

Life With God In Recovery

STAYING STRONG: Bringing Out The Best In One Another



BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN ONE ANOTHER

One of the characteristics of life in addiction is isolation from others and doing things on our own. The life God created us to live, and which we seek to recover is one where we come close to God and others and allow relationships to grow that help all of us live better.

Can we remember a time when someone encouraged us to have hope, to keep going, to do the right thing? What did that person do that felt encouraging? True friends help us become the people we were born to be. Sometime it's as basic as encouraging each other to be our best in daily activities, daily decisions, and spiritual growth. At other times, it's helping us discover our gifts and moving forward to use them for good.

People loved to spend time with Jesus. Everywhere He went, Jesus told people that the kingdom of God was available to them. Jesus taught that anyone who was part of the kingdom of God was a citizen with dignity, a worthwhile servant of the King, the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Jesus called people forward to be the wonderful gift God created them to be. We will grow in our own recovery when we practice encouraging others in their journey.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16 NIV)

Friendship is based on shared values and goals. At one level people can be friends just because they enjoy the same games or crafts. However, lasting friendship happens when people share their deepest and most important values with each other. A passion to see wrongs made right, for example, can bond friends together no matter what they have to face. If each friend sees the other and believes in the other as salt and light, that encourages and strengthens the person so they become more than they could have been on

their own. Knowing God is with us and with our friend is a cord that binds us together in His love.

A real friend helps us carry our burdens, encourages and builds us up, helps us move toward restoration from a challenging experience, and spurs us on to love and good deeds. A real friend doesn't climb into a dark and complaining place with us. A good friend stands with us as we face what comes our way and helps us find God's plan in it.

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Encourage one another daily ... so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (From Galatians 6, Hebrews 3, and 10)

Many of us struggle with self-acceptance. Sometimes we compare ourselves with others – their looks, their gifts, their achievements. However, true friendship means seeing ourselves as peers, encouragers, and cheerleaders in each other's lives. We affirm one another for a job well done, and we open doors for each other to try new things and take healthy risk. We air our feelings out loud without fear of rejection and know that with God's help and our friend at our side, we will get better and better at sorting out the pieces in the puzzle of life.

Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family. (Proverbs 18:24 MSG)

Here are some things friends do to bring out the best in us:

- Friends stimulate our faith walk with God. They pray for us.
- Friends ask questions. They laugh and cry with us.
- Friends encourage us to try new things
- Friends affirm our strengths and are not threatened by our successes.
- Friends remind us of hope when we feel discouraged.
- Friends challenge us to take a healthy risk.
- Friends stick with us when everyone else gives up on us.
- Friends notice and compliment us on a job well done.

In our recovery, today, we would do well to watch for an opportunity to be a friend to someone, to carry a burden, to encourage and build someone up, to spur someone on to love and good deeds. As we respect their uniqueness, we can ask ourselves, "What would feel encouraging to this person? What would motivate this person to fulfill their calling? Is there anything this person needs? How can I be a supportive friend to this person?"

Someone has said, "A simple friend thinks the problems you whine about are recent." A real friend says, "You've been whining about the same thing for years. Get off your duff and do something about it."

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How am I being a friend?
2. How am I reaching out to include the joy and wisdom of friends in my life?
3. What happens that moves me away from friends towards isolation and makes me vulnerable for relapse?
4. Comparing – why do I get caught up in it? What am I doing to change?
5. How deeply or how honestly am I letting myself be known by others?
6. What might I do to improve as a person who "brings out the best" in others?

Dear Jesus, I admit that I struggle with the notion of being a true friend. Please help me take my eyes off myself. Help me to look around at others and truly care about what is going on in their lives. Help me to be friendly towards others as I would be to a beloved brother or sister. Each person I meet could be a potential friend. Help me to be as salt and light to those around me. Help me to learn from You. I am forever grateful that You are a true friend who cares for me.
AMEN