

A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

Sharyl Reid



After hearing about the importance of community at Mosaic membership classes, I became discouraged. I understood the need for real relationships, but living fifty miles from Mosaic made it a challenge to find the kind of close friendship I desired. One day Pastor Erwin spoke on trying to reach out to those people who looked like they needed support, rather than individuals who were so attractive that their social lives were already full. I began to pray that God would help me to find a real friend. But when He told me later that Marianne was a gal He wanted me to befriend, I wanted to run the other direction!

The first night I really spoke to Marianne, we were both at a home schooling meeting. I had read in our group's email that her mother was in the hospital. So, when she arrived at the meeting I asked her how she was doing. Her eyes avoided mine, but I could see that they were rimmed in red. She answered my question with the socially expected, "Fine."

I could tell she wasn't "fine" and fought the urge to let her pass by. I felt God prompting me to reach out to her. I touched her on the arm to stop her from whizzing past me. Looking her in the eyes, I asked, "Are you really fine? I heard your mother was hospitalized."

When she saw that I genuinely wanted to know the truth, she burst into tears. Then she told me that her mother was losing her painful battle against cancer, she had no other supportive extended family, and her husband's unemployment had forced them to use up their savings. Her home group had even sent her an email basically saying

that since she and her husband hadn't come to their meetings in awhile, the members were assuming Marianne and her spouse no longer wanted to be a part of the group. In her great time of need, she felt abandoned. She'd been so desperate for support, she'd even called her church to ask if someone there could pray for her; but they could not refer her to anyone local!

When Marianne stood in front of me that night with tears streaming down her face, I felt so busy trying to survive my three-year-old daughter's antics, home school my son, keep my house from falling apart, meet my husband's needs, and take care of my ministry responsibilities, that I didn't know how I would be able to find time to support someone who was going through so much. Yet I knew God wanted me to offer her whatever assistance I could. I took her outside and prayed with her. We exchanged phone numbers. I then asked God to show me how to help her without neglecting the needs of my family.

To ease some of Marianne's burdens, I offered care in my home for her three year-old daughter a few days a week when my mom came to help with my kids. I also committed to pray for Marianne's family and eventually started a monthly prayer night with her and another friend.

I am so thankful that that I didn't follow my selfish instincts and run the other direction when Marianne unloaded her grief on me that first night. Not only did God give me the strength to help her in the midst of her trials, but He also gave me a valuable and real friend in her. Now that her husband is employed and

she has accepted her mother's death, her sense of humor can bring a smile to my face when I am on the brink of tears. Because she has walked through difficult financial times, she has also been able to provide me with invaluable support and wisdom when my husband and I struggle financially. Best of all, because she was real with me from the first day we met, we have always been honest and open with one another.

Layer by layer all the hurts that had weighed her down so much began to heal and her true light began to shine. Like a piece of carbon that, after undergoing great pressure and heat, became a diamond; Marianne, after experiencing intense suffering, became a true gem. Now that her circumstances have significantly improved, her brilliance can be seen easily by others in her life. I'm grateful to be one of them! I had no idea when I felt God calling me to help her that I would end up being so blessed by such a wonderful friendship. But I am. Her friendship has become one of my greatest treasures. *



Sharyl is a wife and home schooling mom whose passions include reading great books, writing, photography, drawing, communing with God, and helping others find a more intimate relationship with Him.