

Consoling a Friend

The pitcher stood on the mound in a high school playoff game. The winner would advance to the state championships. At the plate was a close childhood friend of the pitcher's. There were two strikes and two outs. One more strike and the game would be over. The pitcher wound up and threw towards home plate. The umpire raised his fist signaling called strike three. The batter was out. Game over. While his teammates celebrated on the mound the pitcher had a different priority. He headed straight for home plate where his friend was experiencing the emotions of being the last out and the end of the dream of a state championship. Consoling and embracing his friend was a spontaneous, genuine expression of love. Celebrating a victory could wait. Having compassion for a friend was foremost on the pitcher's mind.

We live in a dog-eat-dog world. People often climb over or stomp on each other in order to win the prize – whether it is in sports, the business world, politics or midnight specials on Black Friday. All too often people are more interested in achieving the end goal, even at the expense of others. We win. Everyone else loses. Isn't that the American way?



Thankfully, there are people who have a different perspective. The photo to the left is an actual picture of the pitcher and batter in this story. The two friends embraced while teammates of the winning team celebrate on the mound. My heart goes out to the batter who made the last out but, in a different way, to the pitcher who cared more about his friend than celebrating an important win.

What are your priorities – caring for other people or winning a game? How do you react when something goes your way and another person feels the emotions of loss?

The stakes were high. Chances are this game was the most important athletic highlight in both players' lives to date. Years from now the batter might not remember making the final out, but he will definitely treasure the more lasting memory of the friendship displayed by his friend. It was at that moment – for both players -- when friendship mattered more than the outcome of the game.

The Bible says: *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others (Phil 2:3-4)*

Prayer: Heavenly Father. There are many times in our lives when someone wins and someone has to lose. When our achievement means that others may feel a sense of loss, let us be sensitive to the emotions of others. Help us to put friendship and loyalty at a level of equal or greater importance than the outcome at hand. We can make a lasting impression by how we value others in all situations. Amen.