

A Friend Who Shows Up



Hey Chris,

You've been my longest-standing friend on this planet, my closest friend. We met way back in junior high, both of us little guys, though you were even a little more little than I was. My twin brother Gregg and I were a year ahead of you, and we were setting a bunch of records back then, remember? We got to know each other not through gymnastics yet, but through the fierce competition at Montera Junior High. What was it, 1968?

You got a little butthurt at first when Gregg and I were breaking those records, so you did what true competitors do, you started breaking them too. And you did. You caught up. And that's how our friendship began, out of grit and drive and mutual respect.

Eventually, we were all on the same gymnastics team. Gregg and I were the lead all-around gymnasts. He was always a little better than me, and I held my own. But you, you were the powerhouse. You dominated floor and rings, built like Zeus. Among all the guys on that team, you were the strongest, the most naturally gifted athlete. But what made it all work is that we were brothers in spirit. Together, for our beloved coach Bud Call, we took the Northern



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California title. That was the biggest you could get, since California was so massive it had to split into NorCal and SoCal.

You went on to college and nearly made the Olympics. At that alumni meet years later; you still had it. You came back and rocked the floor like nothing had changed.

But this letter isn't about medals or muscle. It's about something deeper.

You embody the kind of friend who shows up. Not just in the good times, though we've had a hell of a lot of fun, but in the hard ones. That's when a man reveals who he really is. And through the decades, you've always shown up. You've never once tried to be the center of attention. You've never needed to be loud. But you've always been there, quietly, consistently, with a kind of presence that anchors people.



Even when you surpassed all of us as an athlete, you never made it about you. You've always been humble. I've never heard you brag. Ever. You'll take a knee to help someone without hesitation. And I know this firsthand.

When my life fell apart, when everything I'd built professionally collapsed, and I was holed up at my mom and stepdad's place, trying to get my head straight, I called you. I told you I was in trouble. You didn't hesitate. You drove down from Santa Rosa just to be there. You didn't have advice. You

didn't need any. You just showed up.

We sat in Montclair, on some random bleachers, not saying much. But it was everything. You sat with me in the pain. You didn't flinch. You didn't judge. You didn't try to fix me. You just loved me. That act of presence, of showing up in silence, was life-saving.

And then years later, when Gregg's life started falling apart too, only this time he couldn't pull out of the spiral like I did, you showed up again. No glory. No applause. Just steady, faithful friendship. You helped him pack, move, sort through the chaos of his life. You were there for



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him when few others were. That meant everything. You helped carry the weight, even when it wasn't yours to carry. That's who you are.

You are one of the biggest-hearted men I've ever known. I have a decent grasp on language, but I don't have enough words to describe the magnitude of who you are in my life.



And then the memories, the good ones. That motorcycle trip with you, Gregg, me, and Todd. Man, what a ride. Meeting up in Winnemucca, heading to Colorado, reliving old stomping grounds in Gunnison, Fort Collins, Pikes Peak. We all got sick from the altitude, but it was perfect. I got hit first, and you all laughed. Then you guys got sicker than me, and I finally got to laugh back. That ride, those miles, those conversations and silences, etched into my soul.

You, my friend, take up a huge place in my heart.

You're the friend who never judged. You're the friend who loved unconditionally. You're the kind of friend who, if anyone embodies the love of Jesus, it's you. Not with words, but with presence, humility, and action.

Thank you for loving me when I was broken.

Thank you for loving Gregg when he couldn't love himself.

You are the real deal.

You're the friend who showed up.

Love you, brother,

Jeff