

Both Jesus and Reverend Moon talk say about the deep meaning of friendship

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12: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13: Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14: You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15: No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. John 15:12-15

If you can love one person, God's love will be there in proportion to the depth and size of that love. If you can love many people like this, God's love will come in proportion to the greatness of that love, to the depth of that love. Good people must be able to win others, not in such a way as to conquer them, but to love them, and to bring them into greater harmony and unity. Unity is the first thing you should desire. And if you love anyone at all, you should want to love him with your whole heart, even at the cost of your life. Then you can overcome hell...

Sun Myung Moon

Both Jesus and Reverend Moon have something profound to say about the deep meaning of friendship. Both of them talk about friendship as coming from God or as a consequence of knowing God. God is the very root of friendship and before our friendships with our fellow human beings can be filled with love and reciprocity, we must know and acknowledge God. How? Friendship with Christ, following his commandment to love, doing God's will as expressed through him is the spiritual discipline that will lead us on to union with God, the goal of our quest, the essence of our yearning, the aim of spirituality.

The discipline of spiritual friendship is no less demanding, no less rigorous, no less sacrificial than any of the most difficult and exciting spiritual disciplines known to man. It is the taming and mastering of that most unpredictable and irascible "creature," the human heart, in oneself. It involves the reaching out to the strange unknown, unfathomable territory of the hearts of our fellow human beings.

The spirituality of friendship requires a commitment of the highest and most noble order (it requires selfless love), but its rewards are more than commensurate with the effort. It is the very way to draw closer to God's love, to receive the powerful life-giving energy that comes from God alone. It is the open secret of human existence, that the more we can give of ourselves for the sake of others the more our capacity to give grows, and the greater the awareness and experience of God's love. Thus in the most difficult of situations, in loving those who are the most distant and seemingly unlovable we can experience the closest union with God and share the deepest experience of His heart.

Jesus spoke to his disciples and told them that he was not going to call them servants. By extension he was speaking to all mankind. No longer did human beings have to be considered as servants to the almighty Lord. A new standard of relationship to God was set by Jesus. He said he did not come to

destroy the law but to fulfill it. The law in this case was the Mosaic standard, the Decalogue wherein God said first of all, I am the Lord your God... like a Lord speaking to His servants. But with the fulfillment of the law, the living embodiment of God's love and truth in Jesus, so much more could be revealed. God could share Himself so much more intimately. Jesus could tell his disciples, you are no longer to be known as servants but now you are to be known as friends.

Clearly Jesus indicated that the fullest measure of love was in terms of friendship. The man who laid down his very life for his friends was the one who could be counted less than no other in quality of love. This last and greatest measure of devotion was just the sacrifice that Jesus made with his life... for his friends, for all mankind.

Who among us can ever really know how precious Jesus was to God and how great his sacrifice was. Perhaps we can never fully know, but because of the deep insight he gave to us about our Heavenly Father, and because of what he suffered on account of and on behalf of mankind, we can still today be called his friends, if we follow his commandment to love one another. This may seem to be a most difficult task. Can't I just meditate or pray or work or abstain from evil, or go into seclusion, and come to know God? The answer from our deepest heart will always be the same: Unless we love ornery, unlovable mankind, unless we become the friend of mankind, God cannot have us for a friend.

Reverend Sun Myung Moon, like Jesus, was severely persecuted for his beliefs. He also paid a great price in terms of torture and suffering for his friends, those immediately around him and all mankind in general, to whom his new revelation, the Divine Principle, is being given. In this new age of spirituality he has given us an example of another meaning of the words of Jesus. The man who lays down his life for his friends can do that while he is living, through devotion.

A very famous architect in Korea by the name of Mr. Aum was the roommate of Reverend Moon in their college years in Japan. He knew nothing of the great mission that Sun Myung Moon would have in the future. To Mr. Aum he was a fellow student studying electrical engineering. Mr. Aum's testimony is the source of our information about that time.

Let us try to imagine the scene as fully as possible. The time was during World War II. From 1905 on Korea had been under Japanese control. Koreans were often brutalized and were forbidden to speak their native language. They were forced to speak Japanese. Public use of the Korean language could be punished as subversion. Peaceful, unarmed protestors, men, women and children alike, were shot or burned to death. This was the climate into which Reverend Moon was born.

This is just the beginning of the story. It is difficult for us to even imagine this much because we have never been subjected to such forceful measures. But let us try to understand this terror.

During this time Sun Myung Moon organized an underground Korean patriotic resistance among his fellow students. In speaking of that time he says that the Japanese secret police followed him everywhere. It is hard for us to imagine the antipathy that the Japanese had for Koreans, remnants of which still exist in Japan today. This hatred for Koreans coupled with suspicion of subversive activities made Reverend Moon a prime target for the interrogations of the police. When he was finally taken in by them they tortured him brutally. This is the darkest point of our story. To be struck even once with a club is reprehensible to us. We can't imagine what it would be like to be struck many times in such a way. And yet this is exactly what Reverend Moon was subjected to. He was strung up by his hands in the police station. He was repeatedly beaten to unconsciousness then revived and beaten again. Other kinds of torture were used on him which I won't mention. What we have just contemplated is sobering enough. The purpose of this foul and inhuman persecution was to exact a confession and get the names of the others involved in the alleged conspiracy to preserve Korean spirit while under Japanese captivity. This was the condition for them to stop the torture. Reverend Moon never spoke a word.

Mr. Aum says that Reverend Moon not only saved his life spiritually by his teaching which many years later he came to know, but then in their college days he saved his life physically as well. Such is part of the measure of his love for his friends. It is part of the price that he had to pay to be able to bring the Divine Principle to mankind.

Many stories are known about Reverend Moon's life. Each one can be studied for a long time. They are too deep to think about only lightly. They may be too deep for our limited hearts to fully comprehend. But they give us something to strive for in our effort to understand the heart of God and our desire to unite with Him. Like Jesus, Reverend Moon has many things to tell us but we cannot bear them all. He says that if he told us what he really experienced in his struggle to discover the Divine Principle and to bring it to the world, our hearts would stop in shock. This one story from his student days is enough to think about for a while. We might each try to imagine ourselves in his place, first even having enough courage to organize a patriotic group under such adverse conditions, and then having enough of the kind of strength for which there is no adequate name, to endure loyally.

Like Jesus, Reverend Moon has shared with us his knowledge of the Father. We cannot be called his servants. We are his friends. The great price that he has paid is worthy of our respect.

The spirituality of friendship requires reciprocity. We can't just receive. We must give what God gives to us, through whomever it comes, to others. We must, in the spirituality of friendship, see this as our sacred, joyful responsibility. We can only be worthy of being called friends if we follow the sacred commandment to love one another as we have been loved.

Whether or not we believe that Reverend Moon is the messiah or simply respect him as a spiritual teacher, we have still received much from him that is enhancing our spiritual lives, our individual relationships with God. He is manifestly a great man who has suffered much for his beliefs and sacrificed much for his brothers and sisters. For this alone he merits our most profound respect. For the love, the concern, the prayer, the support and encouragement he has given to us he merits our love and our friendship. For the outstandingly courageous effort he is making to unite this world under God he merits our loyalty and cooperation.

Friendship must be through Christ, from and in God, toward our fellow man. Jesus called his disciples friends. Such friendship with the living Christ supersedes any and all other spiritual disciplines. Such friendship is still available to us today.

God has given us a wonderful opportunity to practice the spirituality of friendship. We can become true friends in the love of God and Christ. Have we really let our lights shine? Have we really shared hope and joy with others? I cannot say that I have done enough. There is so much that we could find out about others, their needs and desires, and so much we could do to help fulfill these in God and in Christ. In even making the effort we can draw much closer to our Heavenly Father as He reaches out for us.

It is not we who have chosen the path of friendship to God. He has called us. He wants all of His children to be saved. He wants all the lost, brokenhearted, lonely and suffering people on this earth to be saved. He has called us and is loving us and giving us so much so that we might love others. We are certainly not worthy of all that He is giving to us yet we have the most important task, not only to receive His love but to give it to others as well. This is the only way that we can be worthy of receiving it in the first place. We must think that we are here for the sake of other people. Only then can we pass the test of friendship, the judgment of heart. The friendship of God is for all people. When this is achieved and really lived, the Kingdom of Heaven will have arrived upon this earth.

I want to conclude with some of Reverend Moon's words, which, because of his own living example, have great depth and provide the solution of the difficulty we have in knowing God, loving others and in being friends.

"Those who are ardently in love with God can easily overcome unhappiness, because the way of unhappiness will lead them to true happiness. When I was in prison in North Korea, I went through severe torture; the more severe the torture was, the stronger I would become. Every cell of mine was mobilized to fight against the pain. I would fancy that with every blow God's blessing would be multiplied. Because of this, I was not afraid of the torture, and I could easily endure it. If we have this attitude, we can make the crooked way straight and the bumpy road smooth. Even though our path of life may be an uneasy, insecure ephemeral one, full of misery which is more than death, we know that through God's love for us and our love of God, we can go through the path without difficulty. When we are ready to live and die in the love of God, we deserve God's protection. This is the way every human being has to go. May God protect us on our way of destiny."