



FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

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Jesus came into this world to fulfill God's promises to humanity. What are some of those promises?

God had promised us a Prophet—a representative of God who brings us His truth, and urges us to live in a way that pleases Him. (Matthew 21:10-11)

God had promised us a Priest—an advocate, a representative to stand between us and God, Joining us together by taking us both by the hand. (Hebrews 4:14)

God had promised us a King—a ruler who leads in righteousness, for the good of His people. (John 19:19)

Who's Your Friend?

Who would you expect a prophet to be friends with? Perhaps other teachers of truth and the faithful.

Who would you expect a priest to be friends with? I guess other priests and temple faithfuls.

Who would you expect a king to be friends with? I suppose his closest courtiers and allies.

With whom did Jesus make friends? *"The Son of Man came... and they say, 'Behold... a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'"* (Matthew 11:19). Not at all what they (or we) would expect.

God chooses His friends differently than most people. Most of us choose our friends by what we think we may gain from them, what they may contribute to my life—help, humor, happiness.

God chooses His friends according to what He thinks *they may gain* from Him! What He can provide for them that they cannot provide for themselves.

Sometimes, we judge God as a poor friend because He does not give us what we want from Him when we want it, but He has promised to provide what we *cannot* provide for ourselves.

So, if we ask God to provide what He expects us to provide for ourselves, we will be frustrated. He is not stingy; it is we who are lazy, or afraid to try.

Look at who Jesus called “friend.”

- He called those who worked for Him “friend.” (Matthew 20:13)
- He called those who tried to take advantage of Him “friend.” (Matthew 22:12)
- He called those who betrayed Him “friend.” (Matthew 26:50)
- He called those who needed His help “friend.” (Luke 5:20)
- He called those who cared for Him “friend.” (John 11:11)
- He called those who trusted Him “friend.” (James 2:23)

Jesus was very friendly with the outcasts, with those others ignored, rejected. Are you Jesus’ friend? You could be. You should be!

Pastor Chuck Smith hated hippies, because he didn’t understand what motivated them. He didn’t understand what they were seeking or trying to do with their lives. But they started coming to his church and he observed their sincere desperation for God’s truth and joy in the Spirit’s presence.

Existing members of his church were not so impressed, and that created tension. But the pastor’s heart was melting, and Jesus’ love was filling him up. In a scene from the film, Jesus Revolution, Pastor Smith, in the very early days, told his divided congregation what God had put in his heart:

“If you feel like you’re an outcast, then join us here.

“If you feel like you’re misunderstood and judged, this is where you belong.

“If you feel ashamed or trapped in something you’ve done or are doing, you will find forgiveness and freedom right here.

“This is your home.”

If you’re one who prefers religious dignity and propriety, those may sound like fighting words, but if you’re one whom those words describe, it may sound instead like heaven on earth.

That’s what the friendship of Jesus is like.

A hymn published by Joseph Ludgate in 1898 gives a timeless message...

A friend of Jesus, oh what bliss
That one so weak as I
Should ever have a friend like this
To lead me to the sky

A friend when other friendships cease,
A friend when others fail,
A friend who gives me joy and peace,
A friend who will prevail.

Friendship with Jesus
Fellowship divine
Oh, what blessed, sweet communion
Jesus is a Friend of mine

Friendship is a two-way street... It's one thing to not do evil things, and quite another to do good things.

Friendship is a two-way street... With one hand, reach out to God for the love that you need. With the other hand, reach out to others with the love that they need.

What is the love that you need?

- Forgiveness (when you've done wrong)
- Healing (when you're hurt or wounded)
- Companionship (when you're lonely)
- Confidence (when you have doubts or suspicions)
- Courage (in the face of anxieties or fears)
- Strength (when you're weak)
- Joy (when you're filled with sorrow)

This was so beautifully conveyed in a more recent song by Church Girard and recorded by the band Love Song in 1972. Read closely these words:

We're all gathered here
Because we all believe
If there's a doubter in the crowd
We ask you not to leave

Give a listen to His story
Hear the message that we bring
Feel His faith swell up inside you
Lift your voice with us and sing

Accept Him with your whole heart
And use your own two hands

*With one, reach out to Jesus
And with the other, bring a friend*

Many know Him well
Others just by name
If you don't know for what He stands
You've really much to gain

With faith you can move mountains
These are common words but true
We aren't quite a mountain
But He's moved us here to you

*Accept Him with your whole heart
And use your own two hands
With one, reach out to Jesus
And with the other, bring a friend
And with the other, bring a friend*

Friendship is a two-way street... With one hand, reach out to God for the love that you need. With the other hand, reach out to others with the love that they need.

Love comes in many forms, but it always shows up in these ways: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness (humility), and self-control.

Joy – We were made by God to enjoy Him and all that He made for us; that's why we long for joy, but too often settle for temporary happiness. When we love others, we help them find joy in Jesus, too.

Peace – Jesus, the Prince of Peace, came to bring us peace—forgiveness for our sins and restoration to relationship with God our Father. When we let His love fill us, our peace begins to overflow.

Patience – In love, God shows extreme patience with our faltering faith (two steps forward, one step backward) and teaches us, in turn, to be patient with God's timing, with our own slow growth, and with the weaknesses of others. That is love.

Kindness – How kind has God been with you when you did not deserve it? What about those times He did something special for you that you hadn't even thought to ask Him? Could you, in gratitude, follow His example and extend unearned kindness to others? Could you love like that?

Goodness – God will never harm you. His love for you is so strong. Goodness does no harm to others, but goodness goes beyond *not harming* to blessing, encouraging, providing what others need.

Faithfulness – God is faithful to His word; He keeps His promises because He loves us. That’s why we read the Bible—to learn His plan and cooperate with Him. Do you keep your word to others? Even when it hurts? Even when it costs more than you expected? That’s what Jesus did for us.

Humility – Almighty God so loved us that He humbled Himself to become one of us, to walk among us, to serve us, and to save us. His same Spirit now lives in us so that we can follow His example and live, not to be served, but to serve God for His glory, and serve others for their good.

Self-control – Perhaps the first evidence of love is self-restraint for the sake of another. God restrains His judgment and our condemnation, so that His Spirit might transform our hearts and lives. We love, too, when we restrain our anger and our inclination to cancel others or enact vengeance and instead prayerfully give them an opportunity to change and grow with Christ. This is the love that brought us to Jesus, and it will do the same for others.

Paul called this the “fruit of the Spirit”—that means it is what the Holy Spirit produces in the life of one who follows Jesus closely—is Jesus’ love in action, flowing through those who trust Christ and obey the Spirit’s leading.

Give It Away!

We need to receive love in order to give love, or we will soon be depleted. You must keep your well full of fresh water. Yesterday’s (or last Sunday’s) fellowship with Jesus won’t suffice for today. I know there can be some residual, some left over, some reserve, but it won’t last, because we all LEAK.

But here’s an even greater Gospel mystery:

in giving, we receive; in losing, we gain (not passively, as by accident, but intentionally, on purpose).

Now, if you are simply giving up something (like fasting from food), that is all about you and of limited value.

For instance, during the week before Easter we meditated on God’s Chosen Fast (Isaiah 58) in our early morning Prayer Calls. We learned that God’s Chosen People, the Jews, fasted often as part of their regular religious expression, but for many of them it had become mere routine, and God didn’t like that. He confronted and corrected them:

“This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with Me” (v.4)

“Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord?” (v.5)

“No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.” (vv.6-7)

Fasting should be for someone ELSE. It's not about what you give up; it's about what you give away! Fasting positions one spiritually to hear the voice of the Lord and do His will.

Friendship with Jesus is something to receive and embrace, but it is also something to share by giving it away. Your friendship with Jesus will grow exponentially as you give it away, by showing it to and sharing it with others.

Friendship with Jesus is a two-way street... With one hand, reach out to God to receive more of His love. And with the other hand, reach out to someone else to show and share His love.

That's really what it's all about. Are you a friend of Jesus? Does He know it?