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Friends

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Friends

No two friendships are the same; each is a unique personal relationship. We may have some long-term friends, and some whom we have met only recently; we might share almost anything of our thoughts and feelings with a small number of close friends, and also experience the benefits of a variety of interactions with others. When we reflect on our friendships, we might be able to recall how one or other person became a trusted friend, but we attach greater importance to the value of our friendships than to their origins.

Good friends grow closer to us when we are in need, just as we find ourselves more closely bound to friends when we accompany them in times that are challenging. We can readily appreciate that a trusted friend is a treasure that money cannot buy. Our lives would be much poorer if it were not for one or more of the friendships we have in which our concerns for each other are sincere, and in which we discover a capacity for giving active caring assistance that we might not have otherwise known was within us.

No friendship is ever founded upon equality, since no two individuals give and receive exactly the same to and from each other. We might be in particular need of receiving support at one time, and later be able to help that same friend who then requires our help. But with friends, we do not count what we give, looking for it to be equaled, but rather we find in our hearts that we want to give as much as we are able. We appreciate reciprocity of affection, but without an expectation that it will be expressed in the same ways as our own.

If we consider the many levels and kinds of friendship we have in our lives, we might find the exercise of reflection about them to be encouraging and consoling, especially if we are willing to include our relationship with God as also having many qualities of friendship.

God has cared for us as a friend in many ways, even though we are so very far from being equals. We can ponder how God cares for us as we are, as do our friends, and that we can also depend upon God to be present with us no matter what is happening within us or around us. As friend, God wants what is best for us, but does not manipulate us or bend us to his will. We might hesitate at first to accept that we have something to give to God that only we can offer. But our unique response of acceptance, gratitude, and most of all, love is exactly what pleases God. We can be ourselves, and know that God, as friend, appreciates fully such reciprocity.

What really makes a friendship – the things we do, or the persons? Of course we have to manifest our care in words and actions, trying to please the other in the ways that we creatively devise. But the miracle of friendship depends upon the spiritual gift of love that each of us offers to others as we choose, and which satisfies us so deeply.

God made us for friendships.