



From the cell of His Grace Bishop Youssef...



"Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break" (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Morale:

Try to establish friendships with those who can strengthen you spiritually.

When I was a teenager growing up in Egypt, my much respected Sunday School servant encouraged our class of young men to each one develop a spiritual friendship. A spiritual friendship was explained to the attentive and over flowing classroom as one in which we select some one person spiritually compatible to our self, of the same sex, one which we could accept advice from, and one which we could ask to assist us in an hour of spiritual need, request prayers from, and could individually pray without distraction.

"We pull down every proud obstacle that is raised against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey God" (II Corinthians 10:5).

Morale:

Bring into activity every thought to the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to now pass this same challenge onto the readers of the Mighty Arrows Magazine and encourage each youth to develop a spiritual friendship with someone at your church. There should not be a great distance between the two people of this particular type of friendship because one of the most pertinent requirements is that once per week you meet at your church or someone's home if a community church assembles in your area.

Reflections upon

ΣΑΝΧΙΝΜΕΥΙ ΕΧΕΝ

a Spiritual Friendship

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"But by God's grace, I am what I am, and the grace that He gave me was not without effect. I have worked harder than any of the other apostles, although it was not really my own doing but God's grace working in me" (I Corinthians 15:10).

Morale: Learn and follow the ways of God's grace.

First, it is essential that you should meet to read the Holy Bible together and pray the Agpyea together. Reading the Holy Bible together can be looked upon as a challenge to first help each other to learn all the Holy Books of the Bible, their location (Old Testament, Apocrypha or New Testament), and who the inspired writer was for each Holy Book. Following this "working knowledge" step, one can begin at the very first Holy Book of Genesis and progress through the entire Holy Bible with reading and discussion each week until completion. It will be a goal for the spiritual friendship building the spirituality of both members and will make a lasting memory of your teenage years.

Second, following Holy Bible study, the two members of the spiritual friendship may desire to go eat together and share in semi-social with religious overtones, conversation as well, the events of the past week, struggles and accomplishments. This type of friendship should not venture toward study for examinations, movie attendance, computer programming, or sports activities but rather its basic premise focuses on the common thread of spirituality.

"If you think you are standing firm you had better be careful that you do not fall" (I Corinthians 10:12).

Morale:

Don't think that you are strong lest you fall.

A spiritual friendship must be a continuous ongoing friendship which does not adapt to personal inclinations



Anba Paula and St. Anthony. A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter. He that has found one has found a treasure" (Ecclesiastes 6:14).



or judgments but Biblically based in focus, thought and consideration. Establishing a spiritual friendship helped me personally as a youth to overcome many temptations, gave me an anticipated time frame in which to meet with my spiritual friend under no other guise or anxiety than to encourage our spiritual growth.

Growth and equilibrium in my spiritual life were explored on many levels through this friendship. Many important issues pertaining to our teenage years were addressed between the two of us. Many resolutions obtained through the meeting of two minds concerning spiritual warfare. We learned through time to spiritually grow by appreciating the growth and experience of the other. There was no hero to this friendship, no one better than the other, but an unspoken humbleness developed with time and maturity.

“A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter. He that has found one has found a treasure” (Ecclesiastes 6:14)

Morale:
A good friend is priceless.

We were taught in Sunday School that our spiritual friendship will grow through the years to be enriched by obstacles and worldly problems. And indeed it was. I look back now upon the spiritual friendship that developed between my spiritual friend and I and am today very thankful to God I was encouraged to take the opportunity to make a spiritual friendship in which I learned to welcome the positive experience of another person or learn shortcomings to avoid, as well as the support and acceptance of a spiritual friendship.

It is just as important for youth today as in my generation to come to terms that spiritual growth is essential for the teenager. External evidences of growth should not take priority over one's inner life and the development of a positive spiritual personality. External evidences quickly change and fade away often encouraging one to feel either

inferior or egotistical. The inner life continues to display the person's limitless potential, gifts, and talents throughout the life span.

Let us not give way to the underachievement of our spiritual growth. A developing spiritual life will assist you in bearing responsibilities, weigh a decision, learn to turn to God for guidance, confront difficulties with a more open mind, learn generosity, and to not seek what is for your own pleasure.

The rewards of a spiritual friendship are bountiful. Moderation, peace, joy, happiness, self-confidence and appreciation for human life along with being mindful and watchful are among the fruits. Spiritual friendship though a present day challenge for the youth is not a new concept but many have been recorded throughout Coptic history such as St. Anthony and Anba Paula; Saint Apollo and Saint Abib; St. Bacchus and St. Sergius; Saints Atrasis and Yoana; Anba Abraam and Abba George; St. Isidore friend of Sina the Soldier; the Three Holy Youth; and even the Lord Jesus Christ Himself shared a special friendship with Lazarus.

I earnestly encourage you to establish a spiritual friendship today. Life should be making it less difficult one for the other.

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