

# FRIENDSHIPS WITH FORTITUDE

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*Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two stand back to back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided rod is not easily broken. — Ecclesiastes 4:9-12*

There are humans who were prepared and positioned to be our people. If life's a big long race, and there are lots of people on the track, it's worth taking a look around us. Because even as we're finding our strides, there's a good chance people are running their race in the lanes next to us. If the race were short and simple, we wouldn't need much of a gang. But since this is a long race, we benefit from friendships with fortitude.

Who are your people?

You know what strikes me about friendship is that if we're being honest, they are under little (if any) *obligation* to stick around. Aside from the "Best Friends" necklace

you may have gifted your BFF in elementary school (where my 80's ladies at?), we didn't exchange rings and formalize our forever commitments. And yet... if we're being honest, there are people who can speak words that have capacity to wound or strengthen us, speak truth and sharpen... and there just isn't much in life outside of our people that has the power to do that. Sometimes I wonder if that's why we tread so carefully. Or bail when it gets costly... and it will get costly. Jennie Allen references this as: "quitting your people," and dang it, I think we might be missing out when this becomes our theme.

**I wonder if there's an appropriate way to formalize this?** What if we told our people we weren't leaving? What if we showed up, said the hard stuff, accepted the messy, loved on their kids? What if we showed our true selves, picked up our swords and swung them at lies, and celebrated hard the things that mattered?! What if we chose to accept and offer grace?

**If you could put together a list of your deepest longings for friendship, what would you include?** If people are eternal, then they're immeasurably valuable. So let's linger here, because it's worthy.

## **Friendships with Fortitude:**

1. **They're sharpeners.** Iron upon iron, speak the truth in love, transformation-shaping stuff. It's one of my favorite friend things, and those who fall in this category are some of my greatest treasures. They also occasionally make me crazy. More on this to come.
2. **They demonstrate Hesed.** It's unfallable loyalty. The kind that won't disappear when winds blow... and they will blow. They Show up as a rule.
3. **They celebrate hard.** You don't have to wonder who to call when things go well, because they WANT you to succeed. And frankly, because they want you to succeed, they can watch your other relationships blossom and not feel threatened by it.
4. **They Fight for you.** Like, pick up a sword and swing when your heart is under fire.
5. **They don't misdefine friendship.** You are a gift, but not their God. So they remove the pressure of your crushing power or identity upholding. And they can enjoy your life near their's without requiring it to survive.

So sharpeners... most of us want to be made better, but sluffing off worthless (or unhealthy) shards of metal, isn't always easy. Making our lives sharp and meaningful means we get uncomfortable sometimes. So why would we do this? What makes sharpeners so valuable? What does it even look like to be a sharpener? This phrase... it's one of my favorites.