

Which Of You Shall Have A Friend?

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Note: On January 24 we said goodbye, for the time being, to our beloved brother Don Walker. Don was one of the nearest and dearest of my friends. What Don was to me, a great friend, he was to countless others as well. This entire issue of the Christian Worker is devoted and dedicated to him. As a preacher, Don was unsurpassed in proclaiming God's Word with clarity, certainty, and confidence. As a mentor, Don brought the very best out in the men he taught and became an example to. As a friend, he left an indelible impression, a lasting legacy, not to mention, a huge void at his departure. In this article we want to consider Don as a friend.

I first met Don because my father-in-law, Johnny Ramsey, encouraged me to look him up when I went to the annual Southwest Lectures in Austin. Since we were close in age, both preaching full time and had mutual interests, Johnny knew that we would have a lot in common. Little did I know that Don would become a life-long friend and one of my best. Our friendship spanned well over three decades. I certainly was blessed over those years because of the joy I experienced, the lessons I learned and the spiritual growth I attained.

The immense worth of a friend cannot possibly be overstated. The value of friendship has been acknowledged and appreciated by all people throughout all times. God created man with the kind intention that he would be a social creature (Gen. 2:18). Our perfect example in all things, Jesus (1 Pet. 2:21), beautifully set forth the desired four fold development God intends for all of us. In Luke 2:52, we read, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men". Thus, we learn from Luke's inspired words that Jesus grew intellectually, physically, spiritually, and *socially*.

From Genesis to Revelation we are reminded that if we are to grow socially it will be because we recognize the virtues and value of friendship. Solomon teaches us that if we want to have friends then we must show ourselves friendly (Prov. 18:24). We are told that even ruthless Haman had friends (Esther 5:10,14; 6:13). Likewise, wicked Herod and worthless Pilate set aside their long lasting enmity to become friends (Luke 23:12). As we can see from the last examples cited, it's not enough to have friends. The key is to have the right kind of friends. Furthermore, it's not enough to *have* the right kind of friends but also to *be* the right kind. Don had many friends because he was the kind of friend that you appreciated and valued.

My title, *Which Of You Shall Have A Friend*, is taken from Luke 11, where Jesus asks in verse 5, "Which of you shall have a friend and go to him at midnight

and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves!’” In asking this question, Jesus masterfully attracts the attention of everyone in the audience. With the mere mention of the word, *friend*, Jesus now has opened every ear and captured the interest of all present. Since everyone understands the tremendous value of friendship, all ears are fixed on Jesus and receptive to His teaching.

Which Of You Shall Have A Friend...

So Faithful As Don!? The very hallmark of friendship is faithfulness and loyalty. Solomon declares in Proverbs 17:17, “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” God lamented the lack of loyalty in Ephraim by declaring, “For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away” (Hosea 6:4). If you were blessed to have Don as a friend he was there for you through thick and thin. Don was no “fair weather” friend but genuine and true to the end.

So Close As Don!? The faithfulness and loyalty I just spoke of insures, and even demands, an unparalleled closeness. The friendship of David and Jonathan was legendary because they loved each other as their own soul (1 Sam. 18:1,3). Their loyalty to each other was so true that even Saul, Jonathan’s father, could not come between them. Solomon speaks of a whisperer who “separates the best of friends” (Prov. 16:28). “The best of friends” sums up the kind of friend Don was to me and others as well.

So Helpful As Don!? When it came to projects that I needed help with around my house I viewed Don as my “right hand man”. Even though we did not impose upon each other for every little thing that came up, when I needed a skillful hand and a knowledgeable mind I knew that I could call Don. Whether it was running crown molding at my house or tearing down a massive fireplace and chimney stack at his, we knew who to call upon for help. Through the years, some of my fondest memories were the times Don and I fixed (or messed up) something at his house or mine.

So Happy As Don!? Don’s happiness and joy was contagious. His laughter was infectious. Don loved life (1 Pet. 3:10). He was happy to be a child of God (Ps. 144:15). The joy that he approached life with was “inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8). Don was a constant reminder that Christianity was never intended to make man miserable. It didn’t matter what Don was doing he was sure to enjoy it. He was extremely happy as a husband. He found immense joy in his role as a father. Above all, Don was so glad to be a Christian (1 Pet. 4:16).

So Valuable As Don!? How can you calculate the value of a true friend? Like the virtuous woman, a friend's worth is far above rubies (Prov. 31:10). Like the kingdom of heaven, a friend can rightfully be compared to treasure found (Matt. 13:44). Solomon speaks of the value of a friend when he discloses the following reality; "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend". A true friend helps others to grow spiritually, thus, making them more useful in the kingdom of God (Jer. 13:7,10; Matt. 5:13; 2 Tim. 2:21). I can honestly say that I am a better man today because of my friend, Don Walker.

So Beloved As Don!? When Paul writes to Philemon, his fellow laborer, he refers to himself as "a prisoner of Christ Jesus". He then calls Timothy "our brother". When he again turns his attention to Philemon he speaks of him as "***our beloved friend***" (Phile. 1 NKJV). What Philemon was to Paul, Don certainly was to me... **a beloved friend**. In life, Don wore many "hats": a loving husband, a devoted father, a faithful Christian, a beloved brother, an amazing teacher, a powerful preacher and the best friend a person could have. It was a blessing to know Don and it was a joy to count him a dear friend.