

# *Reflections with Sharon*

## **Friendship is a blessing**

*Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4*

There's an old Arabian proverb that says, "A friend is one to whom you may 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 a breath of kindness blow the rest away."

What an absolutely fabulous feeling it is to have a friendship of mutual love and respect and trust and commitment where two people find themselves able to share their secret joys and sorrows, their dreams and aspirations, their successes and failures, their hopes and fears and their funny and embarrassing moments. But the best way to find a friend is to be a friend.

When all is well between my friends and me, the world somehow seems more beautiful, the sky bluer, the grass greener, the air fresher, and life's burdens lighter. Even when hurt crawls into our relationships and we feel the strong urge to isolate ourselves from people, spending time with others may be just what we need to pull us through the difficult times.

All of us need other people in our lives. It's just the way God made us: Everybody needs somebody. Some may have a larger capacity for friendships than others, but everyone needs at least a handful of close friends. And because friendships that are neglected or taken for granted will not grow, all parties must be prepared to invest mutual time and effort into the relationship. That's why there's usually not enough room in our lives at any one time for more than two or three close friends.

Obviously not all relationships are healthy. That's why I have learnt to make my friendships a careful, prayerful choice. I believe our close friends should be people who are linked to our destiny, people who draw us closer to our dreams, people whose lives are in sync with ours, people who are headed in the same direction with us, people who will be an asset to us and not a liability.

That's why we need wisdom and discernment to be able to identify harmful relationships that keep stifling our spiritual progress and hampering our overall growth, and to know when it's time to walk away. In a healthy relationship, each person must have the freedom to be himself and the freedom to grow to be all that God created him to be. True friends will always be more interested in what they can give rather than in what they can get out of the relationship.

I believe with all my heart that the bedrock of any healthy friendship is the application of the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you." If every one of us would treat our friends the way we want to be treated, what blessed friendships we would all have!