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A Special Friendship for Your Child

By Lisa M. Hendey

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Book Review - Jesus, I Feel Close to You by Denise Stuckey

Reviewed by Lisa M. Hendey

In her newly released book, Jesus I Feel Close to You (Paulist Press, November 2004, hardcover, 32 pages), author and art teacher Denise Stuckey employs images from a child's everyday life to help emphasize the importance of a close and personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Combining soft and charming illustrations by Phyllis Saroff with the recurring theme "Jesus, I feel close to you..." Stuckey relates the instances that come about in a child's life to classic stories from the New Testament. Time spent helping Daddy at home relates to Jesus' childhood years working with Joseph in the carpenter's shop. A family picnic helps to recall the occasion of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Climbing a tree reminds the child of the story of the diminutive Zacchaeus, who was so anxious to have a good view of Jesus that he climbed to the top of a nearby sycamore.

As parents, one of the greatest gifts we can bestow upon our children is the knowledge that whatever happens in life, we can always call upon our friendship with Jesus Christ. He is there for us in times of trial, as well as moments of triumph. Jesus I Feel Close to You underscores this perpetual presence and reminds the reader to call upon and nurture this special friendship. Its simple message of intimacy and trust are something you will want to share with your child time and again. A comprehensive list of Bible references at the end of the book provides a great resource for parents who want to go to the "source" for sharing these great stories with their families.

For additional information on Jesus I Feel Close to You visit

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0809167182/digitalcropper-20>

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Childhood Friendships

By **Rexanne Mancini**

Childhood friendships are as special as they are a necessary part of growing up. While some of our children will maintain these friendships into adulthood, many will not. Kids move away or they find other friends with more current interests and grow apart. Whatever form a childhood friendship is taking, know that these relationships are vital to your child's well-being and growth as a human being.

Your child may have one very special friend from the time they are in diapers or they might have a gaggle of giggling girl friends or a thunderstorm of wild boy friends. These bonds can be helped along or a wedge can be placed between them by the parents. Depending upon your feelings about your child's friend, you could welcome the child into your home and be gracious or you could find that the child your child is enthralled with is a demon incarnate. It's up to you to teach your kids how to interact in healthy ways with their peers or how to let negative friendships go.

While I've been traumatized by a few of my daughters' friends, I have liked most of them. The few children whom I found intolerable were not too welcome in my home, however, if one of my daughter's insisted on a play date with that undesirable child, I would allow the friendship to take its course, mostly to try and figure out what in the world my child liked about her/him. Made for some interesting lessons in humanity. ;-) Most of these friendships have faded in good time, on their own. One or two of these kids have actually won me over and now are among my favorites, although I must admit these kids were basically OK to begin with. They just came with issues I didn't want to deal with. I dealt for my child's sake and all turned out well.

A child who is a truly bad influence on your child will need to be shunned, as painful as that may seem to your child at the time. I find that if you adequately explain that the child in question isn't very "nice" or has actually hurt or emotionally abused your child; this can be sufficient reason for your child to understand the situation without too much trauma. If they resist your urging to make new friends or avoid the horrid one, you will probably need to be tolerant until your child digests the circumstances and moves on in her own time. This helps your child learn to differentiate between people they want to spend time with, those they don't and to make their own choices.

The children you like and who are good influences on your child should be invited over often. Have them stay for dinner, take them along on family or fun outings and allow them to become part of your extended family just as your own friends are. Children need to know their friends are welcome in their home. Treat their buddies with the same respect you would expect your children to treat your pals. They will see how you interact with others who visit and will learn how to be good friends and gracious hosts themselves.

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Rexanne Mancini is the mother of two daughters, Justice and Liberty. She is a novelist, freelance writer and maintains an extensive yet informal parenting and family web site,

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-Visit her site for good advice, award-winning Internet holiday pages and

some humor to help you cope. Subscribe to her free newsletter, Rexanne's Web Review, for a monthly dose of Rexanne:

Childhood Friendships

Poem--Friendship, Love and Fear

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Child Safety Tips

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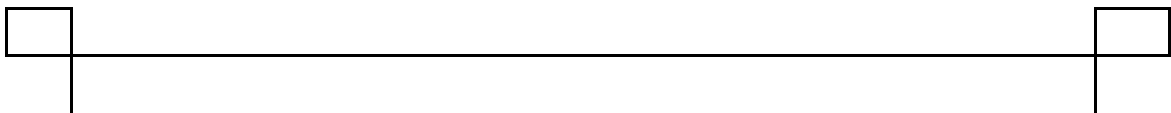
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