

Demolishing the Performance Trap That's Drowning Your Peace

When we look at the differences between slavery (the way God views it) and friendship, we see the reason that Jesus longs to call us “friends”—and why we tend to miss the incredible importance of this altogether:

“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. I no longer call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, for everything that I have heard from My Father have I made known to you” (John 15:14-15).

As a slave, I must obey my master's commands. I have no right to ask for an explanation and am granted no privilege of insight into the plans or the heart of my master. His commands and precepts must be followed to the letter without question and with no expectation of intimacy.

This is the heart of religion. It articulates the rules but fails to plumb the depths of the heart that made them. Therein we see the religion many of us have been exposed to. We were told it would give us life, but in its lovelessness, it has brought only disappointment.

With a friendship, however, comes intimacy and trust, a sharing of deep secrets and intentions of the heart. Jesus wants to call us “friends” just as He did the 12. The emptiness so many of us have felt can be filled only within the intimacy of friendship with God and all that the word friend implies. Slavery, no matter how well intentioned, can never satisfy the emptiness.

In the natural, my son will always be my son, and I will love

him as such as long as I'm alive. If we stopped there, however, we would fall short of a greater glory and a deeper love. In the natural, my son has become my friend and my partner in ministry and has grown to be more than a son to me. Few of us, however, have ever experienced such a shift into friendship with God. It's time we did!

Friendship cannot happen in a vacuum. The deepest love and intimacy are built when two parties sacrifice together, paying a price together for a great purpose beyond themselves. A friend feels in himself the heart of his friend.

My own son, who serves as my co-pastor, becomes more than my son—he becomes my friend—when I can trust him with the flock I serve and love. I know that he focuses his heart beyond himself and his personal need, that he gives his care and his love to the things that matter to me. When he fails, I know his heart breaks, and that he does what must be done to heal the wound and restore trust.

Because this is the heart of what our Father in heaven asks of us, I ask nothing less of those I call my friends on earth. Grace lies in the fact that my friendship with God isn't based on the perfection of my performance but on the brokenness of my heart toward Him.

How deeply do you and I care for what God feels? When a friend hurts, I hurt. I feel it inside of me, as my own hurt. Am I that way with God? Can we move beyond use and abuse of our Lord, taking salvation for granted, and learn to feel what He feels? When He hurts, do we hurt?

When we see a messed-up, broken, and lost individual, do we see what Jesus sees? Would we have seen the potential evangelist in the immoral Samaritan woman at the well who had been married five times and was living with someone she was not married to? Every man in town knew her. No respectable woman would befriend her.

I often pray: “Lord! Would You trust us with another pulse of Your revival Spirit and power even though we blew it in the past? We didn’t really understand, but You’ve labored long over us and we’ve said, ‘Yes, Lord, change us.’ Would You trust us once more to be stewards of a great outpouring?”

Can we be His friends? I have learned to be a son of God. I am becoming His friend. When that happens, something changes so deep inside as to leave no room for disappointment. My heart is full! {eoa}

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