

My dearest sister in Christ,

On the day of my husband's ordination, I stood there looking at the altar and thought—this is it—I'm losing my best friend.

There he is, all alone up there, the man who was my everything, God slipping a giant responsibility between us.

What's worse—I'm leaving my family, leaving my friends, and moving to—well, you know. And, of course, none of those people at that new church could ever be my friend, so I told myself.

I knew very well the danger of having friends in the congregation. I mean, it says it right there in the ordination vows: "[I] will not show partiality for a chosen group, but be equally concerned for all."

And I knew firsthand what showing partiality could do to a church's unity. I'd seen it with my own two eyes, watching the service crumbling as my past priest's friends got into endless squabbles with everyone else.

I figured I was better off living the life of a recluse, hiding in my home, going out with no one and inviting no one over.

Well, it only took me a few months to lose my mind. I hadn't counted on the fact that I was human, and humans are social creatures. I was not intended for the hermit life.

So then I went to the other extreme. I befriended everyone superficially, I went to everyone's house, got caught up in everyone's drama, and generally did nothing but socialize--letting all my other responsibilities die a slow death.

I know, I know. I should have known better. But some mistakes you have to make for yourself.

Overwhelmed and still very, very lonely, I turned my eyes to Heaven and admitted dejectedly, "Lord, You are my best, best friend--scratch that--my only friend. It's just You and me now, Lord."

Indeed, *"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"* (Proverbs 9:10a)—or in this case not fear exactly but knowledge.

In all your searches for friendship, my sister, you will find that one Friend never fails. Friends will move away, they will hurt your feelings, they'll get too busy, or they will pass away--

friends may even betray you. But one Friend won't. One Friend will always make time for you. That's Christ Himself.

"So that's it then?" I can hear you saying, a little choked up, "I'm just going to be alone forever? Me and God on an island?"

No, no, no. Remember the fear of the Lord is the BEGINNING of wisdom--just the beginning. If Christ is your very best friend, that just puts all other relationships in perspective.

Here are four things I keep in mind now when making friends (yes, making friends—you're allowed to do that).

1. **Great Friends Take Time.**

In a recent study, it was estimated that it takes 50 hours of interactions to turn a stranger into a friend, and 200 hours to make a close friend. That means that you shouldn't assume that you'll make a friend immediately. It will take time and repeated interactions to build that trust between you.

2. **Know Yourself.**

Are you someone who likes to have a lot of casual friends? If so, don't hesitate to go out with different groups and see where you fit in best. Invite a few couples over and do trial and error until you get the right dynamic. Remember, you need about 50 hours of time together to really count them as friends, so it's okay to take it slow and try different things.

On the other hand, are you the type that prefers just 1-3 tight-knit friendships? Patience is key here because it will take 200 hours before you really feel close with a new person. Observe people and see who might make a good friend. Take a few different people out to lunch dates or out to coffee one-on-one. Follow up with those you really click with until you find people who make the cut.

Then invest and really rack up those hours--so you can build up that trust. Yes, I know you're busy, but it is worth it to your sanity (take my word for it).

3. **Know Your No-Nos.** Everyone has their own unspoken rules for friends. Values that they won't compromise on, boundaries they won't cross. Here are a few of mine.

- a. *No gossip.* If they like to talk about other people, it's only a matter of time before they're talking about me.

- b. *No complaining about their spouses excessively.* If someone likes to--even jokingly--spend the majority of our conversations complaining about his/her spouse, that's a no from me.
- c. *No hot button issues.* I have enough stress and drama in my life from my husband's priesthood, and I want to live a peaceable life.

Sit with yourself and define your own friendship rules, and then use them to guide your decisions around relationships.

- 4. **Everyone Is Lonely.** The last thing I keep in mind when trying to make friends is that it seems like every adult on the planet right now is suffering from a strange disease of loneliness. Despite social media and free calls to home, everyone is very, very lonely. There is no "out there" where someone else is having a better time than you are.

Every woman in your congregation suffers from some loneliness. Every woman at your work is suffering from some loneliness. Your neighbor is lonely. Reach out. Call someone. Make a lunch date. Send an encouraging text. We ALL need it. It's not just you.

I know it's hard to find people you trust to make friends with. Use your discernment and know that not all friends are friends for every season or every feeling. There are friends I only trust enough to have a good time with--a lighthearted lunch. There are friends I call with my biggest fears, positive people who I know will encourage me. There are friends I call in my sorrow--people I can trust with my darkness. There are friends I call when I need a helping hand.

Not every friend has to fill every role, but it's good to have at least one friend for each role. *"In a multitude of counselors, there is safety"* (Proverbs 24:6b)

You don't have to put all your eggs in one basket, so to speak.

I hope my dear sister that you don't make the same mistake I've made, thinking you must live without friends. But it's never too late to fix this and start again. And besides, you will always have Jesus--AND all of your fellow priests' wives. Don't forget; we have your back.

Affectionately,  
Ni-ni

*Note: Tasoni Ni-ni is a fictional character, a compilation of events and advice gathered through research and interviews. Not everything Tasoni Ni-Ni says or does can be attributed to one person.*