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Someone asked Mom and Pop Raney, beloved favorites of students at Baylor Univ., "Are you rich?" "Yes, we're rich!" they exclaimed in unison. "Rich in friendships."

Actually the Raneys are extraordinary people with an ordinary income who have grasped opportunities of service to college people through dinners, parties, and such. Having helped scores of young people sway from home, they are among the world's wealthiest in their number of friends. And all of us know of the fine young couple in our church who have done the same thing for many of our young service men who have been away from home. Often, we need a friend more than we need financial help.

Money cannot buy the "solid-gold" friends who stand by when we are in trouble. An unknown writer has said, "A friend is the first person who comes in when the whole world goes out."

A priceless reward of suffering and sorrow is their revelation of loyal friends. When we swoop into the depths and somebody slips in to share our burden, we doubly appreciate the wealth of our friendship bank, for it has created a valuable checking account.

We can take Polonius's advice to Laertes in Shakespeare's tragedy, HAMLET: "Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel."

After all, what greater wealth can we hope to create than friends? Whatever losses and crosses fate deals, true friends are the real wealth.

*a poet expresses thanks for us:
poem
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WE CAN ALL BE WEALTHY

Prov. 18:24

Hymn: "What A Friend We Have in Jesus"

Prayer: Thank God for the precious gift of friend
Ship.

How many of us have said sometime, "I wish I were wealthy?" You may have believed your wish were an impossible one, but it's nearer than you think. Great wealth in houses and lands and oil and stocks and bonds may be out of reach, but we can be wealthy in our friendships. If we cultivate this art, we can say along with Shakespeare, "I am wealthy in my friends."

None of us is poor if we have a friend. And none of us is so wealthy in material things that we are not poor if we are without friends. Beyond all other wealth is the attachment we form to noble souls who warm our lives.

Since friends are such desirable wealth, we want to consider a few definitions of friendship. One writer expressed it thus, "A friend is for you under any circumstances."

"Friendship is one soul in two bodies," one other states.

The Bible says, "A friend loveth at all times."

Whatever our favorite definition of friendship may be, it will pay dividends for us to read what the writer of Proverbs said showing us how to have this wealth: "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

As we grow older, each of us feels an increasing need and a dependence upon friends. Those who are wealthy in their friendships are cheerful, outgoing personalities more interested in others than in themselves. Their greatest happiness comes in doing something to lift a troubled heart or to share the mountain peaks of success and joy friends have climbed. What water is to a living fish and sun is to a growing plant, encouragement is to friendship.

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The other part of our Scripture says, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." That friend of course is God. Earthly friends are wonderful, but no blessing known to man is so pure and satisfying as this beautiful friendship with Jesus. Have we felt the touch of His hand on ours? If we have come to know Him thru His redemptive blood, He will share our sorrows and joys. And He never checks on the car we ride in, our house number, the name of our street, our bank account. Even those stricken with poverty can have this unparalleled wealth. Eagerly Christ awaits a closer walk with us. He's "the lily of the valley."

*Solo - "The Lily of the Valley" -
- Poem -*

" The most wonderful thing in this world is to have
A friend, who you know understands,
Who shows it in eyes and who lists it in voice,
Who throbs it in grasp of his hand.

Who shares of his portion and asks not return,
Be it wealth, be it love, be it power,
Such a friend has a worth beyond wealth of this earth---
A solace in life's darkest hour."

Carleton E. Knox

Jan. 16, 1962

W.M.U. Seaside Group Mtg., S.N.B.C.

Introduction

Friends laugh and play together, sharing joys, successes, goals and ideas; but good friends are also there with us to share sorrows, losses, burdens, and problems.

In the following scripture passage a paralyzed man is healed by Jesus as a result of the faith of his friends.

Friends

Friends always show their love. What are brothers for if not to share trouble?

Proverbs 17:17

A Friend Brought to Jesus

One day when Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of the Law were sitting there who had come from every town in Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. The power of the Lord was present for Jesus to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a bed, and they tried to carry him into the house and put him in front of Jesus. Because of the crowd, however, they could find no way to take him in. So they carried him up on the roof, made an opening in the tiles, and let him down on his bed into the middle of the group in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw how much faith they had, he said to the man, "Your sins are forgiven, my friend."

The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees began to

say to themselves, "Who is this man who speaks such blasphemy! God is the only one who can forgive sins!"

Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Why do you think such things? Is it easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? I will prove to you, then, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, pick up your bed, and go home!"

At once the man got up in front of them all, took the bed he had been lying on, and went home, praising God. They were all completely amazed! Full of fear, they praised God, saying, "What marvelous things we have seen today!"

Luke 5:17-26

Jesus Talks to His Friends

"My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you. The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them. And you are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I heard from my Father. You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures. And so the Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name. This, then, is what I command you: love one another."

John 15:12-17

