

TRUE FRIENDSHIP

WALKING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

VAUGHAN ROBERTS

10 Publishing
a division of **10** of those.com

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	9
INTRODUCTION	11
CHAPTER 1 True Friendship is Crucial	15
CHAPTER 2 True Friendship is Close	29
CHAPTER 3 True Friendship is Constant	43
CHAPTER 4 True Friendship is Candid	55
CHAPTER 5 True Friendship is Careful	67
CHAPTER 6 True Friendship is Christ-centred	79
END NOTES	93

INTRODUCTION

'I'LL BE THERE FOR YOU'

Friends, the sitcom featuring six single people in their 20s living in New York, attracted huge audiences when it was first aired from the mid 1990s, and is still shown almost continuously on satellite channels throughout the world. What explains this phenomenal success? Perhaps the answer is found in the title of its theme song: 'I'll Be There For You'. Those words capture the dreams of a generation. David Schwimmer, one of the actors, has commented: 'It's a fantasy for a lot of people – having a group of friends who become like family.'¹

For many that is all it is: a fantasy. Twenty per cent of adults admit to feeling lonely at any time and the same percentage say they have no friend with whom to discuss a personal problem.² Commenting on this widespread sense of isolation, Mother Teresa, who spent her life working with destitute

people in Calcutta, said that the worst disease was not leprosy, AIDS or cancer, but loneliness.

It may be that as you begin this book you are painfully conscious of a lack of close friends. That has been my experience at times in the past, but my life has been immeasurably enriched and strengthened by deepening friendships in recent years. I should say right at the start that I claim no great wisdom on this subject and still consider myself a novice. I am hugely grateful for all I have learnt from the many friends who have loved me patiently and lived life alongside me. Even those who are most naturally gifted at friendship would say that they are still learning as together we sit under God's teaching in the Bible. My aim in this book is, therefore, certainly not to pass on my own thoughts on the subject, but to present wisdom from the Bible. All of us, whether we feel lonely or enjoy many close relationships, need to hear its challenge to live intimately connected lives, and how to give to and receive from others in that context.

A PLEA FOR PRAYERFUL READING

I am passionate about the subject of this book, both because of my own personal experience and, above all, because of the importance it is given in the Bible. I have deliberately kept the material as brief as possible to make it accessible, so it might be possible for you to read it in little more than an hour. Having said that, I hope you will give more time to it than that. You will gain most from the book if you pause to think and pray as you read. The questions at the end of each chapter are designed to help you do this, whether individually or with others.

It will soon become clear that I am writing with followers of Jesus Christ especially in mind, but I hope that some who would not call themselves Christians will also read this book. If that is you, I trust you will find some insights that will help you in your friendships, but my greatest longing is that you will come to enjoy what Christians believe is by far the greatest friendship of all: a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Vaughan Roberts