

How to Pray When You're Offended

Without Jesus as my Rescuer and Savior, I wouldn't have close women friendships. And every time I think the relationship won't make it, Jesus lavishes me more and more with His love. So how can I help but pursue friendships with my whole heart?

Is it possible for genuine friendships to thrive in the "me-first," competitive soil of our 21st-century culture? I've learned real friendship with women thrives when my hands are wide open as God places mercy in one and truth in the other.

Several months ago, a close friend hurt me with a short, but mindless text, and it sent me into a dark mood for some reason. For a few days, weeks even, I avoided her and turned away from being close in any capacity. The honest truth is that she made a choice that put me at the end of her list. Her choice to re-prioritize me to the bottom created a whole host of inner torment for me. I began to ask questions that were never there before, not only in that friendship but other ones, too: Is so-and-so more important than me now? Is our friendship not worth the sacrifice? Am I that easy to take for granted? What does that say about me?

After several hours of misery in every area of my life, I opened my journal and began to repent. Envy. Self-pity. Competition. Fortunately, I was able to see what I was doing and what led me there. Oh, how vulnerable I truly am!

Yet when I was brutally honest, what bothered me more than what my friend did, was how dark and competitive my heart proved to be! Frustrated with myself, this friendship and my inability to pray with a pure heart, I blurted out to God, "How on Earth can I make my way in friendship when this is how

I respond?"

My eyes fell to a passage in Colossians: "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord ..." (1:9-10).

And then in my spirit I heard God say, "Pam, each and every time you start being defensive, feeling unloved, wanting attention, questioning another friend's motives; each and every time you start comparing, measuring yourself as the better friend like flour for your best breads, begin to pray for that woman. Pray she would be filled with the knowledge of my will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

So I did. Prayer is really the only way to keep my heart pure and for any friendship to thrive. It seems when I pray several things happen.

1. Prayer creates a space. On the day I received the hurtful text, my heart felt small until I poured it all out into my journal. Through prayer, God enlarged my heart and created more space so I could pray for my friend without becoming offended. Lavish love has that kind of effect on the human heart, opening windows in our soul we didn't even realize were shut tight.
2. Prayer creates an intimacy. With the extra space in my heart, I was able to visualize an intimate friendship with several of my women friends who are near and far. Surprisingly, the friend who hurt me was in that picture—just a more realistic picture. Along with much-needed mercy, God placed truth in my hands teaching me how true intimacy is always built on what's real.
3. God's Spirit prays in us. It's true! When God's Spirit

fills me in such a disappointing time, I can sense Jesus praying with me. Nothing is too painful, nothing or no one feels too distant, or too difficult, or too separated, or too close—who cannot be reached by Jesus' healing touch.

4. Friendships are renewed. A few weeks later, my friend and I did finally connect. Although I didn't deny she hurt me, I didn't feel the need to punish her or make her pay for her wrongful actions. Because prayer cleaned out my heart, God gave me wisdom in that friendship. It was as if the incident served as my Teacher saying, "I'm sorry this happened to you but learn from it. Next time, you'll be better prepared. But don't ruin the friendship—instead, renew it."

When I brought my whole heart to God no matter its bruised and beaten state, He found a way to meet every need so I could stay close to a woman friend in my life.

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