

Have you ever felt at a loss to know what to do for a good friend? Perhaps our friend seems anxious about something. And we are troubled because our friend is troubled. We want, somehow, to “fix it.” But it isn’t clear HOW to fix it. Where do we begin? What is the right thing to say? Should we just monitor the situation until our friend reaches out to us?

But this is what friends do. We know each other well enough to sense when something is wrong, and we want to help. Why? Because none of us wants to see the people we care about suffering. Good friends both celebrate and commiserate with each other as called for. But how can we best support our friend?

Some of us might offer advice, like Job’s friends. They heard that Job was suffering terribly and wanted to help. So, they came. But they didn’t fully understand the situation. Having limited knowledge, the friends were convinced that Job had done something to offend God. So, they tried to reason with Job. The innocent don’t suffer, they said. God rewards the good, they said. If Job would only admit his sin, then God would restore him, they said. Job’s friends were trying to be helpful, but the way to help wasn’t clear to them, nor is it always clear to us.

For us, friendships are deep relationships in which we can commiserate with one another in our common humanity. With good friends, we feel comforted by knowing that we are not alone. With a trusted friend, we can talk openly about our troubles. We also create a safe space as they talk about their troubles. It’s a reciprocal relationship.

We were created as social beings. We need the companionship of others. It really is our nature to be social, to have friends, to both support and be supported by those we love, and, in general, to love one another. It was asked in the Bible, “Who is our neighbor?” We might also ask, “Who is our friend?”

Well, Jesus is our friend. What a friend we have in Jesus! Certainly, He comforts us and cares for us. He knows our innermost thoughts. He sits by our side in our hour of need. He provides for us and always knows the best way forward. He takes our hand and leads us through the Valley of Death. He cradles us in His everlasting arms. And, He is always on call, night or day.

Earlier, I said that good friendships are reciprocal relationships. So, when and how do we support Jesus? Does he ever need anything from us? Certainly, He too has emotions. When Lazarus died and Mary came out to meet Him, Jesus wept. Did he need comforting from Mary? I wonder, is our friendship with Jesus really a “friendship” or is it a one-sided relationship? What is it that He wants from us? A portion of the answer lies in Matthew 25:34-40, which ends with: *“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”* (Matthew 25:40)

Jesus tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. He says, *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* Fortunately, God does not demand that we be perfect. None of us can measure up to that, and that is why Jesus came to earth to die on the cross for us.

But what does God want in return for the friendship He offers us? Well, what God wants when it comes to us is simple. He wants us. Period. C.S. Lewis said, “God doesn’t want something from us, He simply wants us.” He wants a loving relationship with His children.

As we read the Bible, we quickly conclude that love is the foundation of everything God does. **1 John 4:8** says it outright: *"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."* He created us so that He could love us and we might love Him. He wants our love.

One of my favorite verses is **Micah 6:8**, which pretty clearly outlines what God is looking for in us:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

God is looking for the person who longs to know, understand, and be close to God. Someone who knows that God is the Lord, the omniscient, omnipresent, and sovereign God. Someone who knows that God is the God of steadfast love, justice, and righteousness on earth. Someone who knows that God is good and great and that it is a privilege to know Him. To know God is more life-giving than anything else. To know God is our purpose, our mission, and our life.

The end goal of the Christian life is to become the person God wants us to be. God longs to use us because He loves us. He’s not selfish. He doesn’t need our help. He wants to work with us. He wants our lives to matter. He wants us to have an eternal reward for what we do here on earth because He’s a good Father who wants an intimate relationship with His children.

In conclusion, God wants us to be filled with the fullness of life that comes from having a lifelong friendship with Him.

*19130 Meiggs Ln, Cupertino, CA 95014
kcritt2@aol.com*