

“Developing Your Friendship with God”
by Brother Kenneth Ray
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Friendship with God doesn't come naturally; you have to work at it. It takes desire, it takes time, and it takes energy. A Scripture that gets used (and misused) a lot says, “Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16). One thing about serpents and doves: They don't talk. If I tell you that Sister Teri is my friend, but then when I say “hi” to her, if she says, “Who are you?” then my actions don't back up what I say. There should be reflection through action.

The first building block of friendship with God is complete honesty. I must choose to be completely honest with God if I want to be His friend. I have to be honest about my faults; I have to be honest about my feelings. You don't have to be perfect to be a friend of God. None of God's friends in the Bible were perfect; they whined, accused God, and argued with God. You can be honest with God, though, Jesus can handle the truth. Abraham was allowed to question the destruction of Sodom; he challenged God about destroying the righteous with the unrighteous. David made accusations.

Psalms 55 ...Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell...

David talked about unfairness, betrayal and abandonment. Jeremiah accused God of tricking him. Job exhibited a lot of bitterness, but, in the end, God told Job's friends that Job was right, and they were wrong, and that they needed Job's prayers.

Jeremiah 29:13 ...seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

You know, sometimes I get lonely, and I'm married. Sometimes I get depressed. Being a friend of God doesn't mean that you are removed from the things of life, it just helps you deal with those things. Trials make you stronger. Flaws don't keep you from being a friend of God.

Disclosure: He already knows, but He wants you to tell Him. Sometimes we condemn ourselves, but God doesn't. Sometimes we say, “I'm doing all right,” but God says, “No, you're not.” Sometimes we have to confess hidden anger or resentment in certain areas of our lives. Sometimes we feel cheated or disappointed. Sometimes we have to yell or get quiet. Sometimes we just feel bitterness. Just let it go. When we get to Heaven, we will see it in a different light.

God always has our best interests at heart. He may not always be fair, but He is always just. The antidote is to understand that even when it is painful, even when we don't understand why something is happening, God is still acting in our best interests. Job said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...” (Job 29:13). Revealing feelings is the first step to healing.

Psalms 142:2 I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.

David talks about, not just complaining, but pouring out his complaint before God. God is okay with it if you have doubt. The Apostles doubted, Sarah doubted, but I

must choose to obey God in faith, even if I have doubt. You have to obey your parents, or your boss, or supervisor, or law enforcement officers, but, normally, we don't feel that we have to obey our friends.

John 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

We don't obey out of a sense of duty, or out of fear. We obey out of love and trust. We follow out of gratitude for what He has done, for the love that He gave. The more we do that, the closer we draw to Him, and our friendship deepens. Unbelievers often think that we have to obey God out of obligation, or out of guilt ("Oh, I've done so many things wrong, I have to make it up to God."), or because we are afraid He will punish us. But, we are forgiven; we are the servants and friends of Jesus.

John 15:9-11 ...my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

He wants our joy to be full. It's not always in the big opportunities; it's in the little things that we encounter every day. We must choose to value what God values; friends usually care about what their friends care about. When something good happens for your friend, you rejoice with them; when something bad happens to your friend, it's like something bad happened to you, too.

Psalms 69:9 ...the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

What does God care about most? the redemption of His people. He wants all of His lost people found. The second thing is that we share that news with others.

I must desire friendship with God more than anything else. Getting someone saved isn't that hard; getting them to *stay* saved is the hard part.

Psalms 63:3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

Jacob wrestled with an angel all night long, because nothing was more important to him at the time than getting that blessing. God's friendship has to be that way. The truth is, you're as close to God as you choose to be.

Joshua 24:15 ...choose you this day whom ye will serve...

What is your attitude? Are you a person that God can use? Is it worth it to develop the skills and the habits to be God's friend? Don't live in the past, live in the present. The church at Ephesus lost their first love (Revelations 2:1-4). Pain is the fuel of passion. C. S. Lewis once wrote that pain is God's megaphone. Sometimes pain is just God's wake-up call. God's not mad at you, He's mad *about* you; He thinks you rock. There is, however, an easier way to get your passion back: start by asking. It takes longer for some than others, but you don't have to remain among those that have erred concerning the profession of faith.

1 Timothy 6:21 ...some professing have erred concerning the faith...