

## Wednesday Word

Proverbs 17:17- “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

I have had the same best friend since I was about 10 years old - John Hodges. He and I spent much of our time together through middle school and high school. He went to Bellarmine High School and I went to Curtis High School. He had a vastly different friend group than I had. Most of his friends were stuck in the hippie days of the 1970's (and their wardrobes and music tastes showed it) and all my friends listened to, and dressed like we listened, to 1990's grunge rock. I loved to skateboard and do outside activities, and he was an actor (Playing Harry Beaton in a stage production of Brigadoon). Although we were very different, we remained close.

We did, however, have a mutual friend we met at church who became instant friends to us both. Although all three of us were very different we found a way to bond in our middle school and early high school years. The three of us spent a lot of time together doing whatever young boys did. We had sleepovers, climbed trees, camped out, and made great memories together.

As life progressed, John and I lost touch with our friend - in fact, we have spent most of our adult life wondering what happened to him. John and I had some darker days but found it best to get right with God and get back on track. Our other friend, however, took a very different path. He ended up paralyzed from the waist down in an accident and did time in federal prison for drug running. Neither of us knew this until we made contact out of the blue with him from a random Facebook post. When we finally connected it was in many ways a sigh of relief to know what happened to our old friend. He was very open about his struggles and was very interested in the godly path John and I chose. All in all, it was great to connect with him.

What I realized was that my life is a testimony. I had that friend (I am leaving his name out) who made some poor choices and reaped the fruit of those choices. He saw John and my life and how our choice for Jesus really shaped the healthy lives we have today. Before last week neither John nor I had spoken to him for at least 25 years, but as soon as we did speak, it was as if no time had passed at all. The bond of childhood held strong.

Throughout our lives we make friends and build relationships and don't really think much of it. People come and go and weave in and out of our lives. I remember seeing people at my high school graduation and never seeing them again. God has a plan for the relationships of believers. People who follow Jesus have a divine assignment on all our relationships. The best vehicle to spread the good news of Jesus is through relationships.

When you look at your relationships that you have, are they in a place where God can use them, to spread the gospel? The question I ask myself is have I used my relational equity in

certain relationship to speak into their lives with the truth of the gospel? It was very simple to share Jesus with this friend last week who desperately needed hope and forgiveness.

And God used the memories of our youth to remind this person that there was a way of life that offered fulfillment and eternal hope through Jesus.

Let's not take our relationships for granted!

I Love You and God Loves You!

Pastor Eric Lundbergh