

RELATIONSHIPS

Both my mother and I had friends growing up who became like another sister in the family. And when my children were growing up, there were several of their friends who referred to me as their "other mother." Relationships grow with time and significant events.

We see this with Jesus and His disciples. He first called them to follow Him; then He named them apostles and sent them out (Luke 6:13). Just before He was betrayed, He gave them still another title. "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). To go from a servant to a friend is a big jump. It indicates greater confidence and intimacy. As Jesus said, a friend is privy to the family's business while a servant is not.

But there was an even greater step in the relationship between Jesus and His people. On the day of His resurrection, when He appeared to the two Marys who had gone to the tomb, Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Matt. 28:10). Prior to this, He had not called them His brothers.

Granted everyone in Israel was a "brother" in that they were all descended from the family of Jacob. But it was only after Jesus' resurrection that He became "the firstborn of many brethren" (Rom. 8:29) because He was the "firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18). He initiated a new race of redeemed humanity in which all who put their trust in Him are brought into the very family of God. Now we not only know the family's business, but we are involved in it; we inherit it. Indeed, we inherit everything Jesus inherits, as we become "joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

Human friendships seldom go this far. I suppose some close friends may be included in a family's business and inheritance, but not many. My mother's friend Hazel did not receive anything by way of inheritance from my grandparents. (I'm not sure there was any inheritance as they were not well off.) My friend Carol did receive an item from my parents' household when Mom broke up housekeeping, but that was all.

I am continually astounded by how much more God does than we humans do. In creating a whole new family that we can be part of, He has certainly done "exceedingly abundantly beyond all we ask or think" (Eph.3:20). And yet there is still more. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9). What a blessing to be a friend who becomes a family member!