

Becoming Best Friends with God

God wants to be your best friend. God's relationship with you has many aspects, Creator, Maker, Lord, Master, Judge, and Savior. But the most shocking truth is He wants to be your friend! In Eden, Adam and Eve had ideal relationship with God, not rituals, ceremonies, or religion - a relationship unhindered by guilt and fear - they walked with God.

After the Fall that ideal relationship with God was lost. Only a few people had friendship with God - Abraham, Moses, David, Noah, Job, even Enoch who never experienced death but was taken to be with God. Fear of God and not friendship was more common in the Old Testament.

Then Jesus changed things when he paid for our sins - the veil of the temple split - direct access to God was available again unhindered. We can approach God anytime. Jesus said, "I no longer call you servants, but friends (2 Cor 5:18). The word here for "friend" does not mean a casual relationship but a close, trusted and intimate relationship. Like a best man at a wedding, or the king's closest friends, not like his relationship with his servants.

God wants you to know Him intimately. He planned the universe, orchestrated history, even the details of our own individual lives, so we would be His friends (Acts 17:26,27). Knowing and loving God is our greatest privilege, and being known and loved by God is God's greatest pleasure.

Now it is truly hard for us to imagine how a close friendship is possible with God - God being perfect, omnipotent, and invisible, while we are finite, and sinful human beings. It's easier and sometimes more preferred by us to understand God in a Master-servant, creator, created, father, child relationship, than as our friend!

So here are some secrets to developing a deep friendship with God:

- 1) Know God by having constant conversation with Him. You will never grow close to God simply by attending church once a week. Friendship with God is built by sharing all of your life's experiences with God. Now a daily devotional time is important, but God wants to be more to you than an appointment in your schedule. God wants open-ended conversation throughout the day about whatever you are thinking or doing at the moment. In the book "Practicing the Presence of God" written in the 17th century a man by the name of Lawrence talks about how he turned menial tasks like preparing meals

into acts of praise and communion with God. The key to friendship with God is not changing what you do as much as changing your attitude toward what you do.

Whatever you do for yourself (eating, working etc.) you begin to do it for God and praise Him for that opportunity. You become more aware of God in each step of your day's life. Lawrence said the reason "retreats" are so important (to get away to worship and fellowship) is that we haven't learned to practice God's presence in our lives all the time - worshipping God through all the common tasks of the day. In the garden of Eden worship was a constant walk with God, and because God is with you all the time, no place is any closer to God than where you are right now!

2) Pray shorter, conversational prayers rather than long and complex prayers. Choose a brief sentence to be repeated during the day like, "you are with me" or "your grace is enough", or "help me trust you more", or "you are my God!" By praying these short phrases you will embed them into your heart with practice.

Just as great musicians practice scales in order to play beautiful music with ease, so you must force yourself to think about God at many and different times of the day. You must train your mind to remember God more often so you can be His friend. If you seek God's presence just to make you feel good you have missed the point. We don't praise God to feel good but to do good.

3) By continual meditation on God's word establish friendship with God. It is impossible to know God without knowing what He says. What God says is what God is like. You can't love God unless you know Him and you can't know Him without knowing His word! Now you can't spend all the time studying the Bible, but you can recall verses and mull them over in your mind. Meditation was never meant to be some mysterious ritual, it is simply supposed to be "focused thinking!" For instance, if you think about a problem you have and you worry about it, you are meditating. Just switch your attention from your problems to Bible verses. The more you meditate on God's word the fewer problems you will see fit to worry about.

4) Lastly, friends share secrets. God will share his secrets with you in the same sense, (secrets in His Word, as well as His Spirit's influence over your mind and your thinking) as God shared His secrets with Daniel, Paul, Abraham, and His other friends down through time. Read the Bible, listen to a sermon, pray continually, think about God's desires and renew them over and over again in your mind. The more time you spend reviewing what God says the more you will understand the secrets of this life that most people miss! (Psalm 25:14)

So go ahead, dare to be a friend of God, you will be glad you did!