

Making Friends

Beyond Loneliness to Rich
Relationships

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We were young and naïve and excited about the adventure ahead. My husband Steve had finally finished medical school (Hurrah!) and we were bound for Seattle. We packed up our little family, said tearful goodbyes to our friends and family in Indianapolis, buckled our toddlers in the backseat, and drove off blowing kisses. We'd heard about Seattle's splendor: the snowcapped mountains, the sparkling Puget Sound, and the greenest green you've ever seen. And to think—we were actually going to live there! We'd find a good church, meet new friends, and have family picnics in lush parks overlooking the water.

We moved into our rental house, and Steve began his internship, the final year of his training. That first week he worked one hundred twenty hours. (There are laws now protecting interns and their patients from these long hours—but there weren't then.) As the weeks passed and his hours didn't change, I realized that Steve was not going to be able to explore Seattle, spend time with us, go to church, or want to have new people over. When he wasn't working, there was only one thing he wanted to do: SLEEP.

Alone with two little boys, I waited for the skies to clear so that I could take them outside to play. At first they pressed their little hands and noses against the window, waiting for the sun as we sang: *Rain, rain, go away—come again another day*. But that September the rain fell as in the days of Noah. Soon the gray in my soul surpassed the gray outside our window.

When our need is not so great, it is easy to neglect friendship, to think we can thrive without it. But it is

a lie to believe we can go it alone, that we can thrive apart from community. Many of us live in ever-increasing isolation, far from family, often hesitant to reach out, and we suffer—because we go against the grain of how God made us.

Often we are most open to hearing from God when our need is intense. The lessons he taught me about friendship during that hard year have led to rich and enduring relationships that have strengthened my soul for more than forty years.

It Is Not Good for Us to Be Alone

Men and women are created in the image of God. Just as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have always been in a joyful relational dance—creating the world, glorifying one another, and loving one another—so, likewise, we are relational. When God created Adam and said, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18), he wasn’t just talking about marriage, but about the deep need he put within each of us for fellowship with God and one another. Without God we will perish, without one another we will struggle to thrive, becoming irritable and weary, perhaps not even realizing why. When my only company was two little boys under three, my irritability rose to previously unknown heights. I snapped at Steve and our sons for the smallest infractions. I moped and cried. I nagged Steve mercilessly, demanding he find a way to “beat the system,” so that he could be home with us. I was living out the portrait of the