

My late friend, Chris Rainey.

Chris just appeared in my life. We were the best of friends from the start. He grew maize in his front yard, my kind of guy.

Never one to compromise himself, Chris was often thought of as off the path. But he was always thought of as a man of God. He immediately became a part of me.

When we met, I was struggling. Chris always gave me a smile. He always provided encouragement. Chris always found time to spend with me.

Dying slowly, Chris was always the optimist. We ate at places he liked trying to gain his weight. Once, Shoney's tolerated us for over four hours!

We talked about everything. We enlightened each other.

A true friend, he took my call from the ER at 2:30 am for a ride and he even fed me because I was heavily medicated. He was so pleasant.

Chris often left me envelopes of cash in my car or mailbox. He knew I was unemployed and needed groceries. I even suspected he rallied my church to help.

This hurt a lot. My lesson was humility. I told Chris one day I'd pay him back for the kindness and money. He refused me.

He explained that when helping others, do not expect anything in return. My heart sank. For me to pay him back was simple. Pay it forward.

I am once again in a huge struggle. I do not need or want help. And I continue to pay it all forward as I have been doing. But I've learned something about friendship that I didn't get before.

Friendships vary.

From Chris, I learned my love language is service. I love by helping. I will help friends without question. It's my joy.

Chris was a different kind of friend in that he only texted me to set up a time to visit me. Friends like that, I am afraid, don't exist since he died. He understood that helping involved making effort and time. To look into your eyes and to give a smile.

Chris and I talked for a long time after his first liver transplant. He described seeing life vibrantly in color for the first time in memory. He saw clearly like after a baptism. Shortly later I received word it failed and he passed.

The one question I never got to ask him was really already answered. Chris was doing as God commands us to do. He was spreading the seeds of love. Gladly.

I plan to continue his mission even if it's hard.

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