

BETTER THAN ONE

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!"

What comes to mind when you consider the word "friend"? Maybe it's someone you've known for years and with whom you can share your most intimate secrets. Perhaps it's a person you've only recently met, but already feel a strong kinship connection to. Whatever your unique definition, there is surely one common characteristic that distinguishes genuine friendship from any casual acquaintanceship you may possess—Love.

In both Latin and Greek, the words for friend ("amicus" and "philos") are directly related to the words for love ("amo" and "phileo"). In its purest form, love is the desire to benefit another person while giving at your own expense. Conversely, lust is the desire to benefit only you at the expense of someone else. There is a selflessness and generosity inherent to the love relationship, articulated by Jesus as a man's willingness to "lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

While it's hard to imagine going to the gallows for your girlfriends, remember that laying down your life is not merely a physical act. When Job lost everything, his friends mourned and sat with him on the ground for seven days and nights until he was ready to talk about the pain he was experiencing. Then for over thirty chapters they labored with him, listening to his ceaseless agony and doing their best to provide perspective on his suffering. Surely there were other places they could have been and other responsibilities that demanded their attention, but because of their devotion to Job they stayed. Amazingly, it was only after Job prayed for his friends that the Lord restored his prosperity and gave him twice as much as he lost (Job 42:10).

What kind of friends do you have? Are they the "fair-weather friends," present only in times of success, or are

they true brothers and sisters born for times of adversity? Are they capable of lifting you up when you fall, or are they actually contributing to your unhealthy demise? While you may not have a whole entourage (Job had only three), each of us needs someone in our lives to pray and intercede for us and stay strong when we are growing weak. Two are always better than one, and the first step to attracting a friend like that is to become "one" for somebody else!•

Recommended Readings-- Job 3:11-13, Proverbs 18:24, Proverbs 17:17, Matthew 18:19-20, John 15:9-17 © Edwina Findley 2006 All Rights Reserved.

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