



Links Players

12 WHO AM I?: GOD'S FRIEND

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15, NIV)

MY GOLF FRIENDS HAVE TO ENDURE much more from me than my wife does. I'm not kidding. Reports of another tumor? *OK, Lord, let's see what you're doing here and how you'll walk us through this one.* But watch me encounter a bunker with no sand in the bottom, and you'll hear me grumble and complain all the way from my double bogey to the next tee. It's pathetic, but it's what friends do for each other. Even Jesus.

Before we can realize the fullness of what it means that Jesus would call us his friends, we have to remind ourselves of the wonder of the incarnation. We may be giving Christmas a head start here, but there is no time when this does not matter: Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. So friendship with Jesus doesn't mean buddying around with another Jewish guy in First Century get-up—even a really smart and notable guy. To be friends with Jesus is to be friends with God. He is the Creator of the universe, the Holy One of Israel, the One True God, and through Christ he is your friend. I'm not sure we can ever give that enough time to sink in.

When Jesus told the disciples that they were his friends, he began by telling them they were no longer slaves. Slaves (or servants, depending on the translation you read) served a master. But in no way were masters obligated to their servants in terms of letting them inside on their thoughts and plans. The master gave directions, and the servants obeyed. No chance to ask *why*.

But Jesus was clear that the disciples' relationship with him was not like this. They were so much nearer, because Jesus had passed on to them all that the Father had shown him. With such closeness, they were friends. What a stunning turn of events!

In terms of devotion, we should probably be fired. The quality standard for holiness is elevated and its requirements are relentless. As servants, we should be escorted out of the building. On the whole, this is what we deserve.

Grace is different. It does not give us what we deserve. It forgives and then it rewards. Want to walk with Jesus? Well, here's some gospel good news: He won't turn you away. In fact, he'll make you an insider. When your heart hears that, you'll know you've found your proper identity.

Opening questions What friends do you share the game with? What are some golf behaviors they allow from you, and what are some things they have rightly called you out on?

READING Proverbs 18:24; Colossians 3:12-17; Proverbs 27:6

Nearness with Christ (Proverbs 18)

What is the difference between common friendships and those that are especially close? If you know Jesus, in what ways would you say your friendship with him outshines your other friendships? Does it amaze you that he would allow you to be so close to him?

Friends in Christ (Colossians 3)

The N in the LINKS acrostic is "Network friends together in Christ." How does this passage show us both traits of Christ himself and traits of Christ-honoring relationships? Does anything in this passage surprise you?

Faithful wounds (Proverbs 27)

How can we trust "the wounds of a friend"? What struggles might Jesus allow us to experience in order to deepen our relationship with him?
