

# Inseparably Intertwined

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October 23, 2022

A little more than 20 years ago we moved to a new area and started attending a church that my wife and I had scouted out beforehand and deemed to be a good place to worship the Lord, hear sound Biblical preaching, and enjoy Christian fellowship.

We met a family, the Zieglers, at this new church and we became fast friends. We fellowshiped with one another at each other's homes, prayed together, and my wife and I on occasion would babysit their children. They graciously granted us the great honor and privilege of making their youngest son when he was born to be our godson.

One time when we were visiting the Zieglers at their home, their eldest daughter was at the time into making string bracelets. These bracelets are composed of threads tied together in intricate patterns to form lovely art. She kindly made a jellyfish friendship bracelet for us to take home.



Several years later the Zieglers moved out of state due to new and better work. The children grew up and are now pursuing their own educational goals and careers. All that time we remained close to them and still talk with them on the phone

weekly.

For more than a decade, that string bracelet has been hanging from my computer monitor. Every time I see it, with its intricate artistic design, I am reminded of how our lives have become inseparably intertwined with the Zieglers in deep friendship and love that surpasses location.

In William Shatner's 1989 film, *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*, Captain Kirk was on a shore leave camping trip at Yosemite National Park with Mr. Spock and Dr. McCoy. While Kirk was free solo climbing the sheer vertical rock formation El Capitan, he slipped and started plummeting to his death thousands of feet below. Spock, hovering nearby in antigravity boots, was able to make use of the boot jets to speed toward Kirk and catch him before he hit the ground.

Later that evening around the campfire, McCoy scolded Kirk for not recognizing the preciousness of life by trying such a crazy stunt as climbing El Capitan and not realizing that he should have been killed when he fell. Kirk said he realized his life should have ended that day. But even as he fell, he knew he would not die. An amazed McCoy and Spock wondered why. Kirk said that he knew he would not die because they were with him.

During Jesus' last supper with His disciples (John 13-17), He made some dire predictions that greatly disturbed them. But what unsettled them most was that Jesus was returning to the Father and would no longer be with them.

Jesus encouraged them not to be troubled in their hearts, but to trust in Him as the only way to the Father, in His promise that He would go to prepare a place for them, and that He would return to bring them home to be with Him forever (John 14:1-6).

Furthermore, it was beneficial to His followers that He be not physically present, otherwise they may be tempted to see their

faith as an external, or even political, thing. Even immediately before Jesus ascended to the Father, His disciples asked if at that time He would be re-establishing the kingdom to Israel.

Jesus did not leave His disciples as orphans but promised the Father would send them another Helper who would be a Comforter, Advocate, and Intercessor. God the Holy Spirit would dwell in them (John 14:16-21). They would understand that an internal, personal faith would be established providing an unbreakable bond with Jesus. The presence of the Holy Spirit would empower them to fulfill their divine purpose, and comfort them through the challenges and persecution they would face in what would often be a very daunting and hostile world.

Close friendships, such as my wife and I have with the Zieglers, can be a source of comfort and joy in an uncertain, chaotic, disappointing, and threatening world. They can provide a strength that helps one to persevere through some of the most dreadful difficulties.

Even more so the presence of the Holy Spirit, who permanently dwells in those who trust in Jesus (Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19-29). The joy, hope, and peace He freely gives is especially precious when one is experiencing suffering or sorrow (Romans 15:13).

Through the Holy Spirit, God seals all those who trust in Jesus and makes them His children. The Bible describes Him as the *deposit*, *seal*, and *pledge* in the hearts of Christians (2 Corinthians 1:21-22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30). Like the part of the purchase money for something of value given in advance as security for the rest, the gift of the Spirit to believers is a down payment on the heavenly inheritance which Jesus Christ has promised and secured at the cross.

There are many challenges, dangers, heartaches, and trials we

face in this life. Sometimes they are caused by our own failures and terrible mistakes. But those sealed by the Spirit are inseparably intertwined with God, ensuring a glorious future (Romans 8:28-30).

Captain Kirk was confident that as long as his friends were with him, he would not die. We can have a much greater confidence of life because of God's presence. There is no where we can be where He is not (Psalm 139:7-12), and He never leaves or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). For those who trust in Jesus alone for the forgiveness of their sins and redemption this connection with God and the eternal life that accompanies it is certain because no one can break His seal (John 3:36).

This assurance provides true joy, peace, perseverance, and hope no matter what comes.

**"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."** (Romans 8:35-39)

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