

## Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Relationship with God: “ Friend ”

Good morning!

We have already discussed the first two or five relationships with God:

- Creatures in his creation, and
- Bond-slaves – our foundational relationship.

But there is more. Much more. Our third relationship with God is that of FRIEND.

One of the most astonishing statements in the Bible is found on the lips of Jesus at the Last Supper:

*John 15:15 I no longer call you servants [bondslaves], because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*

This is astonishing news: the Creator of the universe wants to be friends with me – with you! We can understand the dominant-submissive, over-under relationship of Creator to creature – and that of Master to bond-slave.

But this is something radically different. Friends relate on a somewhat peer basis. The relationship is voluntary on both their parts.

Friends enjoy being together – doing things together – just hanging out together.

Healthy friendships share similar values and priorities. They trust each other. They freely share what they have. They are slow to be offended. They quickly forgive. They laugh together and they cry together. They care for each other. They share life together.

True friendships can survive disappointments, separations, and even suffering. A true friend doesn't quickly abandon a friend struggling with grief, personal failure, or sickness.

Righteous friendship is one of God's greatest gifts to humanity. There is a New Testament word for it: phileo. Love for other people.

A person who is “in Christ” and who has “Christ is in him” never loses their deep sense of awe and reverence for God – never treats God casually or flippantly or with disrespect. At the same time, daily relationship with God is relaxed, informal, and intimate.

In the early 1980s I began church planting and leadership training in Mombasa with Emmanuel Chai. Emmanuel is a powerful man of God who worked as a Brook Bond Tea sales representative. Over the next two years we baptized hundreds of new believers and started eight new churches. We witnessed God heal and deliver many people. Emmanuel eventually became the overseer of more than 75 churches.

But before that, we both went through two years of severe testing. I returned to America very sick and Emmanuel was driven out of the church he pastored. We both went through financial, family, and other struggles.

Many years later, I heard Emmanuel tell a group of pastors, “I was able to survive that difficult season because I experienced God as my friend. His daily friendship brought me through.”

I can testify to the same. The Westminster Confession of Faith says it is the plan of God that his People “enjoy Him” now and forever. Not just fear him. Not just obey him. Not just serve him, but **enjoy** Him.

And that enjoyment is continual... an hour-by-hour friendship in which we simply enjoy knowing God, loving him warmly, worshipping him throughout the day, and delight in doing the ministry of Jesus along with his Holy Spirit.

Before you came to Christ, you lived in a state of separation and hostility with God.

But now, as you live in faithful obedience and service to him, he peacefully offers himself as your best friend to accompany you through all the challenges, joys, and sorrows of this life.

*John 15:15 I no longer call you servants [bondslaves], because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*

God wants to be friends with you.

Is this the God you know?

Is this the God you worship?

Is this the God you serve?

God bless you-



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