

Best Friend Forever

Joe Slater

We use innumerable acronyms to shorten emails, text messages, etc. “LOL” (laughing out loud), IMO (in my opinion), and BTW (by the way) are only the start of a virtually endless list. Have you noticed this one? BFF (best friend forever).

“This person” (you fill in the name) “is my BFF!” It might be someone you’ve known since early childhood; maybe it’s a spouse; maybe it’s your spouse whom you’ve known from early childhood! Regardless, having friends helps us navigate through life’s ups and downs.

I’m blessed with many friends, and I hope you are too! I’d be hard pressed to identify which of my friends (among my fellow-mortals) is my “best friend.” Some whom I’ve counted as friends in the past have, by their behavior, made it clear that they are no longer my friends. I regret that, but I realize I cannot change other people’s thoughts and actions.

Christians have no trouble identifying their “best friend forever”! “*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends*” (John 15:13). We know Jesus is the best friend we could possibly have, and He will never forsake us. Who else could ever qualify as our “best friend forever”?

A challenging question for me is, “Am I a friend to Jesus?” We sing, “I’ll be a friend to Jesus” – but look at what the Lord Himself said: “*You are My friends if you do whatever I command you*” (John 15:14). Having warm fuzzy feelings for Jesus is fine, but loving him and being His friend goes well beyond subjective criteria.

Who among us would claim to be the best friend Jesus has? But we can, indeed, be His friends forever. Let’s do that!

Baptism Every Fourth Sunday

A sign outside a large church building in Birmingham announced: “Baptism every fourth Sunday.” I wonder what Peter or Paul would have thought about baptism offered as a kind of fourth Sunday “blue plate special.”

Consider Peter’s practice. On Pentecost, he told the gathered multitude, “*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38). Then just three verses later, Luke tells us that the same day three thousand were added by being baptized for the remission of sins. Daily church growth (Acts 2:47) must have meant daily baptisms.

When Ananias came to Paul and said, “*And now why tarriest thou, arise and be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16), he was baptized immediately.

As prisoners in Philippi, Paul and Silas prayed and sang at midnight, and the prisoners heard them. An earthquake shook the jail, so that the jailer planned suicide, thinking the prisoners had escaped. But after they taught the jailer and his family, they were baptized “*straightway*,” “*the same hour of the night*” (Acts 16:31-33).

“Baptism every fourth Sunday” just doesn’t sound like God’s plan.

--Bob Prichard (via *Bulletin Gold*)

The wealthy woman of Shunem, upon observing Elisha passing through, said to her husband: “*Look, I am sure that this man who regularly passes our way is a holy man of God*” (2 Kings 4:9). Imagine if those who saw us in our daily lives could make such an observation about us! We must strive to fulfill our purpose of presenting the flavor and illumination of holiness in this present evil world (Matthew 5:13-16).

--Tom McLemore (Effingham, IL)

Valued

“For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:10 NAS).

The Jews looked down on the Gentiles, the Gentiles loathed the Jews, and the Pharisees despised the Jewish common folk. There was plenty of loathing back then as there is today. But the Lord makes a difference, changing self-loathing people into valued souls. Jesus died for sinners.

The Broadway musical **Man of LaMancha**, with its theme song, “To Dream the Impossible Dream,” featured a ridiculous knight named Don Quixote. He rides through the Spanish countryside mistaking windmills for giants. During his adventures he meets a cheap woman in a tavern. Any man can have this woman for one night, but no man wants her for life. Then Don Quixote rides into town. The people treat her like dirt. But Don Quixote bows before her as though she were a queen. She puts herself down, but he lifts her up. When she finally is convinced that he really believes in her, she begins to believe in herself. She found a friend who says she is priceless even when she feels worthless.

This story was told several times at a Marriage Encounter seminar Linda and I attended many years ago; it has left an indelible impression on us. We are here to help others to see themselves as lovable souls and give them hope. We may make a difference in the lives of those who sadly see themselves as losers.

Christian, let’s look past the veneer of how damaged a precious soul is because of his or her past, and see that just a caring, loving, helping hand may change a soul’s life for the Lord.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)