

# FAITHFUL ARE THE WOUNDS OF A FRIEND

by Amanda Swartzentruber

We need true Biblical friendships, friends who love us enough to speak the truth in love when no one else is brave enough, friends willing to risk being misunderstood and even shut out for our spiritual health.

*“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Proverbs 27:6 KJV*

Frankly, I find this verse to be SCARY. Elyse Fitzpatrick picks apart these fears in her book *Because He Loves Me*. She surmises, rightly, I believe, that this is uncomfortable because of our American individualism and desire for privacy...that none of us want anyone poking around in our affairs and we certainly don't want to be accused of poking around in someone else's. Fitzpatrick laments that closing ourselves off to God's greatest gift for our sanctification—the body of Christ—is a great detriment to the sanctification of the Bride of Christ. Fitzpatrick goes on to say:

God has placed us in a family because we don't grow very well on our own. It's still not good to be alone. We need the encouragement, correction, and loving involvement of others who are willing to risk everything for the sake of the beauty of his bride.

This past Monday, I woke up with an ear that was closed. This is a very frustrating situation for me. Have you ever attempted to look into your own ears? Compounding my situation is the fact that with my husband's visual impairment, he is no help. I don't trust any of my daughters yet to get the wax out. I didn't want to add a doctor visit to my already busy morning, and even more certainly, I didn't want to ask any of my neighbors for help with such a personal need! I felt as though I were walking around in a tunnel. Mid-morning, my mom and dad showed up unexpectedly and was I glad to see them! While my mom cleaned out my ear, my dad sat in the background and comforted me in my misery. “Yeah, it's my left ear too. Mine does the same thing!” my dad said. Gotta love genetics! And then, just like that, I could hear clearly again without an annoying ring and echo.

I thanked my mom, and she and dad left, but this experience kept turning in my mind. Our sin is like that. We can't see it clearly, we can't get to it easily, and we need the loving, patient help of someone else. We need the eyes and hands of others to deal with our sin, just as I needed the eyes and hands of my mother for my situation. We need Biblical relationships. Elyse continues:

All of our friends are more aware of our sin than we think, and they could probably tell you one or two sins you struggle with most. Our struggle with sin is like the party game where everyone else knows the word pinned on your back but you can't see it.

The ear wax was visible to everyone but me. Even so, my mom didn't make me feel put down because I had more ear wax than most. She was kind as she took care of my need. She stands as a beautiful example of how we as a Body are to care for one another, particularly in our blindness to our sin. Using my mom's example, I developed a few rules for helping others get rid of their “ear wax”. ☺

- Rule #1:** Remember that you have ear wax yourself.
- Rule #2:** Remember that you have other issues if you happen to have great genetics on ear wax.
- Rule #3:** Remember that if circumstances were different for you (bad genetics in this case), you could have ear wax.
- Rule #4:** Don't slander someone for having ear wax (remember, love covers a multitude of sins).
- Rule #5:** Trust will be gained if you don't make others feel put down about their ear wax.
- Rule #6:** Don't point out someone's ear wax in front of others; tell them privately.
- Rule #7:** Ask questions, like Jesus did, instead of using accusations. “Amanda, are you having trouble hearing lately?” rather than, “Your ears are disgusting!”

Truly, faithful are the wounds of a friend.

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*Amanda Swartzentruber is wife to Kevin, who is pastor of Providence Mennonite Church in Montgomery, IN. They have five children. Hobbies consist of reading great literature, tandem biking with husband Kevin, tent camping, hiking, gardening and women's ministry opportunities at her church. Her family lives on a mini farm with chickens, a mini horse and a cat. Her home is busy, noisy and chaotic but full of LIFE! The Spirit of Jesus reigns and for that reason, Amanda finds strength to continue on in her calling.*