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**THROUGH THICK AND THIN**

***Richard Fox***

We can have lots of friends these days on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and many other types of social media. But how many of them could you truly call your friend, your mate, your bff?

There are over 2 billion people on Facebook and people have on average, 338 Facebook friends. But how many of them could you truly rely on, or talk honestly and deeply to? How many would you do that for?

I’ve had different friends at different stages in life. Family friends, school friends, work and sport friends. I’ve found that the best friends are the ones that get you. The ones who have been around you enough to know who you really are, and like being with you, even when you’re at your worst. The best friends are the friends who take the time to be with you, listen to you and enjoy your company. And most importantly, are honest enough to tell you how it is, say sorry when they muck up and forgive you when you do.

I love the story of friendship between two people called Peter and Jesus. Peter was a rugged and brash fisherman and he made a living from it by the sea of Galilee. One day, Jesus was walking along the shore and saw Peter and his brother fishing. Jesus spoke with them and called them to follow him. Peter was instantly engaged with Jesus and followed him. They became great friends and did lots together. They travelled to many different places and had great conversations. They experienced many challenges on their journey and also many amazing experiences. They saw people being healed and many other miracles. They even walked on water together. They had the best friendship. Even to the point that Peter said that Jesus was the greatest person who had ever lived.

But even the best friendships can have rocky moments.

When friendships are going well you can’t imagine that it would ever fall apart. But when trouble comes, the shock of a split can be too much. So how can you keep your friendships strong? Here’s more on the story of Peter and Jesus. They were inseparable and Peter declared that he would stay with Jesus no matter what.

At this high point of their friendship, Jesus let Peter know that he was going to die soon. Jesus even said how Peter would deny that he knew him, 3 times. This troubled Peter who declared that was not going to happen.

Soon after this, Jesus was arrested by the authorities on trumped up charges. He was taken away to be tried in an unfair court and sentenced to death.

Peter followed closely behind until he was confronted by the crowd - the same crowd that wanted Jesus to die on the cross. This was going to be a major test of their friendship. What would Peter do?

The crowd asked Peter if he was a follower of Jesus which he denied. They asked again if Peter knew Jesus and again he denied it. They asked a third time and he boldly and defiantly denied that he ever knew Jesus. At that moment, a rooster crowed and reminded Peter of his conversation with Jesus and how he said he would never deny Jesus. Peter was racked with guilt and fled. At the moment Jesus needed Peter the most, Peter had let him down.

Have you ever had a moment like that with a friend? Even a friendship that has been built over many years and experiences can be broken so quickly and easily. Jesus was eventually sentenced to death, even though he had done nothing wrong. Jesus died alone and Peter was left in his guilt. But that’s not how the story ends

Jesus miraculously rose from the dead 3 days later. One of first things he did was go to find his friends. But what would he say to Peter? And what was Peter going to do when he saw Jesus? Would Jesus tell him off, ask him why he didn’t help him? Would Peter avoid him, too ashamed to face him?

Jesus found Peter back fishing again. He walked up to Peter and invited him to breakfast where they sat down together to eat. Over breakfast, Jesus asked Peter 3 questions about their friendship. “Peter, do you love me?” he asked, to which Peter replied, “you know that I love you.” Jesus asked the question again, “Peter, do you love me?” to which Peter more boldly replied, “Yes, you know that I love you.” And echoing the 3 times that Peter denied knowing Jesus, Jesus asked him the same question again, “Do you love me?” to which Peter responded deeply, “you know all things, you know that I love you.”

Jesus did this with Peter to forgive Peter and for their friendship to be restored. Their friendship was actually strengthened as a result of this journey and they remained best friends forever. Jesus was better than a good friend to Peter. He was his best friend. Jesus can be your best friend too.

For more about how Jesus can be your best friend go to messagesofhope.org.au where you can order a free booklet about prayer. Or call 1800 353 350. You’ll discover how you can talk to God as a best friend.

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