

Who is Your Go To Team?

It happened again this morning. I came into work, Starbucks in tow, turned on my laptop, and immediately brought up my e-mail. As I scanned my inbox to see what I had missed in the 14 hours I had been away from my desk, I saw a few invitations from people who wanted to be a part of my Facebook family.

Not sure if you take part in the social networking stuff of our world like MySpace and Facebook, but in my line of work, it's downright necessary.

Besides, I have to admit that it's pretty fun to stay in touch with people and reconnect with others I haven't seen for a while. Though it's fun to dabble, I'm nowhere near the militant user that some of my friends are. I mean, let's be honest. I've got better things to do with my day than "SuperPoking" people.

Back to this morning. Like every inbox alert, this one read, "So-and-so added you as a friend on Facebook. We need to confirm that you know so-and-so in order for you to be friends on Facebook." Upon clicking the link to my profile and seeing the name and picture of the person requesting my friendship, my reaction was pretty normal: "Who is this?" No idea whatsoever. Her name and face not only didn't ring a bell, the clapper was missing. Had my life depended upon knowing this upstanding member of society, my funeral would have been five days from now.

Completely stumped, I noticed that I could click on some text to see what friends we had in common. Seeing some familiar faces, I adopted the, "Anyone who's a friend of you-know-who is a friend of mine," and accepted her friend request. In short, "so-and-so" is my friend because of "you-know-who." And the world marches on.

All text messagers of the world will immediately recognize the

truncated moniker BFF (best friends forever) that gets passed from person to person more often than the common cold. For some, it's become part of their regular sign off, like writing "sincerely" at the end of a letter. So much for exclusivity.

It's funny what we call friendship these days. Like love, the concept has been grossly watered down by our current culture. According to my Facebook profile, I have 299 of them. In all honesty, I have to stop and laugh; 299? Really? If the chips were down and I was in a tough spot, how many of them would really be able to come to my aid? I realize it's just an innocuous tool for social connection, but the whole concept of friendship is taking such a beating these days that I feel the need to defend it ... or at least recapture its glory.

Like any relationship, love and friendship become very real when they are put through the fires of trial. Friends are able to see your private persona without running for the exits. They are approachable when you are vulnerable and add their strength to yours.

They lovingly tell you what others are too scared to say. They love you for you, not what you can do for them. Friends don't want you to impress them; they only want you to be real with them. They return phone calls for help. They empathize rather than have pity. They show up when you've experienced a loss. They deal in Biblical truth over vapid clichés. They remind you of your best when you feel at your worst.

It's an unfortunate reality that all of us have those people in our lives who only skim the emotional surface. They are unable to go any deeper than making their hand into a gun and do some "air-shooting" our way when they see us, like a slick salesman saying, "Right back at ya." I pray that doesn't describe our entire battery of friends. We will be of all people most miserable.

Everyone needs a "Go To Team," as I call it. A few select

people who we know we can call on when the world is at its darkest. These are the ones you call when the test comes back positive, when you've been downsized, or when you have to decide whether the new opportunity is worth pulling your kids out of school. No amount of "foyer fluff" will help you in moments like that. We all need people who are spiritually and emotionally available. And I pray we are that for others as well. I hope you can identify your Go To Team today.

My greatest reason for defending Biblical friendship, however, is because of the incomparable companionship offered to us by the Creator of the Universe. He referred to Himself as our Friend in a very familiar passage. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business.

Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:13-15) Christ spared nothing with us—the ultimate sign of friendship. He gave, imparted, and blessed us with everything we could possibly need. In a world where friendship can be attained with two clicks, Jesus instead chose three nails.

And that's not all. Daily, He offers His presence, grace, peace, wisdom, and love if we will only receive it. I don't know about you, but sometimes it seems that my friendship with Christ is pretty one-sided. He could do a lot better than me.

Still, He smiles at my approach, glories in my triumphs, comforts me in my failures, and reminds me I am His cherished son. What could possibly be better than that? Today, the Lord sends a notice to us. He reminds us that He has added us a friend. Will we take the time to confirm our friendship, allowing Him to invest in us as we worship Him in return? Will we allow Him to be our BFF? That's a SuperPoke I can't ignore.

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