

# FOCUS ON FAITH

## FRIENDS

I must admit that I never did get into the TV comedy "Friends" that recently finished its series. I don't know why but for some reason it never really grabbed my attention although I know a lot of people who couldn't go a whole week without watching it. I even know some who enjoyed it that much that they've gone out and bought the videos. Maybe it was the humour or just "people watching" the relationships and how they developed, or didn't, that took people's interest.

Programme makers often say that drama mirrors reality but I wonder if that's entirely true. Of course a lot of what we see on TV or in films is based on real life and does reflect some people's views and attitudes. Sadly judging by the reaction to TV "soaps", many people seem to think they are actually real and that they provide an example for us to follow. And now reality programmes are all the rage (that wasn't meant to be a comment on Hell's Kitchen) and it seems anything goes on "Big Brother". It puts me in mind of Andy Warhol's quote about everyone being famous for 15 minutes – or should it be infamous?

The Bible has a lot to say about friendship – it's often called "**fellowship**" – and Jesus himself said that his Disciples were his friends rather than his servants. In Romans 5:10 the Apostle Paul tells us, "**we have been reconciled (fellowship and friendship has been restored) with God through Jesus' death**".

And this restoration isn't just about being tolerated by God either. When someone has let us down and asks for our forgiveness it's easy to accept the apology and say the words, but often the relationship remains on the cool side. "*Once bitten, twice shy*" – we won't let them get close enough to hurt us again. But God's not like that. He doesn't treat us as casual acquaintances but as close and trusted friends.

In any relationship though there are two parties. I wonder what your relationship with God is like. You see He's extended His hand of forgiveness to us and He wants us to develop a relationship with Him but we have to do our part. For some of us all God gets are weekend visitation rights – an hour's appointment slot in our diaries or electronic organisers. Yet He's

interested in our every activity, difficulty, conversation, celebration and thought.

Of course it's good to go to church and have fellowship both with God and other people, but I believe God is looking for a 24/7, 365 relationship with us – His most valuable creation, made in His own image.

But you don't have to go to a specific place or building, get away in splendid isolation in a remote location or follow some ancient mystical ritual to meet with God.

The Bible says in Psalm 139 that there's nowhere we can go (or hide) from God's presence. Nowhere is closer to God than where you are right at this moment! The prophet Jeremiah said that when we seek God with all of our heart, we will be found by God (Jeremiah 29:12).

Can I really have friendship with God? Of course you can.

The Bible says that "**we can approach with confidence**" (see Hebrews 4:16) because God is always willing to receive us. His love for us was demonstrated through the sacrificial death of Jesus – that's how much He loves us!

If you'd like to find out more about the real, radical Christian faith, log on to [www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk](http://www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk) which has details of local Christian Churches and contact details.



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