

God Wants To Be Your Friend

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There is a legend that God once sent two angels to earth, each to collect a basket full of prayers. One was told to fill his basket with prayers of praise and thanksgiving, the other was told to bring back a basket full of prayers of requests from persons asking God to do something for them. Guess which angel filled his basket first? The one seeking prayers of petition, of course.

The longest prayer recorded in the Bible is the prayer of Jesus in the seventeenth chapter of John. In this prayer, Jesus asks the Father to strengthen the faith of the disciples, to make them holy, and to empower them for Christian service. The prayer ends with a beautiful request to God that the love of Christ will fill the hearts of the believers until Jesus himself will be in them.

Another of the great prayers of the Bible is recorded in Ephesians. St Paul prays that the Christians will *"grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that passes knowledge."*

There is a story that an emperor once decided to give someone in his realm a very special gift. In order to select that special person, the king disguised himself and walked unknown among his subjects.

One day, dressed as a peasant, the king decided to visit the public bath house. After wandering around for a while, he found himself in the boiler room. It was noon, and the workman who kept fuel in the furnaces was about to eat his lunch.

The disguised king greeted the workman. After a short conversation the workman asked the stranger if he would like to share his lunch. The emperor accepted, and a friendship was begun.

Many times the king returned to the furnace room to eat with the workman. Sometimes he brought a lunch to share; sometimes they shared the workman's lunch. Always they had a warm, friendly conversation.

After many visits, the emperor decided to reveal who he really was. At first the workman did not believe him, but the emperor produced undeniable proof. Then the workman was very fearful, but the emperor pleaded, "Don't be afraid of me. I'm still the same man that ate lunch with you. Please, let our friendship continue as before. But I do want to give you the nicest gift that you have ever received. Tell me, what can I give you?"

"I have always thought of my emperor as stern and powerful," the workman replied, "but you are kind and lovable. I have looked forward each day to your visit. I have rejoiced in your friendship. As for a gift, I do not want anything that is costly. Just continue to give me what you have been giving me. Come back often, eat lunch with me, and be my friend."

God is the emperor. We are the workman. God comes unknown to us, but eventually our eyes are opened to his presence. Then he says, *"You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it"* (John 14:14).

Although God is ready to consider our prayers for health, wealth, and right relationships, what he most wants to hear is our request to be his friend.