

*"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 15:15*

Growing up, I had three best friends: Paul, Mike, and Billy. We all lived on my street and so from birth we were best friends. And we did all the things best friends did, like play, brag, get in trouble, and of course fight. We knew all we needed to about each other. Mike was the toughest, coming from a family with two older siblings who all played hockey. Billy was the smallest which he made up for in braggadocio and attitude. Paul was my best best friend with a rough father and a gentle mother.

But when we got to middle school, we drifted apart. I found myself with no friends for a while except at church, where my friends were twice-a-week relationships, but those relationships were new and stronger than my previous friendships were. These were Greg, Dave, Jody, and Holly. There was now romance mixed in, and deep sharing. And then came high school, where there were church friends and school friends who seldom met, and one was my social circle while the other was my spiritual companions. These included Steve, Jeff, Colleen.

And then there was Jesus. Somewhere along that path, Jesus became my friend, too. People were uncomfortable with that language still, thinking it too familiar for the Lord Jesus Christ. But I knew He felt the same - after all, the bible told me so! - and so I was ok with our friendship. I talked with him about school, and girls, and temptations, and adolescence. I confided in, and joked with, and learned from Him. And our casualness was never a problem. I could still be formal in church, but in our one-on-one times, we were friends.

As I've grown and moved into the ministry, I've met many people who do not like the idea of Jesus as friend. Like the adults of my youth, they are afraid that familiarity breeds contempt, and that we are disrespecting our holy Lord. And some are, in truth. When Jesus becomes such a "pal" to us that we feel we can ignore Him or or His teachings, we have tipped the needle too far. But since most have tipped the needle too far the other way, toward a distant Lord up in His highest heaven, I think a middle ground is best.

Like Paul, Mike, and Billy, I know all I need to know about my friend Jesus. It's always good to learn more about our friends, to learn new stories and new aspects of their personalities, but I know what I need to for us to be called friends. And like Greg, Dave, Jody, and Holly, our relationship has it's intimacy. And like Jeff, Steve, and Colleen, Jesus has become both my spiritual companion and part of my social circle.