

Is Jesus Your Friend? – by Thailer Jimerson

I know. The clichéd title feels a little icky. If a televangelist (or any evangelist) asks you this question with a sentimental smile, the feeling would be akin to how you would feel as an adult trying to take seriously a show such as The Wiggles or The Teletubbies. But Christianity is really all about that question.

It's understood from the inside that our faith is not really "religion" in the typical sense. What I mean is, it's not less than obeying the laws of God and modifying our behavior to what it should have been to begin with – *but it is much, much more*. Christianity, in Jesus's own words, is an invitation to friendship with the Creator of the cosmos. Jesus, in a very revolutionary statement, invited his followers to be his friends in John 15.14f. That means that I look at my faith in the same way I look at my friendship with other people.

What does it mean, then, to really be a friend to Jesus?

First, it means to be hurt when he is hurt. True friendship can only exist where empathy is present. You find yourself literally in sync emotionally with your friend so that when they're displeased, you're displeased. When they're happy, you're happy. When they are suffering, you're in the hole with them. When you see things that displease the Lord – do you feel that in your own heart? What about when YOU fail him (as is inevitable)? Do you feel that?

Second, it means you long to know him. True friendship can only exist where there is the desire to know another. You want to know their history, how they think, what makes you both so similar (or different). You long to spend time with them because you appreciate them so much. Do we really know who Jesus is? Does he walk with us? Do you meet the Lord regularly in the scriptures?

Third, it means he has a significant influence on you. True friendship can only exist where there is positive, character-changing influence and mentorship going on. You're friends because you can add something to each other's pot. Face it: unfortunately, some of us are friends with those who bring us down because they influence us – but good friends make us better people. Has our proximity to the Lord influenced us for the better? Has he borne such an influence on us that we begin to think, speak and act like him?

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