



Inspirations Newsletter
(November 16, 2007)

DEVELOPING A FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

Relationships have been on my mind a lot lately. These last few months, God has been showing me the correlation between developing a new friendship and how we can develop our friendship with Him.

I don't know about anyone else, but I was really struggling with the whole, "you have to spend time with God every day" concept. Mind you, it's not that I don't want to spend time with God every day. It's that I felt condemned if I didn't have a set time or a set thing I did with Him to meet that requirement, or if I happened to miss the appointed time, or didn't do anything specific that day. So, I began looking at my relationship with God from a different perspective and decided my time with Him was going to be motivated from a desire to get to know Him instead of having to meet someone's expectations, including my own.

As I began to walk out the process of spending time with God, He brought a new friend into my life, and then began showing me the process for developing friendship with Jesus is much the same process she and I experienced as we developed our relationship. I pray what I am about to share will help those who are struggling with their devotional time to move from legalistic expectations to a true desire for friendship with Jesus.

So, here are 5 Cs for developing friendship with God. While some of us are past the weekly and already onto the daily, I pray these principles will help each of us deepen our intimacy with the Lord! Let's begin:

CONNECT: with Jesus by establishing a weekly time to meet with Him. For most people, this starts out as going to church each week. But, in order to develop friendship, you have to set aside a one-on-one time where you can spend time listening and talking.

COMMUNICATE: with Jesus by getting to know Him through His Word and allowing Him to get to know you through your prayers. As you pray, allow Him to see into the most intimate areas of your life, just as He has allowed you to see into the most intimate areas of His as recorded in the Bible.

CULTIVATE: the relationship by being faithful to your weekly meeting. As time goes on, you will begin to develop intimacy with Him through this relationship. This intimacy will lead to an increased desire to spend time with your new Friend, looking forward to what He says to you and what you are bursting to share with Him.

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CULMINATE: your relationship by allowing your desire to be with your new Friend help you reach out at times other than your weekly meeting. The more your relationship grows, the more you will desire to be with Jesus. The more you desire to be with Him, the more you will purpose to spend time with Him until, one day, you will find yourself in His Presence every day, multiple times a day. He will be the One you will want to run to in good times and in bad. He will become the One you realize knows your most intimate thoughts, so you will look forward to hearing what He has to say about a situation.

CONTINUE: to grow your relationship for it is a limitless relationship without walls and without boundaries, until eventually spending time with Him is a way of life and is coming straight from your heart and not being performed out of a legalistic duty.

I sincerely believe legalistic expectations are one of the major hindrances in the Body of Christ today. Instead of desiring to be with Jesus, we try to meet people's expectations, because that's what they say we are supposed to do. Trust me, I am not advocating not having a daily devotional with Jesus. What I am advocating is to start somewhere and then build your way up from there. If you are failing at daily, start with weekly! Then, spend the rest of the week, meditating on what you and the Lord shared in your last meeting. If you enjoy journaling, do so. It will give you something to go back to during the week as you reflect on what you've already learned. I will admit, journaling has been one of the major changes I have incorporated, and it has made a huge impact on my life.

Because I like to write, journaling makes my devotional time both fun and practical. I journal things I learn, my thoughts, my prayers, questions I have, or whatever I feel led to capture. Some days I set out to learn something new; others are spent going back through my journals for a fresh perspective, looking for answers to unanswered questions, and even capturing praise reports. I'm still amazed at how many times God answers my prayers through something I have already journaled!

If I miss a day, I don't get into a panic. I start the next day from a fresh perspective. And, just like I don't wait anymore until our weekly meeting to talk or share news with my newest friend, I don't wait for my devotional time to talk or share news with my Friend Jesus. So, whether I journal or not, or set aside a specific time to be with Jesus or not, I spend time listening for and talking Him every day! When I'm excited, I tell Him that. When I'm sad, I tell Him that. When I have a question, I ask Him. If I feel like He is trying to tell me something, I try my best to listen. Some days I succeed; some days I don't. But, I sincerely believe I give it my best effort, in that moment, for where I am in my relationship with God.

The beautiful thing is that as long as we are on this journey called life, we have a chance to develop more intimacy with our Lord Jesus. But, we each have to start from where we are. So, no matter how far along we are, or even if we are just starting, we

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can use these 5 C's to help us develop a more intimate, more meaningful relationship with the One we want to call us His friend.

Keep in mind, every friendship requires some effort on our part for it to grow. But, what we don't want to do is get bogged down in other people's expectations of how we should spend time with our Lord so what we are offering Him becomes profane fire instead of a sweet smell to Him. When we follow this progressive pattern to connect, communicate, cultivate, culminate, and continue our relationship with Jesus, we can achieve our ultimate goal, which is to "pray without ceasing" (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**).

May the Holy Spirit illuminate each of our lives and bring understanding and wisdom every time we spend time in God's Presence. I pray we will each listen to God's voice through His written word (logos) and through His Holy Spirit (rhema). I pray we will be transparent, not holding anything back from our Heavenly Father, but that our hearts would be open to hear and willing to obey that which the Holy Spirit teaches us. I pray none would be trapped in legalism or condemnation, but that all would be set free in Christ...free to love, free to serve, and free to obey! We give You all glory, all honor, and all praise Father. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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