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Rick Myatt

TO BREAK THE DROUGHT 1 Samuel 20

Who is the best friend you've ever had? When we think about that question most of us recall someone from the past. We often also experience some disappointment with the depth of our current friendships. Somewhere inside most of us wish for that friend described in Randy Newman's song *You've Got A Friend In Me*, the theme song for the entire *Toy Story* series of movies. "You've got a friend in me. When the road looks rough ahead and you're miles and miles from your nice warm bed, boy, you've got a friend in me. You've got a friend in me. You've got troubles and I've got 'em too. There isn't anything I wouldn't do for you. We stick together and can see it through, 'cause you've got a friend in me."

In the first *Toy Story* film Woody the cowboy, Andy Davis' favorite toy, feels threatened by the arrival of the dazzling new Buzz Lightyear toy. That film focused on the tension and conflict between the two toys that is finally overcome at the end. In the second film the two are now good friends. Woody is confronted with the reality that all kids eventually outgrow their toys and discard them. This is a truth that can be verified by the presence of boxes of our kids' old toys in our garage. But at the end of the movie Woody tells Buzz that it's okay if someday Andy no longer wants them, because they will have each other.

Friendship is a frequent theme in movies. There are the sappy chick flicks like *Beaches* and *Fried Green Tomatoes* and the long string of buddy movies going back to Bob Hope and Bing Crosby in their Road movies, including such brilliant films as *Dumb and Dumber*. Captain Kirk had Mr. Spock, Han and Luke had each other and so did R2D2 and C3PO, Batman had Robin, the Lone Ranger had Tonto and Frodo had Sam. It says something when a theme like that shows up so frequently. It is about human longing. We long for friendship. Today we will glimpse a true friendship in 1 Samuel 20 and learn some valuable lessons from it.

PREMISE: JONATHAN WAS A TRUE FRIEND

We are now in the Facebook age. Today you can gain friends, even hundreds of them, just by clicking a button on a screen. Facebook and smart phones have been touted as being revolutionary for bringing people together. People who haven't been in contact with each other for decades are finding each other on Facebook. We are able to keep track of what huge numbers of people are doing by checking their Facebook posts. We can instantly be in touch with friends who are hundreds

or thousands of miles away by texting them. It seems like our network of friends has vastly expanded.

These new media have been wonderful in one sense. It is very cool to know that your friend is having pancakes for breakfast this morning, or that they are at Disneyland having a great time today. But we all know that these electronic forms of relating tend to be the very definition of a mile wide and an inch deep. A person may be your Friend on Facebook but can mean little when you are seriously in need. When a true crisis hits in your life you likely will get little more than brief expressions of sympathy from your Facebook Friends. And let's not forget that Facebook has introduced the idea of "unfriending" a person.

True friendship entails a lot more than you can get from Facebook or texts. What does it mean to be a real friend? There are some big reasons why you should care about friends and I will share them later. For now let's look at an example of a real friend. Jonathan, King Saul's son, was a true friend to David, who needed one. He exhibited the traits of a real friend. We will see those traits in 1 Samuel 20.

HE WAS LOYAL TO DAVID

Early in this chapter David tells Jonathan that Saul, his father, is determined to kill David. Jonathan has seen Saul's murderous intent, but I think he chalked it up to his father's irrational and unpredictable mental instability. While his dad would fly off the handle from time to time, he would get over it.

David insisted that Saul's efforts to kill him were now a settled determination, not just an irrational outburst. He was certain that Saul wouldn't rest until David was dead. At the end of verse 3 he said, "there is only one step between me and death." You can see Jonathan's loyalty to David in verse 9 when he said, "If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?" Then in verse 13 he said, "If my father intends to harm you, may the Lord deal with Jonathan, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away in peace." He promised David that he would do all in his power to protect him from his own father.

We've already seen Jonathan's loyalty in previous incidents. In 18:4 Jonathan gave David his own robe, tunic, sword, bow and belt. That sounds like just a nice gesture. Jonathan was the king's son so he had nearly unlimited clothing and equipment. David wasn't quite as wealthy, so Jonathan was generous in giving him some of his stuff. Years ago we went to visit our friends Mike and Dee Riley when Mike was in his first year as the football coach at Oregon State. While we were

there one day Mike took us into the equipment room for the football team. He gave us team sweat shirts and pants and a hat like the coaches wear. It was really cool. I still have those sweats. But what Jonathan did was way more than that.

Walter Brueggemann, a highly respected Old Testament scholar, wrote in his commentary on this incident that this act by Jonathan transferred “to David Jonathan’s right to claim the throne.” The things he gave to David were symbolic of the right to the throne. Giving them to David was a statement that Jonathan knew his friend was the one who should be the next king of Israel, and he was forfeiting his own right to that throne in favor of David.

In 20:13-14 Jonathan said to David, “May the Lord be with you as he has been with my father. But show me unfailing kindness like the Lord’s kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed.” Do you get what he’s saying? The Lord had been with Saul by making him king. He’s saying, “may the Lord be with you in the same way and make you king.” He asked that he not be killed because the norm was for the new king to kill the heirs of the previous king so they wouldn’t try to assassinate him and grab power. Jonathan was acknowledging that David would be the king and asking him to not kill him when he took over the throne. Jonathan was telling David, “I am in your camp. I believe in you and I am with you.”

Jonathan was a man of great integrity and courage. He had shown remarkable bravery on the battle field and was highly respected by all. He had not only the right to the throne but the character of a noble king. Yet he believed in David to the extent that he essentially told him he should be the next king instead of himself.

Have you ever had anyone other than your parents who believed in you? Sadly most of us are so preoccupied with ourselves that we don’t think much about believing in and being loyal to someone else. It is a powerful thing when someone believes in you.

In the years immediately after I graduated from college I worked in a campus ministry. There was a guy named Mike who had started a new work at a community college in our area and I was asked to go one day a week and help him. Mike turned out to be a terrific guy. He was a good speaker, but his greatest strength was that he was a natural leader. People followed him. He was dynamic. We teamed up and had a very successful couple of years on that campus. I loved working with Mike because he was so positive. He was an up kind of guy, and he constantly encouraged and affirmed me. He made no secret of the fact that he really believed in me. We became very good friends. We would part ways as

ministry called us in different directions, but I have always had great respect and fondness for Mike. I felt he had some qualities and strengths that I lacked. I wished I had them like he did, but have just never possessed them. More than 10 years ago one day Mike and his family just showed up in the worship service at the church I was serving at the time. They were vacationing here. He knew I was a pastor in this area so he tracked me down and just surprised me by showing up on Sunday. We had them over to our house for dinner a few days later and had a terrific time. Mike was still the same wonderful guy. He still had that same positive spirit. That evening he said to me, "Rick, you've still got an amazing gift." What an encouragement from a man I greatly respect. Earlier this year I wrote a blog in which I talked about some of my own perceived shortcomings. To my surprise my friend Mike, whom I haven't heard from in years, commented. Once again he fired off a totally affirming statement about me. Has he been reading my blogs? I didn't know it if he had, but apparently so. That guy has always believed in me and he still believes in me to this day. How good it feels to know that there is someone who believes in you.

Isn't that what you want in a friend? Don't you long to have people in your life who are totally on your side? I've had the other side of that as well. I've had friends who, when they said, "I've got your back" meant "and I'm going to put a knife in it." I've had other friends who seemed friends, but when the chips were down they were nowhere to be found. No one wants friends like that.

In Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 he said in verse 7 that love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Instead of "always trusts" both the New American Standard and the English Standard Versions translate that "believes all things." In other words, love believes in the person loved.

HE HELPED DAVID

All that loyalty would be unhelpful if, when Saul was trying to kill David, Jonathan said, "I'm really sorry, buddy. I feel real bad about this. Wish I could do something about it, but you know Saul is my dad and the Bible tells me I have to honor my father. I can't go against his wishes. I'll pray for you, but my hands are tied. I can't rebel against Dad. And besides, remember he is the king."

Jonathan didn't do that. In chapter 19 he went out of his way to intervene on David's behalf. In verse 4 when Saul was telling everyone in his court that he wanted David dead Jonathan said, "Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly." You see

the same thing in 20:32 where Jonathan pleads David's case saying, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?"

The main action in this chapter is that Jonathan cooked up a scheme to find out how committed Saul was to killing David and to warn David if indeed Saul wanted his scalp. He set up a clandestine meeting with code word messages to help David out. In the end he realizes that his dad has gone over the edge and that he will not be satisfied until David is dead, so he tells David to get out of town in a hurry.

James 2:15-16 says, "Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?" That's a good question. Is it friendship if you see a person in need, you feel sorry for them, but you're just too busy to help? Is it friendship if you would rather not get involved because it is likely to be messy?

Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity." You find out who your friends are when you hit those times of adversity. When you are in serious need, whether that need is physical, relational or spiritual, you learn who you can count on. The person who is supposedly a friend but who won't go out of his way to help you is not a friend at all.

If you really love someone it is natural to help them. Back in March Toby, Anna and Ella moved into a house in Encinitas. They had movers do the big furniture pieces, but the day before that they asked if we could help them with the other stuff. I hate moving. It's just awful and it seems like it's never ending. So I said, "keep warm and well fed." No I didn't do that. We were eager to help. On my day off for hours we moved boxes and all manner of paraphernalia. The next day we called and asked, "Is there anything more we can do?" We didn't do it because we had to, we did it because we care about them and we wanted to help.

HE SACRIFICED FOR DAVID

Jonathan didn't just help David in ways that were convenient for him. He didn't check to see if his schedule was clear so helping David wouldn't interfere. He helped even when it was costly to him. He sacrificed his own right to the throne so that David could be king. But Jonathan's relationship with David cost him more than his throne. It also impacted his relationship with his father. Jonathan knew that loyalty to David would make his father angry, yet he stood up for David anyway. There was a relational cost for that decision. I know that most of you know the pain of a damaged or even broken family relationship somewhere in your

extended family. Whether it is with a spouse, parent, sibling, child, grandparent, cousin or someone more distant you quite likely have experienced the sting of a relationship that has gone sour. It feels just awful. Jonathan took David's side knowing it would fracture his relationship with his own father.

The blow up occurs in verse 30. "Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, 'You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you?'" Uh, yeah, love you too, Dad. It doesn't sound like Saul and his wife were hitting it off too well either since he called her a perverse and rebellious woman, but the main thing is that Saul was furious at Jonathan and expressed his ire quite clearly. It had to hurt Jonathan, who loved his dad.

But Jonathan even sacrificed his own safety. By this time he had no illusions about his dad's mental stability. Saul was a loose cannon. It was evident that he had more than a few screws loose, and a part of his mental illness included a volcanic temper that could erupt anytime, anywhere, at anyone, including his own son. On our recent visit to Michael and Carissa in Mississippi we got to do something that you can't do here. Because it is so wet there they don't care if you set off fireworks. You can fire off as much as you like because nothing there is going to catch on fire. Michael and Carissa wanted us to get the full Mississippi experience, so they bought a lot of fireworks for us to light off. I'm not talking about sparklers. One of the packages of fireworks described its contents as artillery shells. I have to tell you, setting those things off was fun. But once you lit that fuse you had to run to safety in a hurry. You didn't want to be standing anywhere close when that thing launched. That's what Saul was like. His fuse was lit and he could go off at any moment, and when he did it was spectacular. You didn't want to be standing anywhere close if you could help it. In verse 33 he erupted. "Saul hurled his spear at him (Jonathan) to kill him."

That's reasonable, don't you think? You are concerned that David is going to usurp your son's right to the throne so the way you deal with that is to try to kill your son. Yeah, that's just all kinds of rational. What usually happens around someone who is an emotional volcano? People tiptoe around them trying their utmost to do nothing that might cause the volcano to erupt. Jonathan knew very well that by defending David he was going to set Saul off. He also knew that his dad was just crazy enough that he might even hurt Jonathan in an outburst of anger. But he was such a friend that Jonathan stood up for his buddy anyway, even though it meant he might end up playing Dodge Spear. He put his own safety, his life, on the line in his effort to help David. He sacrificed a lot to be a friend to David.

There was one brief scene at the end of the first *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie, the good one, that depicts what Jonathan did. Captain Jack Sparrow is about to be executed as a pirate, when Will Turner steps in front of him and insists that if they want to kill Jack they'll have to kill him too. Have you ever been in a situation where a friend stepped in to defend you when to do so cost them something? It is a powerful thing. Have you ever been in a situation where a friend could have stepped in to defend you and didn't? That is also powerful, but in a negative way.

HE ENCOURAGED DAVID

We can see how encouraging it was for David throughout this ordeal to know that he wasn't alone. Jonathan was in it with him no matter what the cost. What a difference it makes when you know there's someone with you in the situation and you're not on your own.

While we were visiting Michael and Carissa we drove to Pensacola to do something they've wanted us to do with them for 3 years. We went to the Pensacola Air Show, where you can watch the Blue Angels from the beach. We headed for Pensacola Beach that Saturday morning along with a couple hundred thousand of our closest friends. We knew it would be crowded, but we had no idea. They have huge public parking lots by the beach there. We were warned they fill up by 8:30 or 9 in the morning, so we planned to get there before 8. Nice try. The lots were already full by the time we got there. We learned later they had a record crowd that day and the lots were already full at 5:45 in the morning. This is the kind of situation that I avoid religiously. They stress me out to the max. Traffic was solid stop and go, mostly stop. The police had directed people to actually park on medians on the main road, there was no place to park. Through it all I was quite calm and unworried. We weren't alone. We were with Michael and Carissa. We didn't have to deal with it ourselves and that was hugely encouraging for me. Michael is super resourceful and totally in control under pressure, so I knew he'd figure it all out. And he did. We ended up with a great parking space right next to an ideal spot on the beach and had a great day. What a difference it made just not having to deal with the situation on our own. The harder a situation gets the more important and encouraging it is to have someone with you who has your back.

But there is another instance of Jonathan's encouraging ways later in this book. In chapter 23 David is hiding from Saul when he has a hurtful and discouraging thing happen. There is a town that he fights for and saves. The people return that favor by betraying him to Saul. Saul comes after him, but so does Jonathan, and Jonathan finds him first. In verse 16-17 you can see what happened. "Saul's son Jonathan

went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in the Lord. ‘Don’t be afraid,’ he said. ‘My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father knows this.’” The New American Standard translates that “encouraged him in the Lord.”

Jonathan found David and let him know he was still in his corner. He also reminded him that he was God’s man for the throne and that God was not going to fail him. No matter what anyone tried to do, he would be safe. God would see to it that he would survive and rule. So be encouraged, you’re going to be okay.

Wouldn’t you like to be the kind of person who strengthens others? Wouldn’t you like them to feel more hopeful and stronger just because they’ve been with you? Isn’t that what a friend is for? How great to be like Barnabus, whose name meant “son of encouragement.” This guy lifted everybody up. Everyone had more hope, everyone’s spirit was lifted after they’d been with him. Now that’s the kind of friend all of us wish we had.

We have friends that we met almost 30 years ago who now live all the way across the country. We keep in touch with them through Facebook, (Laurie does). We have only seen them in person a couple of times in the past 20 years. While we were on vacation we had the chance to spend a couple of hours one afternoon with Angie, the wife. It just so happened that our visit with her coincided with a number of difficult things that happened in their lives. We had a great time with her. We didn’t try to fix any of the things that they were dealing with, we just enjoyed renewing our friendship. We were surprised to see that after our visit she posted our picture on Facebook and wrote about how we had refreshed her soul and how she loves us. Being there with her encouraged her in ways that no amount of texts or posts on Facebook ever could have. We aren’t anything special. We were just her friends who were with her.

These are the elements of real friendship. Believing in and being loyal to a person. Helping them in their time of need, even to the point of sacrifice. Encouraging them.

IMPLICATIONS

BEING A FRIEND IS A LAW

I don’t mean it’s a law in the sense of it being a rule or a legal matter, like you’ll get a citation if you don’t obey the law of being a friend. I mean a law the way gravity is a law. It’s a principle that exists whether you acknowledge it or not. You may decide you’re not going to believe in it, but you will pay the consequences if

you try to ignore it. Maybe you saw the story about skydiver and stuntman Luke Aikins, who yesterday jumped out of an airplane at 25,000 feet with no parachute and no wing suit. If he just did that because he thought the law of gravity didn't apply to him, it would have been the last thing he ever did. That law applies whether you like or not, whether you believe in it or not. He's not a total idiot so he jumped into an enormous net that cushioned his fall. He maybe isn't an idiot, but he is crazy. The point here is that the principle applies and if you ignore it you reap the consequences.

We were created to live in true friendships. Relationship is built into the human soul. It is who we are. It is a law, a divine principle. We are made with a powerful need to be connected to other people. We need friendships. That's an immutable law and if violate it you will pay a heavy price. You damage your own heart, to say nothing of how you impoverish other people.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says, "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." Those verses say we are more effective and efficient with others. We need each other to help us when we fall. We can even share resources, like warmth, and most of all, together we can stand against opposition when alone we would be overwhelmed.

Psalms 133:1 says, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity." That calls on us to live together, to have strong relationships. Notice verse 3. "It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mt. Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life evermore." Hermon is a 9000 foot high range of mountains in northern Israel where there is plentiful precipitation. Today it has the only ski resort in Israel. Zion, Jerusalem, is much more arid. The dew of Hermon pictures the precipitation of those mountain slopes falling on and bringing to life the more arid desert-like landscape of Zion. It would be like if here in SoCal we began receiving the kind of precipitation they have on the island of Oahu. The drought would be no more and the foliage would become lush and green. I know some people like desert landscapes. I commend you, if that's true of you, but it's not for me. Everybody has their own taste, and desert landscapes kind of depress me. My lawn kind of depresses me. It's barely surviving because we can't give it enough water due to drought restrictions. El Nino was going to save us last winter. Fail. Didn't happen. We need something to break the drought. The Psalmist says

when we have unified, deep friendships, that is where the Lord blesses. It breaks the drought of this broken world and brings life.

To break the drought of this often arid world, a world where our souls become parched and feel like they are dying, you need to live in relationship with others. You need people, friends. Researchers now tell us isolation and loneliness actually impact even our physical health. Psalm 133 tells us we cannot experience the life of God being the Lone Ranger. It is impossible to live the Christian life all on your own. By living in isolation we make ourselves less efficient, weaker and far more vulnerable. According to these verses if you live in isolation you will not experience God's blessing and you will not experience his life flowing through you. We all badly need friends. It's the law.

BEING A FRIEND IS OUR CALLING

As we see this friendship most of us think we would love to have a friend like Jonathan. We want someone to believe in us, to be loyal to us, to stand with us, take our side, encourage us, help us when times are hard and rejoice with us in our good times. It is not unusual to feel sorry for ourselves because we don't have friends like that. We feel hurt, maybe even think we've been given a raw deal because we want friends like that and don't have them. We think maybe other people do, but we don't. We can see all too clearly how others could be that friend to us but don't care enough to come through for us.

Jesus stated a profound principle in Matthew 16:25 when he said, "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." That is one of the most important truths we will ever encounter. Jesus said when you try to serve yourself, when your attention is aimed at making yourself happy and getting what you want, you will lose your life. It is a dead end, a life-destroying pursuit. The way to find life, to truly be human and experience life as God intended it and we long for it, is to give yourself up to serve God. That principle shows up in every aspect of life. As long as you are focusing on yourself you are killing your own soul. So as long as you are saying, "Why can't other people be the friends I want?" you are guaranteeing that you will forever be dissatisfied and unhappy. You will be negatively impacting other people as well. The only way to find life is to quit worrying about yourself and serve God by being a friend to others.

In Philippians 2:3-4 Paul wrote, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others." You will have a hard time

finding the verse in the Bible that tells you to consider yourself more important than other people and to see to it that they look after your interests.

The implication of those verses in Matthew 16 and Philippians 2 is that we should quit worrying about whether other people are the friends we wish we had. Instead we are to make the focus of our lives being the kind of friend to others that Jonathan was to David. Our concern must not be having good friends, but being a friend. To whom are you a friend like Jonathan? Who can't count on you to be there for them, to drop everything to help them in whatever way they need? Who are you encouraging?

BEING A FRIEND IS COSTLY

We should learn from Jonathan and David that it was not easy to be the kind of friend that Jonathan was. It cost him something. It took effort and it meant he gave up a lot. We should not think being a friend will always be unicorns and rainbows. It will be hard and inconvenient.

In John 15:7 Jesus said "greater love has no man than this, that he lays down his life for his friend." Within hours of saying that Jesus would exhibit the greatest love the world has ever known. He would lay his life down for his friends, as well as millions of others. Do you think that was easy? Was it convenient and enjoyable?

There is a principle that we need to remember clearly because we tend to forget it. Love is always costly. The more valuable a thing is, the more costly it will be. Laurie loves bling. I can go down to Target and buy her lots of bling for very little money. The reason is that the bling they have is not valuable, so it doesn't cost much. If I go to her favorite jewelry store suddenly the costs go way up, because the bling they have is way more valuable. Nothing is more valuable than love, which means that nothing will be more costly. To be a friend will demand that you give up self, that you lay down your life for your friend.

BEING A FRIEND REQUIRES HAVING A FRIEND

Being a friend is a costly endeavor. It is extremely difficult to be that kind of friend for someone else when we don't have it. That's why we tend to make friendship a transaction. I'll lay my life down for you to the extent that you lay your life down for me.

Michael and Carissa deal with a number of things in Mississippi that are not often, if ever, problems here. While we were there one day there was, with no warning,

no water in their house. They said this happens periodically. The water company has a pipe break, so they shut off the water with no notice, to fix it. They also have power outages due to violent weather periodically. Aren't you glad you don't live there? The last time our power went out was during the big blackout several years ago. It happens here, but not often. What if, during a blackout, a neighbor came over and said to me, "We have a lot of really expensive meat in our refrigerator that we're going to lose if we don't have power soon. Could I run an extension cord to your house and use your power?" That would be useless. I cannot give him power that I don't have. I might want to help him, but without some source providing me power I've got nothing to give him. I cannot give someone else what I don't have. Think of true, loyal, sacrificial, encouraging friendship as being a resource. If you aren't given any yourself, you can't give it to anyone else.

In order to give friendship, you need to have friendship. In order to give love, you need to have love. But this is the tricky part. Our tendency is to think we need other people to give us that love and friendship. But they have limited supply and our needs go beyond their resources. There is an old hymn called *What A Friend We Have In Jesus* that points us in the right direction.

Jesus is loyal to us. Romans 8:38-39 says nothing will ever separate us from his love. Hebrews 13:5 says he will never forsake us. No one has ever been as loyal to you as Jesus is, and no one ever will be. Jesus helped us like no one else. Our greatest need was that we were guilty before God and separated from him with absolutely no way to fix the problem. Romans 5:6 says, "when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." We were powerless, helpless to fix our greatest problems. Jesus came to our aid. You can accomplish a lot of things in life. You can become famous, powerful, rich, and talented. But none of those things will connect you with God and none of them will gain you eternal life. In fact, they won't even fill your life right now. But Jesus has helped you with all of that. Jesus has sacrificed for us like no one else. Ephesians 5:2 says "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." We have friends who have who have done some kind and wonderful things for us. But no one has ever personally died for me. That is the greatest sacrifice, and Jesus made it for us. Jesus encourages us like no one else. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 says, "May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word." God has encouraged us with eternal hope, and continually encourages and strengthens us.

In other words, Jesus has all the qualities of a friend, but to a degree that no one else ever will. Our supply of friendship and love is endless because of him. We draw from him in order to be a friend to others. There will be days when you will be tempted to go to the “what about me?” default. Recognize that’s not where God’s blessing is found, nor where life is found. Focus on how Jesus loves you, on what a friend he is, on his encouragement, on his strength that he will pour into you. Ask him to enable you to be the friend that God wants you to be, then commit yourself to giving yourself up for his glory. He is the only one who has all the resources that you need.