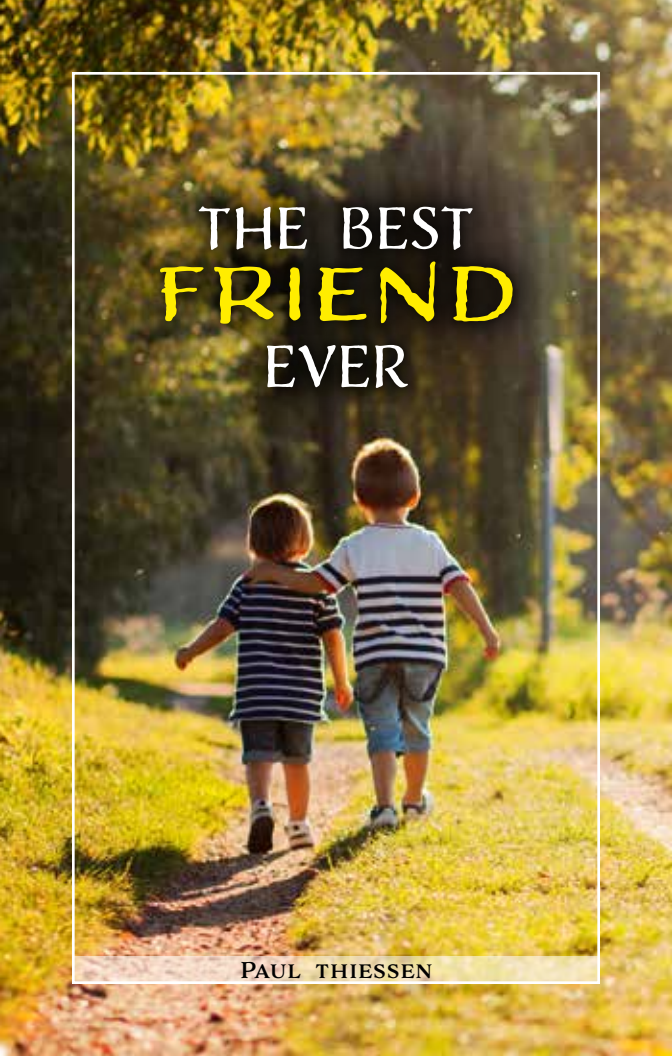
THE BEST FRIEND EVER



PAUL THIESSEN

God has created us to enjoy friendly relationships between human beings. The Bible teaches us that **"There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother"** (PROVERBS 18:24 NKJV). That person is our Lord Jesus Christ, and He wants to be your best friend in this life. This friendship begins by receiving Him as a personal Saviour. Many people around the world have found a sublime friendship with their Saviour and anticipate spending all eternity in His presence.

On September 10, 1819, Joseph Medlicott Scriven was born in Ireland. His father, a captain in the royal navy, ensured that his children received university education. He and his brother graduated from Trinity College in Dublin. He was saved and gathered with believers in an assembly of Christians, first in Ireland and later in Canada. In many parts of the world, he is remembered for being the writer of the famous hymn *"What a friend we have in Jesus."* The hymn was born from a deep sadness in the life of Mr. Scriven. Many others have also found comfort in his words.

One of the first sadnesses in his life was that poor health stopped him from a military career, even though he had already enrolled in college. In 1843 he anticipated getting married, and the night before the wedding he was waiting for his fiancée next to the River Bann. He was watching as she crossed the river on horseback, when suddenly she fell out of the saddle and drowned in front of his eyes.

After visiting several countries he settled in Ontario, Canada in 1847. His mother became seriously ill in 1855, and he wrote a poem to her. Later, Charles Crozat Converse wrote music, and this poem became a hymn. In Port Hope, Ontario, Canada, he met Eliza Catherine Roche, and they fell in love and planned to marry. Sadly, they never married because she died of pneumonia on August 6, 1860.

Mr. Scriven dedicated the rest of his life to preaching and teaching the word of God and helping others. In 1886, sick with a fever, he was taken to a friend's house to recover. On August 10, 1886, he died by accidental drowning in a river and was bur-

ied next to his second fiancée. He passed into the presence of his best Friend.

Every human being can enjoy this friendship with the Lord, because He wants to be our friend, but everyone is born at enmity with God. The cause of this enmity is our sin. The judgment against sin condemns us to eternal separation from God. The Lord Jesus Christ extends His hand toward the sinner to enter into friendship with Him. He has made the payment to repair the damage caused by our sin.

Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge–
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield thee;
thou wilt find a solace there.

Brody Thibodeau
Call or Text 902 206 1453
Email bwthib@gmail.com

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WWW.IBHGOSPEL.COM