

Make a new friend today

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

With the first day of school, we return to familiar places and faces. It's comfortable to be with people we know. It's fun to hear what they did this summer and tell them what we did. Maybe we're in a tight group of friends, have our own little clique. Maybe we have only one or two best friends. It's easy to be with people who know us and accept us for who we are.

But what about the new person or the one who doesn't quite fit in with any group? Do we ignore people we don't know? Are we so busy with our life that we don't notice what's going on with other people around us? What if we are the outsider and feel ignored or left out?

There's a beautiful verse (Psalm 68:6), "God setteth the solitary in families." Divine Love is all-inclusive. No one is isolated or left out of God's family. God has a plan for each one of His beloved children to bring them into contact with others to bless, protect and uplift them. God doesn't have an in-group and an out-group. All that turn to God are taken under His sheltering wing and nurtured until they are ready to respond to His plan of love.

It takes humility to respond to God's love. Selfishness, pride and fear make it seem so much easier to shut others out, justify excluding them. It takes unselfishness to make the time to get to know someone. It takes courage to overcome a fear of talking to people we don't know. It takes a willingness to find good in another even when they don't see it in themselves.

Jesus told his students, "love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." (John 13:34,35) Jesus talked to everyone. He didn't pre-judge people by their occupation, past behavior, race, etc. Where others saw a flawed human being, Jesus saw a perfect child of God. His willingness to speak to people that others shunned or avoided resulted in lives healed and saved.

Can't we resolve to do the same to some degree? What if each one of us prayed before we go to work or school to love someone today as Jesus loved us? What if we prayed to speak to just one person that we don't know and have them feel appreciated and included? What if we prayed to make one new friend today? What a blessing this would be! Ever widening circles of Christly love would start to wash away walls of separation. And when you need to feel loved and included, God will meet your need as you have met the need of others.

One year in grade school I was going through a very difficult time. In the third school that year, I had no energy left to try and make friends yet again. But a mentally retarded girl ignored my lack of responsiveness and insisted on befriending me. While others excluded and harassed her, she reached out over and over again to me. Her friendship helped me out of a deep hole. Truly it was an example of God setting the solitary (me) in families (interacting with other kids again). Others started to defend and befriend her as well.

Let us be disciples of Christ and love more than just our friends. What blessings this will bring to us and others.

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