

What a Friend

Born in 1819 of prosperous parents in Bainbridge, Ireland, Joseph Scriven grew to enroll and graduate from Trinity College in Dublin.

In 1845, his fiancée accidentally drowned the night before they were to be married. Grief-stricken, Scriven moved to Canada. There, he again fell in love, was scheduled to be married, and the young woman suddenly became ill of pneumonia and died. He then devoted the rest of his life to helping others, particularly the underprivileged. He gave them clothes and shared his food. If anyone could afford his service, he would not work for them.



In 1855, while staying with a companion, James Sackville, Scriven received news from Ireland of his mother being very ill. He wrote a poem to comfort her and titled it *Pray without Ceasing*.

No one knew about the words of the poem until a neighbor who was visiting found it. The words were later set to music and renamed by Charles Crozat Converse, becoming the well-known *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*.

Scriven did not have any intentions or dream that his poem would be for publication in the newspaper and later become a favorite hymn among millions of Christians around the world.

On Aug. 10, 1886, Scriven's body was found dead in the water near his home, and no one knows if his demise was an accident or suicide, because he was said to be in depression at the time.

The lyrics of his hymn led it to be ranked among the 10 best-known and most-beloved of all time, bringing hope and comfort to its hearers. Here are the words:

*What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.*

*Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.*

(more)

*Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.*

*Blessed Saviour, Thou has promised Thou wilt all our burdens bear,
May we ever, Lord, be bringing all to Thee in earnest prayer.
Soon in glory bright unclouded there will be no need for prayer,
Rapture, praise and endless worship will be our sweet portion there.*

Claim the promises of this grand old hymn and allow them to make a difference in your life.

A man who has friends must himself be friendly. But there is a Friend who sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter