

7 Ways Jesus Picked His Friends

When most people think of how to choose their friends they have more of a worldly, casual concept rather than a biblical one. In John 15:15 Jesus told his disciples He called them friends and not servants. Since the Kingdom of God is based upon relationship and not ministry, it is important we know how to choose our friends wisely.

Many churches and even Christians attempt to engender friendships merely to have nice fellowship together. However, true kingdom fellowship should be with the ultimate goal of getting closer to someone to advance kingdom purposes. Most folks are too quick to call someone a friend and/or choose friends just because they have a few things in common. Choosing friends should be a lot more important than just picking as a friend someone you merely work with or enjoy watching a football game with. Merely liking someone should not be the only criteria.

There are many people I would like to consistently hang out with. But when it comes to the kingdom there is more to it than that. I have to ask myself if I am called to build with someone before I make a long-term commitment to him or her. The reason is obvious: A person's destiny is often determined by those closest to them in regards to quality time spent, mutual goals and common purpose. You are whom you choose to "hang with" the most.

The following are some of the criteria Jesus had before He chose who would be His friends:

1. He prayed about it.

In Luke 6:12-13 Jesus prayed all night before He chose the twelve closest people to Him. This shows His choice of a

friend was not haphazard; neither should ours be.

2. His friends lived lives of obedience to God.

In John 15:14 Jesus said "I call you friends if you do what I command you." It would be foolish for a believer to make their closest friends and confidantes people who live purposeless lives before the Lord. This is not to say that we cannot have friends who do not follow Christ. Jesus at times spent time with sinners (Luke 7:34). However, He did not hang out with them merely to have a good time but to win them to His Father so they would eventually live a life of obedience. Also, these "sinners" were not the ones He invested the most time with unless they became His disciples. Paul encouraged Timothy to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22).

Consequently, we should not be close friends with someone unless they are serious about pursuing the things of God.

3. Jesus chose His friends to be with Him in order to send them out.

Mark 3:14 teaches that the primary expectation Jesus had at first with those He chose as friends was to spend time together. They had to learn to "do life" together, not just Bible studies and attend synagogue. However, the ultimate result of their proximity to Him was to be sent out to preach. After all, how could they proclaim a Jesus they did not know and how could they know Him unless they spent quality time with Him? No one should be quick to call someone a friend before they have spent much quality time with them and know them personally.

4. Jesus chose friends He could share His heart with.

John 15:15 teaches us that Jesus shared His heart with His friends who understood Him. In Matthew 13:11 Jesus told His friends "To you it has been given to understand the secrets of

the kingdom of heaven but to them (non-friends) it has not been given." If someone cannot understand your heart or believe in your vision it will be difficult for them to be a true kingdom friend.

5. Jesus proactively chose His friends.

John 15:16 teaches us (in the context of His choosing friends) that people did not choose Him but vice versa. Although this passage is also referring to salvation, it also shows that His methodology for choosing friends was proactive (not reactive) based on their calling to build with Him. Consequently, we should determine in our hearts who we should pursue in a friendship. Don't merely pick those who desire to be close to you; proactively choose people based on a leading of the Lord. Not everyone who wanted to be close to Jesus were given that access; out of the multitudes He only had an inner circle of three, then 12, and then 70.

The others only had access to Him during brief moments of their lives. If you are going to be fruitful in the kingdom you cannot spend a lot of time with every person you meet. For example I do not feel guilty for not answering every Facebook message or email sent to me; if I did I would either suffer burnout, leave important work undone, or lose my primary focus and miss my calling.

6. Jesus's friends received His hard sayings.

In John 6:66-68 many of His disciples left Him because they could not receive the meat of the Word! His true friends were thus separated from those who were merely temporary acquaintances. Your true friends will stand by you even when God gives you a hard saying and/or call to do something that is not understood by many other people.

7. Jesus's friends were those who stood by Him during His trials.

Luke 22:28-29 shows that His closest friends were those who stuck it out with Him during His earthly trials. God will often allow you to go through a severe personal or ministerial trial to test those around you to demonstrate who your real friends are. You can only build with those who are faithful to you during difficult times and not only when things are going well.

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