



## EXPLORING FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

### - DEEPENING FRIENDSHIPS

- **Keeping your relationship fresh...** There is a certain peace and joy attached to significant relationships that can slip into comfort and predictability with time. Have the dynamics of your relationship with Jesus become an obligation? Maybe it's time to shake things up a bit?
- **Don't be satisfied with shallow...** It requires a great deal of objectivity to evaluate your personal relationships. That's part of what makes them challenging. Most married couples think their relationships are maybe not the best, but surely not the worst. If you ask them to grade the quality of their relationship with their spouse, most would give it a 7 or 8. Yet if you ask them what it would take to get it to a 9, most wouldn't be able to give you an answer. Would you say you have a relationship with Jesus or a friendship with him? Maybe it's actually more of a transactional relationship, based upon what each of you bring to the table. ***The truth is, in order to deepen your friendship with Jesus you have to admit to some degree of shallowness or there's no room to grow!***
- **Giving more than you receive...** A lot of people who are struggling in relationship with a close friend or spouse say things like, "I'm just not getting what I need out of this relationship." Rarely, do they see the answer to the struggle is to **give** your way into a healthier place.
- **Turning the corner...** Today's message is not for the faint of heart, but for those who really want to go deeper in their Friendship with Jesus. The key is to not state with a plan, but a person. The person of the Holy Spirit. Remember, If Jesus needed the power of the Holy Spirit to do ministry while he was here on the planet, so will you! Another way of looking at it is, **"It takes God to love God!"**

### - EXPLORING FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

- **Take a risk...** What does it mean to trust Jesus with your future?
  - Most of us rarely risk discomfort, let alone failure. **What do you feel would be a really risky thing to consider?** Remember, faith means taking a risk.
  - <sup>28</sup> Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." <sup>29</sup> "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. <sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. **"You have so little faith,"** Jesus said. **"Why did you doubt me?"** (Matt. 14:28-31 NLT-SE)
  - <sup>7</sup> It was **by faith** that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith. <sup>8</sup> It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to

*leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. **He went without knowing where he was going.*** (Heb. 11:7–8 NLT-SE)

- What would the conversation sound like with Jesus if you were actually facing risk? What would you ask him for? What are you convinced you could **only** with the help of the Holy Spirit?
- **Wrestle with control...**What would it feel like to really let go?
  - **The healthy place to start might be to honestly articulate your “relationship” with control.** How does it work for you? What do you get out of it? What do you think will change if you actually give up control?
    - <sup>6</sup> **Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.** <sup>7</sup> *Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.* (Phil. 4:6–7 NLT-SE)
    - We must learn to **accept that we cannot control the people** who make up the world around us- collectively or individually. The ones who have figured this out have stopped trying to exert power over others, and have learned to focus solely on controlling themselves. **Self-control, in fact, decreases the drive to control** those around us. This is probably one of the reasons why self-control is in the list of fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. In resisting this craving, we fight for contentment in the simple act of letting go of control over others, of influencing people to live the way we see fit, realizing we are actually not in control of anyone except ourselves-and sometimes, not even that... ~ The Abiding Life, by John Houston
  - Pick one area of control you’re ready to let go of and work through how **letting go** might impact the dynamics of your relationship with Jesus.
- **Do something new together...**Take a walk, enjoy a sunset, watch people, stand in the rain, go shopping, etc.
  - The point is to let your friendship with Jesus out of the closet! See what it looks like outside the bounds of, “What can I do for you God?” It’s not just taking him with you as you go about *your* day, but going to a place and doing something *with him* you’ve never done before. Don’t forget to pick-up a souvenir along the way to remind you of the trip!
    - <sup>5</sup> *He told them, “Go into the middle of the Jordan, in front of the Ark of the LORD your God. Each of you must pick up one stone and carry it out on your shoulder—twelve stones in all, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel.* <sup>6</sup> **We will use these stones to build a memorial.** *In the future your children will ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ <sup>7</sup> Then you can tell them, ‘**They remind us** that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant went across.’ These stones will stand as a memorial among the people of Israel forever.”* (Josh. 4:5–7 NLT-SE)
    - From the book, **Hinds Feet On High Places**, by Hannah Hurnard...“O my Lord,” she cried, “I thank thee for leading me here. Behold me, here I am, empty as was this little cove, but waiting thy time to be filled to the brim with the flood-tide of Love.” Then she picked up a little piece of quartz and crystal which was lying on the rocky cliff and **dropped it beside the other memorial stones in the little bag which she carried with her.**”
  - If you really want to stretch yourself, ask him, “**Where have you always wanted to take me, Jesus?**” then let him take you there, then you share that experience with him.
- **Be brutally honest...**Tell Jesus something you’ve never shared with anyone else.
  - Revealing your heart to your best friend will often change the dynamics of your relationship with them. **What do you sense will change in your heart** when you share something with Jesus you’ve never shared with anyone?
    - *The LORD is **close to all** who call on him, yes, to all **who call on him in truth.*** (Psa. 145:18 NLT-SE)

- *But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will **worship the Father in spirit and in truth**. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way.* (John 4:23 NLT-SE)
- **Honestly, what are you afraid of?** Make a list, then let Jesus explain to you how he will set you free in those specific areas of fear. What are you excited about in the future? Let Jesus speak into you're excitement. How does that feel?
- **Dream with Jesus...**Not just dreaming *of* him, but dreaming *with* him.
  - **What are dreams?** Are they something that's common to man, but not experienced by Jesus? Can God "dream" if he knows everything (omniscience)?
  - God does communicate with us through dreams. **Tania Harris** considers three ways to know if your night-time dreams are actually "God-dreams," or just pizza:
    - **It Comes with a Supernatural Sign**
      - **This first one is perhaps the easiest. You can tell if it's a God-dream if it contains some element of the supernatural.** There is information in the dream that obviously comes from heaven – something you wouldn't ordinarily know or that points to a future time. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would help us by 'speaking of things to come' (John 6:13-14) and that when we call to God, he will tell us 'unsearchable things we do not know' (Jeremiah 33:3).
      - Remember, **God's heart is to help us discern his voice if we are listening for it.** So he builds in supernatural signs for us – little indicators to show us it is him. We see this happening in Jesus' ministry. Jesus spoke and signs 'followed him' to confirm the message (John 6:26). God wanted the people who were listening to understand that this was a word from God.
      - **The confirming sign may be something simple...** like the pastor at church preaches the same message you've just received in a dream. Or events happen that day that echo what you've seen in the night. Perhaps a friend calls and repeats the same message, or the scene plays out before your eyes that very day.
  - **It is Part of an Ongoing Conversation**
    - **Secondly, we recognize God's voice in a dream because it is part of an ongoing conversation.** Dreams are one of the ways God speaks to us but it's not the only way. It's just one mode of communication he uses in the context of an ongoing relationship. So if you have a dream you think may be from God, ask yourself, what has God been speaking to me about lately? What prayers have I been praying?
    - God knows us intimately. He knows what we are experiencing, he knows our prayers and what has already been said. So we learn to recognize his voice as we continue the conversation with him. **It is about recognizing the voice you know and love.** Obviously this gets easier with time – just like any relationship.
  - **It Contains Divine Wisdom**
    - **A third way of identifying if a dream is from God, is by looking at the nature of its message.** In amongst all the jumbled imagery of your dreams, sometimes there's one that stands out. It tells a story that rings in your spirit; it answers a question you've been asking, or provides wisdom for a situation you're facing. It resonates with what God has already been saying to you – and it sounds like something God would say.
    - Of course, sometimes we can have a natural dream that sheds light on our situations as well. Our brains are constantly working to solve problems and find answers whether we are sleeping or awake.

- **Ultimately we need to learn to discern the voice of God in the night in the same way that we discern his voice in the day.** We recognize his voice speaking to us in ongoing conversation whether it's through the Scriptures, a sermon, a still small voice, an impression and through a dream. Does it produce the fruit of the Spirit? Does it lead us to worship him? Is it something Jesus would say?
- **Collaborate creatively...**Write a story, song or poem together.
  - Can you imagine working with Jesus on a project? What would it be like to create something, **not just for him, but with him?**
    - Missions leader **Ted Esler** says, "Theologians have long discussed what it really means to be made in His image. Our ability to create and be creative is certainly an expression of Him in us. Our creativity is authored by Him and comes from His hand. It is one of the most important ways that we can imitate Him. When we create, we are simply acting out one purpose for which He formed us. **He is extending His creativity through us.**"
    - <sup>13</sup> *You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup> Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! **Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.** (Psa. 139:13–14 NLT-SE)*
  - **You could start by asking him what he wants to do through you** and then inviting to help you get there. What would that process look like?
- **Prioritize together...**Come to some agreement with Jesus about what's important and what's not (*an extremely insightful practice!*).
  - Sit down with Jesus and ask him **what attracts his attention?** What types of situations is he drawn to and why?
  - After spending some time listening to Jesus' heart, spend some time sharing your thoughts and feelings with him. What frustrates you when you think of where you feel pulled to spend your time? **What would you love to spend time doing if money, productivity or the expectations of others were not an important consideration?**
    - <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?" <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments." (Matt. 22:36–40 NLT-SE)
  - Then, together with Jesus, **make a list** of what's important and what's not do important. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you live out these new priorities.
    - *Above all, constantly chase after the realm of God's kingdom and the righteousness that proceeds from him. Then all these less important things will be given to you abundantly.* (Matt. 6:33 TPT)

## - A QUICK NOTE ON JOURNALING

- **Most people can think faster than they can write**, making journaling a somewhat tedious process. It takes time. You have to SLOW DOWN. Journaling can be a form of worship. In solitude, we can explore the blessing of writing our hearts to God. We don't have to be professional writers, or even good writers - it's all about the passion for God in our hearts, coming out. Journals are powerful tools for recording thoughts, prayers, fears and miracles in our lives and can be a truly beneficial practice in deepening your Friendship with Jesus.

- **Benefits of Journaling:**

- **Journaling Creates a Record for Yourself...**Having a record for yourself to look back on is probably the most obvious benefit to journaling, but the memories you preserve by journaling aren't just for your sake.
  - **Journaling Creates a Record of God's Providence...**By reading your own journal's record of God's providence in the past you can be emboldened to believe that He will yet again be faithful to you in the future.
  - **Journaling Makes You a Clearer Thinker...**The process makes you burn off the dross of half-formed thoughts and clarify opaque reasoning. Turning thoughts into words clarifies your thinking.
  - **Journaling Helps in Making Tough Decisions...**When faced with a weighty life decision, you're able to look back to your journal after weeks or months of processing to find pages of notes of you and Jesus talking through pros and cons, outcomes and consequences, ambitions and fears.
  - **Journaling Solidly Documents Prayer...**Just as a lack of focus in Bible study can be helped by journaling, so too a struggle to concentrate while praying may be assisted by the act of writing your prayers out in a journal.
  - **Journaling Provides a Place to Record Insights Gained from Studying Scripture...**Since we usually journal in conjunction with studying the Bible, thoughts concerning the Scriptures we are reading frequently color our entries. Yet, I tend to forget the lessons the Holy Spirit has shown me and we need reminding. It is not an infrequent occurrence to be delightfully surprised when reading old journals, stumbling across some profound insight into a passage which we had long forgotten, written by your own hand. If not for our journal, those insights would not have been preserved for us.
- Here are some **Basics for Journaling** that may get you thinking a bit. If you don't like them, head to the World Wide Web. There is no shortage of ideas for starting a journal there:
    - **Reflect...**Who are you? What is your background? What experiences brought you to this time and place in your life?
    - **Release...**What life changing mistakes have you made? Are there any buried mistakes in your life that still hold you back? Have you released your mistakes to God, so you can experience His true blessings for your life?
    - **Surrender...**What event or series of events in your life brought you to your knees? Where did you focus your thoughts and efforts during crisis? When did you turn it all over to God?
    - **Praise...**What victories have you experienced in your life? What blessings has God brought your way? Think about God's role in your life, and give Him thanks for all you have.