



FRIENDSHIP

Iron Sharpening Iron



June Hunt



HOPE
for the Heart

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JUNE HUNT



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Dear Friend,

I know what it's like to *not have a friend*—a true friend, a trusted confidant. And for good reason. I couldn't share my painful home life with anyone. I felt like there was a cork in my throat.

In reality, I grew up in an adulterous home—off on the side. Then after my dad's first wife died, our family of five moved into his huge house. (I was 12 years old.) A year later, my parents married.

During this period, an unspoken code of “family loyalty” prevented me from trusting others with the truth. Oh, I had acquaintances. But they weren't aware of the embarrassing secrets locked behind our closed doors and my closed heart. Secrecy and shame were my only intimate companions.

Then in 11th grade, I met Catherine. Reserved and winsome, Catherine's sensitive nature seemed to parallel my own. She was a senior who had just moved to town (how hard was that!). Quite soon, Catherine was the answer to my unspoken prayer. Finally, I had my first friend!

As I poured out my heart to her, family secrets, personal pain, and private thoughts cascaded out like an undammed river.

After Catherine left for college the following fall, I could hardly wait to see her smiling face at Christmas. However, following her return Catherine explained that she had outgrown our friendship and needed to “move on.” Then she

suggested I do the same. In social media terms, she “unfriended” me (though the term didn’t exist back then). Absolutely crushed, I reluctantly parted company with my first friend.

Nevertheless, in following years, the Lord began to bring new friends into my life—a small group of “forever friends” who have literally stood by me in the good times and the bad. Through this process I began to see that, just as Jesus had chosen disciples whom He called “friends”—we can have an inner circle of friends—not a cast of forty, but a few close friends.

Instead of focusing on one exclusive friend, how much better to have a “family of friends” that resides within the home of our hearts. In this “home,” each friend occupies their own special place and each fulfills a special, meaningful purpose. For example, the warm inviting living room where laughter and entertainment abounds is quite different from the cozy comfort of the kitchen table where stomachs and hearts are nourished. Even two necessary rooms, the laundry room and the bedroom, can never take the place of the other. In my “Friendship House,” my *grace friend*, Barbara (who taught me grace), doesn’t occupy the same space as my *ethics friend*, Eleanor. And my *ready-to-go friend*, June, inhabits a different place in my heart than my “*you light up my life*” friend, Sue. One room—or one friend—can never take the place of another.

I love the word *friend*. A friend is not your judge and jury. A friend holds your hurting heart.

A friend is “iron that sharpens iron” to bring out your best. Whatever your friend says and does is born out of love, not to shut you up or tear you down. As Proverbs 27:17 says, “*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*” That’s the heart of friendship.

My precious *forever friend*, Sue, now at home with the Lord, gave me a stained glass etching with these words: “*A friend is someone to whom you can pour out all the contents of your heart—chaff and grain together—knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keep what is worth keeping and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.*” How I’ve loved that sentiment and how I loved having her as my friend.

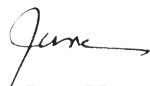
Years ago, my excruciating experience with Catherine did make me cautious (Proverbs 12:26), but it also heightened my value of friendship, teaching me to never take for granted God’s priceless gift of a friend.

Instead of focusing on *getting* friendship, God calls us to focus on *giving* friendship. Our joy and significance will be found in serving and befriending others as an extension of the Lord’s love for us. (See John 15:10–12.)

The source of rich, godly friendships is God, Himself. James 1:17 says, “*Every good and perfect gift is from above.*” If you seek abiding friendships, if you have a need for closeness and intimacy, ask God to bring wise friends into your life who will take Him seriously. Ask for friends who will

esteem Him and who are committed to Him. As you pray, begin reaching out and serving others by being a friend. As you do, may the *biblical hope and practical help* in this book guide you in your quest for “*a friend who sticks closer than a brother*” (Proverbs 18:24).

Yours in the Lord's hope,



June Hunt

FRIENDSHIP

Iron Sharpening Iron

Imagine a young man who has it all. He comes from a powerful family and is heir apparent to the family fortune. Everyone knows that one day he is destined to take his father's place as head of the business. Fortunately, he has the temperament and giftedness to fill his father's shoes.

Yet this talented son is willing to sacrifice everything for another capable man—his closest friend whom he believes is the right choice to run the empire. Where there could be contention, there is instead undying commitment. His extraordinary decision is unprecedented—unparalleled. Where there could be rivalry, there is genuine respect. In truth, David is God's anointed, and his friend Jonathan does everything possible to support the one who will rightfully rule, including protecting David from his own jealous father, the reigning King of Israel.

Jonathan is willing to sacrifice everything—even the throne—for the higher good of his friend. He enters into a covenant friendship with the man God has chosen as king, and he intends for their sworn oath of friendship to have an impact for generations to come.

**“Jonathan said to David,
‘Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do for you.’
(1 Samuel 20:4)**



DEFINITIONS

Earlier, Jonathan must have at least known of David—he served in the palace courts and had quite the reputation. One man in the palace said, “*I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the harp. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him*” (1 Samuel 16:18).

But the day David slew the giant Goliath, whatever limited relationship he and Jonathan may have had deepened dramatically to what can only be characterized as diehard devotion. That very day a strong spiritual bond suddenly connected the two young men in deepest friendship.

**“Jonathan became one in spirit with David,
and he loved him as himself. ...
And Jonathan made a covenant with David
because he loved him as himself.”
(1 Samuel 18:1, 3)**

WHAT IS a Friend?

Like father, *unlike son*.

Saul and Jonathan cannot be more different in their attitudes and actions toward David. Although David has brought honor to the king through one military victory after another, it is the refrain of a song that galls Saul and has him

seeing green where David is concerned. The words credit Saul with slaying thousands, but David with tens of thousands. “*And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David*” (1 Samuel 18:9).

Jonathan reveres David, Saul reviles him. Soon Saul’s emotions churn with murderous hatred and the maniacal monarch attempts to kill David, time and time again. So while Saul seeks to take David’s life, Jonathan seeks to protect it. Jonathan’s commitment to the will of God and to the bond of friendship is far stronger than the blood tie of his father. There could not be a more devoted friend than Jonathan. But what does it mean to be a friend?

- ▶ **A friend** is a person united to another by feelings of affection, loyal support, and time spent together.¹
- ▶ **Friend** translated in the Greek is *philos*, which is a term of endearment.²
 - *Philadelphia* means “brotherly love.”³
 - *Philanthropy* means the love for man, benevolence.⁴

Jesus said...

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

- ▶ **Friend** developed from the Old English word *freond*, which is related to the Old English word *freon*, which means “to love.”⁵ Thus the basis for genuine friendship is love.

The Bible reminds us ...

**“A friend loves at all times.”
(Proverbs 17:17)**

WHAT IS Friendship?⁶

David becomes a man on the run from Saul. Caught up in the terrors of the moment, his prior anointing as the next king of Israel by the prophet Samuel is, no doubt, a distant memory. Before beginning life as a fugitive, David and Jonathan exchange a grievous, gut-wrenching farewell: “*David ... bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most*” (1 Samuel 20:41).

Jonathan told David: “*Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever’*” (1 Samuel 20:42).

- ▶ **Friendship** is a reciprocal relationship of liking and loving between two people.
- ▶ **Friendship** is a mutual emotion based on liking—*phileo* love.
 - The Greek word *phileo* means “tender affection.”⁷
 - Because of Abraham’s faithfulness to the Lord, he was given the unique title “the friend of God,” a *philos* of God, not a *hetairos* of God.

“The scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend” (James 2:23).

► **Friendship** that is mature also includes *agape* love.

- The Greek word *agape* means a commitment to seek the highest good of another, even when a person has characteristics you don’t like.

“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Reporting a Friend

QUESTION: “Was I wrong to report my friend for being on drugs and possibly hurting his child? He refuses to have anything to do with me now, and I really miss him.”

ANSWER: No, out of concern for both your friend and his child, you were not wrong to report your friend. To the contrary, you were right in seeking to protect him from himself and to protect his child from possible injury.

Obviously, your friend needs help. Helping a friend who puts others at risk means holding your friend accountable. Sometimes we are led by God to do something that causes our loved ones to suffer a little now so that they won’t suffer a lot later. Your decision was right because:

- ▶ **You tried to save your friend** from doing something that could possibly harm his relationship with his son for the rest of his life.
- ▶ **You stepped in and spared him** from doing something he could regret forever.
- ▶ **Your action was that of a true friend**—doing what is in the best interest of another regardless of how that person responds.

Pray that, in time, God will use your intervention to open the eyes of your friend and to serve as a catalyst for him to change.

**“Better is open rebuke than hidden love.
Wounds from a friend can be trusted,
but an enemy multiplies kisses.”
(Proverbs 27:5–6)**

WHAT IS a Codependent Friendship?⁸

In the strictest sense of the word, there are no codependent *friendships* because friends are committed to doing what is best and right for one another, and fostering codependency is both wrong and hurtful. We are to lock hands in friendship and look to God in dependency—trusting Him and deriving our strength from Him.

The Bible says, “*He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.*” (Isaiah 40:29)

- ▶ **Codependent enablers** are those who enable addicts or the dysfunctional people in their lives to continue with their addictions or dysfunctionality without drawing and maintaining boundaries.
- ▶ **Codependent people** are those who are dependent on another person to the point of being controlled or manipulated by that person. Just as the alcoholic is dependent on alcohol, the codependent is dependent on being needed by the alcoholic or on being needed by someone who is problematic.
- ▶ **Codependency** is a relationship addiction comparable to the sin of depending on false gods that are powerless to help or depending on a broken water well that won't hold water. It simply won't work! God pointed out this fact in referencing the Israelites: *“My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water”* (Jeremiah 2:13).

Enabling

QUESTION: “How can I know whether or not I’m an enabler?”

ANSWER: You are an enabler if you perpetuate another’s destructive behavior by protecting that person from painful consequences that could actually serve as a motivation for change.