship at this point is restraint. If another person allows you this deeply into his/her life, be extra careful not

to crowd them. You'll learn things about the other person that must not be used carelessly or selfishly. To do so is a betrayal of the highest order.

The goal is summed up in Ephesians 4:15- *But Speaking the truth in love (we) may grow up unto Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ Jesus.* In other words, part of the program of growing up as a Christian and becoming like Jesus involves being able to speak the truth in love. If you don't think that's hard, you've never come close to doing it. More next month...

## Events:

Speaking of speaking the truth, we're still continuing with our new emphasis for Promise Keepers, which is a return to the basics. Get yourself a copy of the *7 Promises* book, and get that first chapter read before next time. We're going for it.

Just a word about the "Helping Hand" days- these are days we're setting aside just to help those who may need a bit. They may be people in the group, in the church, or strangers to most of us. Possible activities are painting, cleanup, or minor maintenance that we can help with. If you know of any such need, let us know and we'll consider helping.

Since some of the things we did last month included helping E- restore her kitchen after some fire damage (painting ++), helping E- (another) get moved, and helping clean up as part of an Estate Sale for the relatives of a man who'd attended church here. This is the type of unselfish, service oriented activity we feel God will bless us for being involved with. If you're unable to help with any of these due to time or physical limitations, why not pray and ask God what you could do just to bless someone? Blessing others puts us into a whole new segment of life!

See you all at church...

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