

## **Tears for a Friend**

Proverbs 17:17 “A true friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.”

I don't cry very often but the tears flowed freely from my eyes on the plane trip home to Phoenix for the funeral. I looked out at the clouds already missing my good friend Rich. To pass the sad time, I concentrated on the plane's wing to watch the pilot's inputs keep us flying level. I had to watch for a long time and finally could detect the tiny movements along the wing's edge and feel how the pilot was using them to keep the ride level for the passengers.

Rich and his family owned a hobby store and he became my mentor and friend from my interest in model cars. As parents we all hope and pray our children will follow positive role models and not someone who will lead them away from the faith and values we have tried so hard to instill. Rich kept me out of trouble and through him and his family's influence I began my walk with Christ. He was not perfect, but available. Looking back now it is easy to see that Rich was a key part of God's plan for my life. When I started amateur racing Rich was my mentor and my pit crew. Rich had been a test driver at the GM proving grounds in Mesa, AZ and could go on forever telling stories about the cars he had driven and his adventures from work. He would coach me from the sidelines of the track on the lines I was using through the corners and gear selection on different parts of the track. Then the day of my graduation finally arrived. We were racing at a track out of state and I won my class that day. Rich came to me and announced that I had become a better driver than him. There was nothing left he could teach me – we were now peers. No other award or degree or praise I would ever receive meant as much as this one.

At the funeral I met several other young men who had been in Rich's care after me, some had become Christians also. Rich had left a living legacy in the lives of others he had left behind. I thought about the wings of that plane and how those little almost imperceptible movements changed the path of our flight. The imperceptible influences we have in each other's lives are much the same. The smallest act of kindness, advice or friendship can make a difference that lasts for a lifetime and indeed eternity.

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