

Speaking to the soul



Friendship

The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense. Never abandon a friend—either yours or your father's. Proverbs 27:9-10

The writer Samuel Johnson once wrote: “Life has no pleasure higher or nobler than that of friendship.” I am sure we could all speak movingly of our friends. They are the people with whom we can laugh and cry, and be completely ourselves. It isn’t surprising that the writer of Proverbs had much to say about friendships. He recognised how important they were in a happy and fulfilling life. We see many friendships in the Bible, such as the friendship between David and Jonathan. There was an immediate bond between them when they first met, and the friendship sustained them through desperately difficult times.

Words are a crucial part of friendship, and the writer of Proverbs observed how precious the counsel of a friend is. This doesn’t mean that a friend’s words are necessarily easy to hear. They may be deeply painful, but because they are motivated by love and care, they will always be a blessing. We hear the most beautiful words of friendship spoken by Ruth to Naomi, her mother-in-law. They were very different from one another in many ways. They came from different nations and were of different generations, but Ruth, after the death of her husband, was devoted to Naomi and refused to be separated from her. She said: “Wherever you go, I will go, wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God” (Ruth 1:16). Friends will often be very similar to one another, but this beautiful story shows that friendships can cross every kind of boundary.

Just before his death, Jesus told his disciples the kind of relationship that he wanted to have with them. He said that he didn’t want to call them slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Instead, he wanted to call them friends

(John 15:15). That's how it is today, too. As we follow Jesus and are obedient to his loving commands, we are nothing less than his friends.

QUESTION

Why are your friends important to you, and in what sense do you think of Jesus as your friend?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you that you want to be my friend today, and throughout my life. Amen

