



Prayer as friendship

What a Friend we have in Jesus,

All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
*O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!*

Have we trials and temptations?

Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged,

Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful

Who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness,

Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,

Cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Saviour, still our refuge—

Take it to the Lord in prayer;

Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?

Take it to the Lord in prayer;

In His arms He'll take and shield thee,

Thou wilt find a solace there

Joseph M Scriven, 1855, written from Canada to comfort his mother still in Ireland. Charles Converse, an attorney and composer, wrote the musical setting used today. Scriven, who was no stranger to personal tragedy, was known as a devoted Christian who was always helping people in need.

Can we find a friend so faithful?

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I would like to talk about prayer in relation to the friendship Jesus offers us.

We often see prayer as a means to an end, to obtain what we want from God, and this is certainly an aspect of prayer. 'Ask and you will receive' (Matt 7:7).

But what if we saw prayer as the way we enjoyed our friendship with God?

The remarkable gift to us from God comes as a hand, held out in friendship.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not

know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you (John 15:12-15)

Think of a good friendship.

We enjoy the company of a friend. And friends talk. We go out for a coffee – and we don't just sit there looking at each other! We converse. PRAYER!

Friends look forward to each other's company. I think God looks forward to our company. And friends don't ignore each other. PRAYER.

Friends (true friends) have the other's highest interests at heart (John 15 – Jesus).

Friends take interest in their friend's interests (Philippians 2:21) What do we pray?

Friends honour each other, the honour due them (John 15:14 – obeying Jesus).

Friends are faithful to each other (Prov. 27:10 – do not forsake your friend). They are trustworthy. Abraham, God's friend, trusted God – was faith-full to him – James 2:23). We can trust our friend, Jesus, and our praying can reflect this.

Friends are there for each other, especially in times of need. 'There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother' (Prov. 18:24); (Job 16:18-20 intercessor; 29:4).

Friends find solace in each other's company (last line of the song above) (1 Samuel 18:1-3 David and Jon. 2 Sam 1:26; Psalms on God's presence and strength).

Friends love at all times (Proverbs 17:17).

Friends confide in each other (J 15 above); Friends LISTEN! They hear!

Our deepest need for love is met in the communion and fellowship of friendship, most of all with God, which involves PRAYER, conversing with Him.

We lost that with God because of our sin and separation from Him. And it is astonishing that God extends His hand of friendship to us, His enemies (Rom. 5:10), to offer it to us again. When Jesus hung on that Cross and cried out *It is finished* (Jn 19:28-30), He won back for us the friendship that was lost in the garden eons ago. His sacrifice reconciled us to our loving Heavenly Father, bringing us into union, fellowship, and friendship with Him.

Let's think afresh about prayer – as friendship.



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