

Who is like God? A good friend, a comfort to us

Life is nothing without friendship. Cicero

In my opinion, sending a 7-year-old to school with a nephrostomy bag was a horrible idea. Nonetheless, the doctor assured me our son would be fine. Many children attend school with a tube draining urine from their back into a bag attached to their leg. I had to let him go.

Sam could not participate in PE or recess so he went to the library. After the third day, his teacher decided to let Sam sit outside during recess. When I picked him up in the afternoon, she explained her change of plans.

Engulfed by the roaring sea of children referred to as the parent pick-up line, I could hardly cope with this news. The thought of Sam all alone with his nephrostomy bag



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while the other children played together was more than I could stomach.

The parent pick-up line is hardly the place to express your concern, sob hysterically or have a nervous breakdown — unless, of course, you are under the age of 10. Instead, I simply nodded at the teacher, took Sam's hand and left. Driving home, I asked if he would rather go to the library than sit alone.

"I didn't sit alone," he answered. "Michaelangelo stayed with me. He is my really good friend."

"Do y'all just sit and talk?" I asked.

"No we sit and dig. He goes and gets acorns, then brings them back for me to bury," Sam offered casually.

Never mind that Sam should not have been in dirt. He was happy. He had a friend who sat with him. The words were like oxygen. Suddenly I could breathe again. He wasn't alone in a world of germy bullies. He had a friend, "a really good friend."

This is the mark of true friendship. A friend is one who is willing to slow down when you can no longer run. A friend is one who sits at your side, when you are sick or afraid. A true friend is there when everyone else runs off to play.

As it turned out, Sam only needed the nephrostomy bag

for a couple of months. As the doctor predicted, he was fine. Today he is a 6-foot, 3-inch healthy teenager. But at an early age, he learned that a true friend can get you through the toughest moments of life.

I was a young adult before I fully understood that. At the age of 30, I became critically ill and faced major surgery while visiting out-of-town relatives. A friend — whose name happened to be Michael — called to see how I was doing.

When I told him how sick and defeated I felt, he asked me if I had prayed about it. I said, "No, I don't have the energy," then braced myself for a spiritual scolding. Instead, he offered words of comfort that still linger in my soul.

"Don't worry about praying.

I'll pray for you. You can borrow my faith until you are well."

These words bathed my soul with grace. Relief washed over me.

According to the dictionary of names, Michael means Who is like God?

Who is like God? The person who sits with a friend in good times and bad. The person who loves instead of judges. The person who prays for those who have lost all hope.

This holiday season, let us generously share the precious gift of friendship so that Christ's love can be born among us and the world can see who is like God.

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