

We have difficulty with the idea of friendship with Jesus. For some, the problem is distance. Jesus seems so far away and the idea of a friendship with him seems very mystical and, frankly, kind of weird. For others, the idea of friendship with Jesus is very natural, but often the friendship becomes too familiar, where Jesus is like one of our buddies who will never tell us that trying to jump the canal on our mountain bike is not a very good idea, but instead will give us the encouragement we need to “go for it”. How do we try to have a friendship with Jesus in our modern world? Let’s spend some time exploring that this week.

## Day 1

### Look, A Squirrel

The biggest problem most of us face today in trying to pursue a relationship with Jesus is distraction. Screen time, especially on the internet, leads us to problems with focus. For most, since the advent of the internet, our ability to focus has gone down and our attention span has diminished. There is so much information on the internet, that our tolerance for any kind of boredom has evaporated. I was at a discount tire store not too long ago, and the waiting room was completely full, as is often the case. Not surprisingly, every person in the waiting room was engrossed in their phones, from playing games to scrolling social media. This sight of endless phone focus was not surprising, as it has become ubiquitous, but seeing a few magazines laying around made me remember what life was like before phones became smart, and you either leafed through a magazine that was barely interesting to you, or you just sat there with your thoughts. When I was a kid, afternoons over even weeks of boredom were not unusual, and you had plenty of time for meditation. When reading the Psalms, I picture David spending hour after hour with nothing to do but watch his sheep and think of his life, and how God interacts with it. Those Psalms that give us great strength and inspiration came out of a large amount of meditation on God and his relationship to David, and yet we only get the inspiration second hand, because David clearly did not write down everything he was thinking and feeling. If we are to find our friendship with Christ, we must make room for him.

Verses: 1 Corinthians 10:13, Joshua 1:8, Proverbs 4:25, Proverbs 19:15

Prayer Topics: Distractions (Squirrels), Routines, Priorities, Idleness

## Day 2

### I Am Soooo Tired

For all of our labor-saving conveniences, we seem to be tired most of the time. It really becomes a head scratcher, because we all know that 95% of us have easier lives than most people in history. Perhaps our tiredness comes from too little physical activity. There is, however, an alternate theory. Studies seem to indicate that the boredom killing effects of the internet and electronic devices produce an interesting side effect, and that is anxiety and burnout. We have so much information at our fingertips, and we can always find something to entertain us so we never really give our minds a chance to rest. We can research nearly every piece of information ever created. In the old days, if we wanted to cook a batch of chili for the cook-off, we would go to our cook book and look at a couple of recipes and choose one. But now, we have access to nearly every recipe ever created, and we want to choose the right one, so we go through option after option. When the cooking is done, we can get on social media and catch up with everyone we ever met, rather than placing a phone call to a close friend. Research shows that the younger generations that have grown up with this situation being the new normal are particularly prone to this anxiety and burnout. You can no longer be content with making a good choice, because the best choice is at your fingertips. In the bible, the rhythm of life was to work six days and rest on the seventh,

because God knew that we needed rest. In that rest, we found a relationship with Him. There needs to be a time when we put down the screens, slow down, and find our relationship with Christ. If we fail to discipline ourselves to this, we will always be this tired.

Verses: Matthew 11:28-30, Exodus 33:14, Hebrews 4:9-10

Prayer Topics: Boundaries, Resources, Time Management

Day 3

Hook Your Peepers On.... Friendship

When we rest in Christ, what do we do? If we are to practice a Sabbath kind of life, where we find our rest in God, what does that look like? Well, first, it means that we actually take our eyes off of all the cares and concerns of life and spend some time focusing on Jesus. It goes without saying that a friend you never talk to, never do anything with, and never make a priority will not be a friend for long. I am speaking here about a real friend, not a friend in the social media sense. To have a real friend, the relationship has to carry some weight and have some importance. If you had a friend that you spent the amount of time talking to that you do Jesus, would they remain a friend? The Sabbath was a time to stop worrying about your life and your worries and your work, and instead focus on the covenant with God. Under the new covenant, we do not need to wait for a specific day to do this, but instead can live a Sabbath life as we make time for Jesus throughout each day. What has Jesus done for you? How has Jesus acted in the world? What did Jesus do in his earthly ministry? What kind of person is Jesus, and what kind of relationship does he want with you? How has he acted in your life, and how does he want to act in your life in the future? David, in the book of Psalms, spends lots of time meditating on God and who he is, based on the law and creation. How much more would David have meditated if he knew Jesus, and had the life of Jesus to ponder? What kind of person will you become if you do what David never had the chance to do? Jesus calls his disciples friends, and you can have that friendship if you focus on it.

Verses: John 15:12-15, Psalm 25:14, James 2:23

Prayer Topics: True Friendship, Love, Trust

Day 4

Brothers Gotta Hug, Friends Not So Much

Chris Farley famously said that brothers don't shake hands, brothers gotta hug, while C. S. Lewis pointed out that friendship is standing shoulder to shoulder, facing the same direction, walking the same road together. Lewis's point was that friendships are about much more than the relationship itself, being rooted around shared interests and shared goals. If we are to be friends with Jesus, we must have the same interests as he does, and be about the same business he is about. We will plant and harvest in the same fields, and we will work to establish the same kingdom. When we have a relationship with Jesus, we do not leave him as we walk out the front door for a day of work, but we work with him throughout the day. This means that the agenda of Jesus becomes our agenda, and the labor of Jesus becomes our labor. As Jesus works to bring the kingdom of God to fruition, we work alongside him. This entails, of course, dying to our old agenda and our old life, and taking up the life of Jesus. While this sounds difficult and maybe even unpleasant, the alternative is to continue our same course...alone. Jesus will not modify his course to ours, and he will not live the life we intended to live before we met him. We have a friend in Jesus that will always be faithful, but to give us the life that is most blessed, we must follow him on the path that he is walking. True friendship with Jesus means following him, because he is

not just our friend, but also our king. In what areas of your life do you need to follow a little closer to Jesus? What will be the outcome of failing to follow in his steps? Embrace friendship with him by obeying his word.

Verses: 1 Corinthians 4:20, Romans 14:17-18, Psalm 145:13

Prayer Topics: Submission, Purpose, Direction

Day 5

Party Like It's 1999

For all of the buildup, I don't remember 1999 being much of a party. The fact that the numbers that were changing on the calendar included more zeros didn't exactly seem to correspond to having more reason to celebrate. The fact that Jesus has made us friends is a real reason to celebrate. The reality that all of creation was made with a will, an intention, a purpose gives us hope that we may have something to be happy about. With the revelation that Jesus, the creator of all things, loves us and desires our glory, and that the creation of all things includes that purpose, gives us more reason to celebrate than we could have hoped for. When we are friends with Jesus, and we understand that we are working alongside him to bring the glory of the kingdom to earth, we have joy in all of the activities of our lives, knowing that they are part of a glorious purpose. We understand that even the difficult parts of our lives are achieving for us a glory that outweighs all of the pain and suffering that we go through. People who have had to endure far more pain and suffering than we have testified to the truth of this, and they were able to have joy in the midst of trials. Joy is a major part of our friendship with Jesus, so let's pursue it with enthusiasm.

Verses: Psalm 150:1-6, 1 Corinthians 5:8, Luke 15:23-24, Ecclesiastes 3:13

Prayer Topics: Joy, Celebration, Intensity