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**Sirach 6:5-17**

A kind mouth multiplies friends,  
and gracious lips prompt friendly greetings.  
Let your acquaintances be many,  
but one in a thousand your confidant.

When you gain a friend, first test him,  
and be not too ready to trust him.  
For one sort of friend is a friend  
when it suits him, but he will not be  
with you in time of distress.

Another is a friend who becomes an enemy,  
and tells of the quarrel to your shame.  
Another is a friend, a boon companion,  
who will not be with you when sorrow comes.  
When things go well, he is your other self,  
and lords it over your servants;  
But if you are brought low,  
he turns against you  
and avoids meeting you.

Keep away from your enemies;  
be on your guard with your friends.  
A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter;  
he who finds one finds a treasure.  
A faithful friend is beyond price,  
no sum can balance his worth.

A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy,  
such as he who fears God finds;  
For he who fears God behaves accordingly,  
and his friend will be like himself.

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Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo,  
but what you want is someone who will take the  
bus with you when the limo breaks down.  
- Oprah Winfrey

**On Friendship**  
*Kahlil Gibran*

Your friend is your needs answered.  
He is your field which you sow with love  
and reap with thanksgiving.  
And he is your board and your fireside.  
For you come to him with your hunger,  
and you seek him for peace.

When your friend speaks his mind  
you fear not the "nay" in your own mind,  
nor do you withhold the "ay."  
And when he is silent  
your heart ceases not to listen to his heart;  
For without words, in friendship, all thoughts,  
all desires, all expectations are born and shared,  
with joy that is unacclaimed.

When you part from your friend, you grieve not;  
For that which you love most in him  
may be clearer in his absence,  
as the mountain to the climber is clearer  
from the plain.

And let there be no purpose in friendship  
save the deepening of the spirit.  
For love that seeks aught but the disclosure  
of its own mystery is not love  
but a net cast forth:  
and only the unprofitable is caught.

And let your best be for your friend.  
If he must know the ebb of your tide,  
let him know its flood also.  
For what is your friend that you  
should seek him with hours to kill?

Seek him always with hours to live.  
For it is his to fill your need,  
but not your emptiness.  
And in the sweetness of friendship  
let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures.  
For in the dew of little things the heart finds its  
morning and is refreshed.

## **Defining Spiritual Friendship:**

Two people bound together by the love of God.

In his book “The Four Loves” **CS Lewis** dedicates a chapter to friendship “the happiest and most fully human of all loves.” Lewis notes, “Friendship arises out of mere companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden). It is when two such persons discover one another ... that friendship is born. And instantly they stand together in an immense solitude.”

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A spiritual friend can offer insights and prayers, comfort and encouragement when we are struggling with our children or a problem at work. We can pray with one another – or for one another. We can talk about spiritual questions that not everyone else wants to discuss. Whether we live across the street or across the country, we can join our hearts and minds and provide each other with a spiritual refuge. Such companionship can bring us a deep sense of peace that comes from knowing we are loved in a particular way, that we are not alone, and that what we are longing for and striving for is not so impossible or crazy after all. And all of that, in turn, allows us to approach the rest of our relationships and responsibilities with a spirit of hope and a sense of solidarity. It is powerful stuff!

*Mary DeTurris Poust, Walking Together: Discovering the Catholic Tradition of Spiritual Friendship*

Someone, somewhere wrote, “A friend is someone who knows the song in your heart and can sing it back to you when you have forgotten the words.” Someone, somewhere clearly understood what real friendship is all about. My friend is the person who knows me as well as I know myself and holds that treasure, with all its soulfulness, all its struggle, in soft and tender hands.

Real friendship then, requires two things: the transparent disclosure of the self and another’s single-minded appetite to hear it and abiding commitment to treasure it. It means that I must be willing to be known and that someone, somewhere must be intent on knowing me. Then, in those long, hard times when life is shale and rain, when I forget who I am and where I am going, this other side of me brings me home to myself again.

Friendship is not mere companionship.  
Friendship is intimacy.

Aristotle said that there are three kinds of friends: those we cultivate for the sake of the good times they give us, those we seek out for what they can do for us, and those we love for their own sakes. “If I were pressed to say why I love him,” Montaigne wrote of his deceased friend Etienne de Boetie, “I feel my only reply could be ‘Because it was he, because it was I.’” Friendship, real friendship, in other words, is the blurring of two souls into one where it was thoughts they were separate. No price exacted. No interested paid.

*Sister Joan Chittister, OSB- The Friendship of Women: The Hidden Tradition of the Bible*

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Think of one friend. What are some qualities that you most appreciate about your friendship with this person? Think of someone with whom you are no longer friends. What came between you? Why did that friendship end?
2. How do you keep in touch with your friends? How much face-to-face time do you spend together? Does technology enhance or detract from building and maintaining friendships?
3. What happens to our relationship with God in a culture of superficial friendships? What expectations do we carry over into our friendship with God? How important is it to you that your friends share similar religious beliefs and values? How has faith played a role (or not) in your friendships?

### **Resources on Friendship:**

Aelred of Rievaulx. *Spiritual Friendship*. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications.)

William Barry, SJ. *A Friendship Like No Other: Experiencing God's Amazing Embrace*. (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2008)

Joan Chittister. *The Friendship of Women: The Hidden Tradition of the Bible*. (Bluebridge, 2006)

Michele Faehnle and Emily Jaminet. *The Friendship Project*. (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2017)

Mary DeTurrís Poust. *Walking Together: Discovering the Catholic Tradition of Spiritual Friendship*. (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2010)

### **Beth's Books:**

Beth M. Knobbe. *Party of One: Living Single with Faith, Purpose, and Passion* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2011)

Beth M. Knobbe. *Finding My Voice: A Young Woman's Perspective* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009) – Chapter 4: Friendship