

LETTING PEOPLE GO

I think that one of the hardest things that we sometimes have to do as believers in Yahweh is to release people from the bonds of friendship. Did you ever find yourself giving people not just second chances, but 150 second chances or maybe more? I take friendship very seriously and I will stand by a friend through thick and thin. The only thing that I require is that the friend does the same, or at least tries to do the same.

I've had a friend, a brother in Yeshua, for many years. We went through some of the most difficult times when churches were falling apart and friends walked away from us because we stood for righteousness. The thing about this friend is that I always wondered if he took our friendship as seriously as I took it. Judging by the fruit that he manifests, I finally came to the conclusion that he didn't have a fidelity for true friendship. There were tons of times when he said that he'd be around when we made appointments to fellowship; but he would never show. There would never be an apology for these actions. He would always say that he would call and never would, and again he would never apologize for making false promises. When these things were brought up, he would act as though it was not an offense, but would apologize just to get it out of the way. I think that the strangest thing is that at the beginning, he sought me out in friendship; he approached me and wanted to hang out.

What was strange was that my friend's family treated me like another brother or son. They were great people and they always talked about their brother being a flake. Funny how we feel the need to defend flakes when they are our friends. It was uncanny how this friend would ask for money when his family wasn't doing well, and knowing his flakiness I would always treat the loans as gifts so that I would not expect the money back. When his marriage was going bad I was the sounding board and the one that this man sought out for advice. If you ever felt like a cup that was constantly poured out and never fully refilled, that was me in my friendship with this man.

Like all good friendships we had our up's and down's. We had times when we would not speak to each other and times when we sat around talking about how stupid the latter times were. After a while I moved to a city that was about half an hour from this friend's home. Soon I very rarely heard from this friend, and when I did it was because he needed advice in his deteriorating marriage or such. In time his marriage ended and I didn't hear from him for years. When I moved up to Oregon, I found this friend on Facebook. I decided to friend him and a few months

later he friended me back. It wasn't long before this friend asked for my phone number. I got the same old, "if you give your number, I'll call you." The next time he asked for my numbers (and I sent them yet again) he told me that he would call me the following Saturday. My wife and I waited around the house that whole Saturday because I wanted to talk to my friend and I wanted my wife to meet him too. At ten o'clock that night I came to the conclusion that there was no call forthcoming.

Today, I got another message from this friend, asking for my phone number again. Today I did something that was not easy, but had to be done. I told him that there were too many times when this garbage happened and I wasn't going to put up with it anymore. In quoting the WHO, I told him "I won't be fooled again." He answered back that he would give me his number so that I could call him and he mentioned that maybe I could forgive him. I countered that he was already forgiven, but I was tired of his making opportunities arise where I had to forgive him again and again. I told him to have a nice life and I blessed him.

The thing that I'm trying to convey here is that in this day and age, many Christians are becoming flakes and they're out for their own desires, wants and needs; and they aren't the least bit interested in your or my welfare. It kind of reminds me of the friend who always swears that he likes you just before he plunges his fist into your solar plexus and then repeats that he likes you. Well sorry, "you will know them by their fruits," and if a friend is going to abuse a friendship time after time; month after month; year after year and decade after decade then they probably are not or ever were a friend. When people are wishy-washy like my friend you have to wonder if their relationship with Yahweh is wishy washy too.

I don't know, maybe it was because we both grew up in different places. My formative years were spent in Bergen County, New Jersey; and not in the nice areas, but in the areas where friendship meant covering each other no matter what the cost. My idea of friendship is being there when my friend is going through his roughest times; to fight someone if necessary and to be an advocate in every sense of the word. Anything else is either an acquaintance, a person I never met, or an enemy. Yes, I demand fidelity in a friendship, just like I offer fidelity to the same. None of us needs flaky people in our lives; we have so many of them already. Flaky people are on the roadways, at work or school and some of our neighbors are flakes. We have flakes as authorities over us in local, state, national governments and in world bodies. Why on earth would we seek out and keep flakes as friends. No, I want a friend who I can call and tell all about the flakes I met that day and to have them empathize with me, not because I'm right, but because they had just as many flakes in their lives that same day. I search out people who can act

like friends, and when they flake out, I'll have grace for a time. I mean, we have to have grace, right? We have to figure that a friend is going through a rough spot in their spiritual or mental lives that they don't share right away and that makes them strange or aloof. However, when they become flaky, and that flakiness goes on for months, years or even decades then the status of "friend" has to be questioned. Sometimes people grow apart. Sometimes tastes change or likes become different; that can be expected. Friends will grow with that, but when things become one-sided in a friendship then a person has to be demoted to acquaintance.

I can't say how much having to demote my former friend (now acquaintance) hurt me. I went for years suffering through the notion that it might happen someday. It hurt me when I had to write to this man and tell him that I could not associate with him anymore. He's still my brother in Yeshua and if he called and asked for prayer, I'd start praying before he finished his request. I do pray for the best for him, his family and their welfare. I do know that when we get to Heaven, we'll see each other and that we'll probably talk and worship Yeshua together. However, while we still live on this mortal coil, I have to fellowship with people who are serious about friendship and who want to have my back as I have theirs. Those are the people whom I choose to associate with, to be friends with and to bond with till my dying day, and thereafter.