



the experience

Do People come into our lives for a reason?

Text: "The evil you planned to do to me has by God's design been turned to good that he might bring about the deliverance of numerous people."

Genesis 50: 15-21

Do people come into our lives for a reason?

A pastor was locked outside her car. She had taken a coat hanger from a friend to break in but she did not know how.

She looked at the hanger and said, "I don't know how to use this." She bowed her head and asked God to send her help. Within five minutes a beat up old motorcycle pulled up, with a dirty, greasy, bearded man who was wearing an old biker skull rag on his head.

The pastor thought, "This is who You sent to help me?" But, she said "I know God sends people into our lives for a reason, and so she was also very thankful. The man got off of his cycle and asked if he could help. She said, "Yes, my daughter is very sick. I stopped to get her some medication and I locked my keys in my car. I must get home to her. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?" He said, "Sure." He walked over to the car, and in less than a minute the car was open. She hugged the man and through her tears she said, "Thank You So Much! You are a very nice man."

The man replied, "Lady, I am not a nice man. I just got out of prison today. I was in prison for car theft and have only been out for about an hour." The pastor hugged the man again and with sobbing tears cried out loud, "Oh, Thank you God! You sent me a Professional!"

Perhaps you have lost a spouse through separation or divorce. Perhaps you have lost a friend and you really are at a loss as to why. Could it be that they came into your life for a reason? Could it also be that relationship ended for a reason, perhaps because the first reason was over? If so, is this process possibly connected to divine Direction?

This is a good question if we are a person of faith, for if we lose the friendship of someone we loved we want to know why. I, like you perhaps, have had what I thought was a wonderful friendship but that friendship was suddenly brought to an end. And I had a hard time dealing with that because it was painful. But if I could see that that person was a person God sent into my life for a purpose, then I could deal with it better, especially when it ended.

There is a popular quote out on the internet that says that people come into our lives for a reason, for a season or a lifetime.

Alvin Romer writes: "When someone is in your life for a REASON, it is usually to meet a need you have expressed. They have come to assist you through a difficulty, to provide you with guidance and support, to aid you physically, emotionally or spiritually. They may seem like a godsend and they are. Then, without any wrongdoing on your part, or at an inconvenient time, this person will say or do something to bring the relationship to an end. Sometimes they die, or fade into anonymity. Sometimes circumstances dictate that they go in another direction leaving you to wonder; sometimes they walk away, uncaring and unwilling. Sometimes they act up and force you to take a stand. What we must realize is that our need has been met, our desire fulfilled, their work is done."

One of the greatest stories ever told in sacred literature is the story of Joseph.

Joseph's brothers resented Joseph because he was gifted, somewhat conceited and he was his father's favorite. That combination of factors led to a decision by his brothers to kill him and blame his death on an attack by a wild animal. They hatched a plot and Reuben intervened and asked them instead to sell him to slave traders who took him to Egypt. In Egypt, Joseph rose to second in command under the Pharaoh. In that position he

developed a strategy to defend against famine. He created large granaries and stored corn for 7 years of plentiful harvests. Then the famine came and everyone who had not prepared for the famine (which was the entire Middle East) became dependent upon the huge storehouses in Egypt, including the brothers of Joseph.

Hearing there was corn in Egypt they came to Egypt to buy corn and encountered their brother who they did not recognize. When he revealed himself to them they became afraid because after all they had wanted to kill him. They expected no mercy from Joseph. But Joseph was a great spirit and forgave his brothers saying that the evil they had planned for him God had turned for their good and the good of numerous people.

In other words Joseph had come into the lives of his brothers for a reason- actually to save their lives and the lives of countless others.

Note too that Joseph's brothers were in *his* life for a reason. He would never have got to Egypt without them and the Middle East would never have been saved from the deadly famine.

Romer also argues that people come into our lives **for a season**. He says:

“They may only be there for a short period of time based on premeditated agendas; they may have motives that are not condoned by you, or because your turn has come to share with them in growing or learning new initiatives for the future. If all things are good, they may bring you an experience of peace, or make you laugh. They may introduce you to new routines and techniques that you have never experienced. They usually give you an unbelievable amount of joy. Believe it, it is real. But only for a season -- they move on. Why does this happen? This situation usually deals with those that are going through changes, can't cope with certain situations that cause them to step outside of comfort zones, or are unwilling to take chances. Other seasonal folk readily recognizes their own kind, and will not hesitate to cut you loose.”

Joseph also had **seasonal** people in his life. His slave master Potophar had a wife who began a relationship with Joseph, most probably as a friend. But

then one thing led to another and she wanted more than just friendship and when he could not give her a sexual relationship, she cut him loose with a vengeance, falsely accusing him and making sure that if she could not have him, no one else would either, and off to jail Joseph went. In jail Joseph came across another seasonal friend, the butler to the Pharaoh. The friendship grew around dreams and the Butler promised to remember Joseph before Pharaoh, and when his jail season was over he forgot Joseph. Joseph, you see, was of no more use to him, that was until the Pharaoh had troubling dreams and then the butler remembered Joseph, who was still rotting in prison all this time. Then the seasonal friend remembered Joseph's skills. The butler was seasonal- he used Joseph when he needed him.

Have you ever had someone who needed to use you or your talents and then when they had got what they wanted walked out of your life? These are the seasonal folks, but even *they* are in our lives for a reason . For Joseph would not have got to the Pharaoh without that butler's testimony.

Romer has a third category *friends for life!* This is what he says about them.

LIFETIME relationships are harder to recognize for the moment, but with time can be the best choice you can make. But how many people do you know who are willing to persevere for the long haul? Find one and I guarantee you will have him or her as someone trustworthy. Life timers teach you lifetime lessons, things you must build upon in order to have a solid emotional foundation. They accept you for who you are, do not prematurely judge you, do not have any inhibitions about taking chances for the betterment of the relationship, and surely feel that compatibility is something that is assessed as you go, not at the spur of the moment. They don't adhere to conditions and will be there for you during the zero hour.

(I know of a friend like this just at the moment. He has been there for a friend who is now in a coma. He has been a friend for life and he will be there at his bedside until either he lives or dies.)

As Romer says;

"There's GOT to be something that you can learn from this type of person.

Our job is to accept the lesson, love the person, and put what you have learned to use in all other relationships and areas of your life. This is Agape Love that at its core is the type of love that God has for us. We need to thank all the people we have met in our lifetime who have lent us their ears, allowed us to belong, gave us love and let us love them back.”

One of the best examples of this in the Hebrew scripture is found in the relationship between David and Jonathan. At the risk of his life Jonathan is faithful to David at the zero hour. He truly loved David and sacrificed his royal position as the heir apparent to the Kingdom. He died as David’s best friend and the keeper of David’s secrets. David did not forget Jonathan but raised up Jonathan’s only relative from poverty to prominence after Jonathan’s death. David knew that Jonathan was a friend for life.

I have been greatly blessed to have friends for life. For me they make the world go round. They are very precious indeed! Do you have friends like this? if so thank God for them. They are the spice of life!

People often say that a true friend for life is relatively rare, perhaps only 3 or 4 in a life time.

But where the problems come in relationships I find, is when we mistake a friend *for a reason* or a *friend for a season* for a *friend for life*. That special someone we fell in love with and married and then after a few years or even before that, we discover to our dismay that our lover is a friend for a season and no more. Suddenly they are gone from our lives. If we have thought that they were a friend for life, we can, because of our grief, go into victim-hood.

When a friendship comes to an end I think it is very healthy and an act of faith **to look at what happened in a spiritual way**. Was this person a friend for a reason? What did we learn from them? Did they come into our lives to teach us where our boundaries were? Did they come into our lives to steer us away from a course of action that would have been tragic in our future? What did we learn before they moved on?

Yes Joseph's brothers hated Joseph and threw him out of their lives. They were not having this reason thing. He had no purpose they thought, but God had other ideas and years later they saw the plan as Joseph saved their lives and the life of their father. But let's note another thing: **Joseph was a friend for life.** He did not give up on his brothers. He did much later turn the tables on them and let them know that what they did was wrong and that they were now in his power. But Joseph had boundaries and he was fair. Joseph also did right by the whole of the Middle East as well. He could have gone into the victim thing but he did not. Instead he chose to love at the zero hour.

That I think is what God is like. That is why the Muslims are always saying that God is merciful. That is why The Christians say that if we love we know God because God is unconditional love.

Jesus had friends that came into his life for a reason and for a season -in fact all of his disciples were seasonal friends. When the going got tough at the zero hour they all bailed. Jesus did not bail, but loved them all to the end. Jesus died alone without his male friends, but his women friends did not bail. They were there while he died till the very last and were the first at the tomb on the day of resurrection.

I think that it is perfectly normal to have friends that come into our lives **for a reason.** I think that it is perfectly normal to have **friends for a season.** It is also a privilege to have and **become a friend for life.**

Friendships for life will give us the richest experiences of being fully alive! Its about love, laughter, being there through thick and thin, staying beside a person in a situation of conflict when all appears lost.

I wonder what our world would be like if every person would do an act of friendship every day? What would our cities be like? What would our schools be like if we made it a priority to brighten someone else's day to be a friend when no one else cares?

Pauline Burgard was a school bus driver . In her 4th year of driving an eight year old boy called Charlie was on her bus every day. If there was trouble on the bus he was always behind it. No matter how Pauline spoke to him,

either gently or firmly, Charlie would never say a word. He would just stare at her with his big grey eyes.

Pauline found out that his father was dead and that he did not live with his mother, so she decided to cut him some slack. She thought this boy needs a friend and so she would greet him cheerfully each day and when she passed him by in the aisle she would gently touch him on the shoulder to let him know she cared. There was never a response only the big grey eyes would stare.

At the end of that year the kids on the bus gave Pauline a small trophy inscribed with the words *to the best bus driver ever*. Pauline propped it on the dashboard and on top she placed a small tin heart that a little girl had given her in which she had written in red paint; "I love Polly and Polly loves me."

On the next to last day of school Pauline was held up talking to the principal and the children had all boarded the bus. However the little tin heart was missing from the trophy.

"Does anybody know what happened to the little tin heart that was up here?" Pauline asked.

For once on the bus there was total silence from the 39 children. One boy piped up: "Charlie was the first one on the bus. I bet he took it!"

The other children formed a chorus; "Yeah he did it, search him!" Charlie spoke: "I don't know what you are talking about. Standing up he took a few pennies and a small ball out of his pockets; "See I don't have it!"

Pauline asked him to come forward. Charlie's eyes glowered. She stuck her hand into one pocket. Nothing. Then she reached into the other pocket. Then she felt it- the familiar outline of the small heart. Charlie stared at her, those big grey eyes had no plea for mercy. He was expecting the usual from the world that he had known.

Then Pauline decided to do something that would make her a friend of this small boy for life.

She was about to pull the tin heart from his pocket when she stopped herself. **Let him keep it** a voice seemed to whisper. "It must have fallen off before I got here" she said to the kids. "I'll probably find it at the bus depot."

Charlie never said a word.

That summer Charlie moved away and she lost contact with him. Eventually she retired but a dozen years later she was in Kansas City when a balding man approaching middle age accosted her and said "Are you Polly?"

She recognized the big grey eyes immediately. "Charlie?" she said. He told her that he was living in Montana and doing well. Then to her surprise he hugged her and after he had let go he pulled something that he had carried in his pocket everyday for life; an old key chain with a little tin heart on it which said "I love Polly and Polly loves me."

And then he said "**You were the only one who kept on trying.**"

That is what 'friends for life' do, and when we do **that**, we are most like God, who never gives up on us; who brings people into our lives for a reason; for a season, and for life!