



The Branches

Volume 5 ■ Number 3
January 2009 ■ Winter

Priceless Friendships

The official theme for January is entitled “Encouraging and Supporting One Another as Christian Women.” As Christian women, we have a built-in foundation for friendships with one another. God mercifully provided us with His Word to draw from, study together, and live in. When a joy or hardship arises, another Christian woman can reinforce proper attitudes and bear burdens alongside.

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11). How valuable is that friend who knows just what to say when! And yet, even when a friend doesn’t know what to say, her mere presence is a blessing. This presence can surpass miles of distance—sometimes she simply answers the phone when needed the most. She gives just a touch of sympathy and then some decent perspective and Bible-based encouragement and advice...what an incredible blessing we have in the company of those who are like-minded.

Ecclesiastes 4 describes this more poetically. “Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls, For *he has* no one to help him up” (verses 9–10). And there is more following those verses, but I will leave that for you to look up...with a friend.

We can gather friends somewhat as we would gather stones from a beach to take home. We can—and should—be selective (this is not to mean close-minded). We don’t choose stones that are dull and lifeless. In friends, we may look for those who have personalities that are interesting, beautiful, pleasing, uplifting. A person who makes a habit of dragging us down, criticizing and gossiping, is not a friend. A person who doesn’t try to reciprocate a positive, at-least-attempting-to-persevere Christian joy at times, may not be a positive friend either.

Women of all ages share more in common than they realize—especially Christian women. Restricting friendships to our equivalent age-group cheats us of very rich and rewarding relationships. Maturity levels in all age groups vary, experiences vary, wisdom varies, perspective and advice varies. Different times in our lives may require different friends to help us through. Once we know these women well enough—the ones that we know we can lean on and trust, that are like-minded spiritually—even without talking to them, we can hear what they would say to help straighten out a flagging attitude and give direction.

In this issue you will hear from others just like you—women who share in the same thoughts and victories and struggles that you do. We’ll hear their thoughts on Mary and Martha, Elizabeth, ways we can be supportive to other women, opportunity to connect with others, and more. Enjoy!

—Abby Matzke, Immanuel, Mankato, MN

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***Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.
And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.***

—Ecclesiastes 4:12