

“LOVED, CHANGED, SENT” #2 -

“Loved by God as a Friend”

God is Love

- Love was not created at the beginning. It always was. It's eternal because love always existed within God - who is eternal. Each person of the godhead loves the other.
 - ▶ *John 14:31* “the world must learn that I [Jesus] love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.”
 - ▶ *John 15:9* “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.”
 - ▶ *1 John 4:8* “. . . God is love.”
- God can't do anything that isn't loving. He doesn't shift back and forth between love and judgment/holiness/anger. All he does is loving.
- God showed us the depths of his love when he created us knowing full well that we would reject Him and walk away from Him time and time again in every conceivable way. *That* is love.
- We were created for love - which ultimately is for the glory of God – and the sooner we get that into our heads and live that way, the better it will be for everyone! – especially us.

Friendship Love

- God as friend forms the best foundation for understanding all the other expressions of love we receive from God because of its intimacy.
- The Old Testament revelation of God doesn't emphasize this friendship aspect of God's love, but we see glimpses: Moses with God (Exodus 33:11 – “as one speaks to a friend”) and David (Psalm 38 “All my longings lie open before you, Lord...”).
- When parents have children, they often look forward to the day when their kids become their friends – mutual respect and affection.
- Without the foundation of friendship, we'll distort our awe and worship and we'll miss out on something that is basic to his love - intimacy.
- It's in Jesus that friendship comes to full light – and it's Jesus who shows us what the Father is fully like (John 1:18; Hebrews 1:3).
 - ▶ *John 15:13-15* “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because servants do not know their master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”
- 1. **He is our friend because he lays his life down for us.** He sacrifices not because he *should* but because he loves us as a friend!
- 2. **We are full partners in his mission.** He's invited us into the family business - we're partners as long as we stay connected to the Vine and draw our goals and our methods from him.
 - He's not an equal friend – he's God. So our friendship will involve his commands and our obedience, because he's our friend who

knows more than we do and has a clearer sense of why we're here on earth than we do. We obey him because he's a very wise friend.

3. **He connects with us.** ▶ *Luke 7:34* “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’”

- If he was giving them moral lectures about their sin, do you think he would have been called their friend? More likely he listened, had conversations, laughed, shared drink & food, and hugged them.
- Friendship love is “fellowship” - sharing things in common. It's not lectures or rebukes or criticism or superior attitudes. It's connecting, joining hearts, smiling about the same things.
 - ▶ *1 John 1:3* “our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”

4. **He is present with us.** ● Isn't one of the greatest gifts of friendship silence? All you want to know is that your friend is there for you. We know our friend knows us and understands us and will love us according to our needs - **then it's our job to trust the friendship.**

- If we need words, He will speak; if we need blessings, He will bless; if we need protection, He will protect; but often we need to learn to trust our friend and be glad he's with us.
 - “Trusting the Father's love for you simply means that every day, in every circumstance, you can rest assured that God knows who you are, cares more deeply about you than you do yourself, and is capable of working out his glory in you.” (“He Loves Me”, by Wayne Jacobsen (p. 153).
 - How did he relate to his disciples? “Has there ever been a friend like Jesus?” He treated them as friends even in their doubts and immaturity. He valued each one.
5. **He likes us.** ● Friends like each other. They see qualities in one another that attract them. **Do you believe God delights in you?**
- He delights in your faith in him, he delights in your abilities and strengths, he delights in your potential, and he delights in you because he created you in his image.
 - What do friends do when their friend messes up? “I Love you man/girl”. “I understand. I feel your pain. I'm here for you.”

What hinders this friendship-experience of God's love?

1. **Fear.** Fear is helpful when you don't have God's heart in you. But once you welcome his will & words into your soul, then it's all about love.
2. **Shame.** It just makes him persist even more in being your friend.
3. **Using God rather than Glorifying God.** God is our friend, but he's not an equal friend. He is to be worshipped and glorified in all we do.
4. **Busyness.** This is the great friend-killer in earthly friendships. Imagine him sitting by the phone and waiting for your call - He's really only a prayer away.