

Friendship



These two elderly hens of different cross breeds, Red (on the right) and Mate, sit together on the perch to keep each other warm through the cold nights. They are survivors. Younger hens are the egg producers now. Red is very old and has not laid an egg for years. Mate is slightly younger and has not laid for about a year—until recently!

A few weeks ago when Red was looking rather 'off colour', I decided to give her little pieces of tomato, lettuce and leftover cooked meat at lunch time to tempt her to eat. (This was when Mate joined the other hens free-ranging in our back yard.) Later in the afternoon Mate returned, immediately looked to see what Red had left and quickly devoured it.

One day I thought I would look into their nest. To my amazement there were two eggs sitting beside the plastic egg I leave there permanently. I took them. The next day I looked again, and another egg had appeared. I watched closely. A day later Mate was not in the yard but I could hear

her calling to me. I went in and she was sitting on the nest. Red was nearby.

It was not long before Mate's next egg was laid. This went on for a week or so and then the eggs slowed down and eventually stopped.



Red and Mate are friends that help each other in little ways—keeping warm at night, sharing extra food, and Mate cleaning up food crumbs on Red's face. Much of the day they do nothing particular but seem glad of the other's company.

Jesus said to his disciples in John 15:15, "I do not call you servants...but I have called you friends..." We are friends of Jesus and called to be friends of one another. To be a friend is to love another and give one's life for them, as Jesus did. For us, this may be giving up time we had planned for ourselves, to meet someone's need to be heard.

In the Aged Care facilities we often sing "What a friend we have in Jesus". It is a hymn from a former century, but it continues to remind us that we are never friendless. Jesus is our close friend who is always with us wherever we are - physically, mentally or emotionally.

When I was a child, I suddenly realised Jesus could be my friend. I quickly cultivated this new friendship by telling Jesus my latest childish jokes (scorned by the older members of my family!) as I walked home from school. To my joy, I found I could share everything with Jesus, all my inner feelings and thoughts, even later as a teenager.

To have a friend or be a friend of someone is a privilege we can develop and for which we should give thanks. It means that we are valued by another person for just being ourselves, and we in turn value, accept and respect them.

We will share things with our friends but we will not always agree with them. Yet, when discussing topics together we can be opened to a different perspective, especially when we listen respectfully and gently. We are to remember that God loves us all, and we are to love one

another.

Sometimes we may hurt, or be hurt by a friend. It does happen. In these cases, Jesus' reconciliation with Peter who denied him (John 21) can guide us on a path to reconciliation through costly acts of saying sorry and offering forgiveness.

I have a friend who attended the same kindergarten as I did. We grew up spending weekends and holiday times together. Although for many years we have lived in different States of Australia, we still keep in regular contact, appreciate each other and are grateful for our long and deep friendship.

Friendships with new people are continually made throughout our lives. Some friends may be culturally different from ourselves and can enrich and refresh our lives. Even people we know, who through illness no longer know us, can still be our friends, regularly present in our love and prayers.

When we experience and know the eternal love of God in our lives, it supports us through difficult times. In that love we are to always be ready to offer our friendship to support others, especially those who are in need and lack friends.

Red and Mate have their quaint friendship that supports them both. They have made friends in old age and are content.



May we value our friendships with Jesus and all whom we meet. Let us work at making these relationships expressions of God's inclusive love, embracing all people, old and young, sick and well, angry and happy, tired and energetic. Such love longs for everyone, to experience God's love in their lives, for ever.

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