

# What About ... Being a Friend

By R. J. REGAN

*Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. "You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:13-15).*

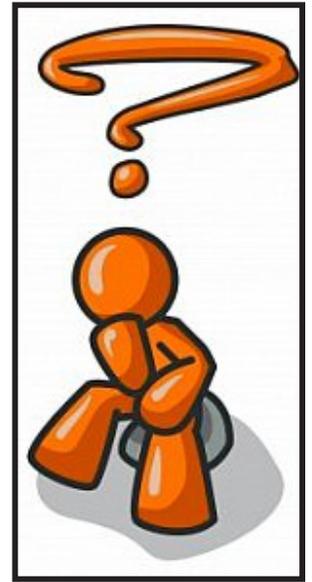
What does it mean to be a friend of Jesus?

In John 15, Jesus gave us two key components to friendship:

The **first** is **giving**. [He mentioned two things: to *lay down his life for his friends* and *all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you*.]

The **second** is **obedience** [*do what I command you*].

Jesus said He proved to be our friend because He gave to us. We prove to be His friend if we obey His commandments.



Let's think about the **first** principle. The basis of every relationship is giving. Jesus demonstrated friendship to His disciples by what He gave them. He gave them instruction, protection, salvation, the Holy Spirit and, of course, He laid *down His life for His friends*.

But that is also true of our relationships. Giving is the foundation of our relationships with our spouse, our children, and those friends we have at, say, work or school or church. As soon as we look at a friendship for what we can get, or get back, the friendship is in jeopardy. As soon as giving turns to thoughts of getting or swapping, friendship is over.

The **second** element of friendship Jesus gave in John 15 is obedience. *You are My friends if you do what I command you*. According to Jesus, He gave to His friends and His friends obey Him. If a person chooses to disobey Jesus' commands, then he or she does not qualify as His friend.

But wait a minute! Jesus was God so, of course, I should obey Him. But what about my spouse, children, and other friends? Should I obey them? The basic principle is, "Yes. If I am your friend, I will not only give to you, I will also do for you what-

ever you ask." But, we are sinful and imperfect people. These two form corollaries to the obedience principle when it comes to human friendships. That's why Apollos did not obey Paul's request for him to go to Corinth in 1 Corinthians 16, and when Paul saw that Peter was acting like a hypocrite, he criticized Peter to his face, resulting in Peter's correction (Galatians 2).

We can, therefore, conclude that the basic qualifications for friendship are **giving** and **obedience**. But when it comes to human friendships, obedience is tempered by sin and lack of omniscience. Because we are imperfect beings, we need to give grace when friends do not do what we ask, and decline unreasonable and unbiblical requests.

So friendship means I will do whatever you ask of me. The exception is only when I understand your request to come from a sinful desire or a lack of understanding. That's why Jesus said He would give to us but not obey us. Sometimes what we want is wrong or foolish.

But remember, requests among friends are based on discernment. Commands from God are not. A human friend can say "no" to a request and still be considered a friend. But friends of God do what He says. Saying "no" to God makes you His enemy.