

*I have found a friend in Jesus, He's everything to me* are the opening lyrics to the song *The Lily of the Valley*. *I'll Be a Friend to Jesus* is also another song found within our hymnals. I wonder, though, if we really think about what we are saying, and if we truly mean we want to be a friend to God. It may come as a surprise to some, but it is true that God wants to be our friend. When He created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, He did so with the intention of having and maintaining a close, personal relationship with man. We see this in the *Book of Genesis* when God would come at the cool of the day to walk in the Garden and talk and commune with Adam. It was not until sin had entered into the world that man feared to be in the presence of God, and Adam and Eve sought to hide themselves from Him. Sin had separated man from his Father, his Creator, and his best friend. And God desires so greatly to restore that lost relationship He had with His creation, that He sent His Son to live as a human, to suffer as we do, to be tempted as we are, and to be the payment price that would satisfy God's demands for our justification and redemption. Only a handful of men throughout history were able to achieve a close, personal friendship with God: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Job, Moses, David, and Solomon in his younger days. Fear of God, and not friendship, was more common in the Old Testament. David wrote, *16. But I call upon God; and the Lord will save me. 17. Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and He will hear my voice.* (Psalm 55:16-17 [RSV]) He also wrote in Psalm 25:14 [RSV], *"The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He makes known to them His covenant."*

During His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke of the desire of God to seek us as His children and friends. He told His listeners in John 10:14-18 [RSV], *14. I am the Good Shepherd; I know My own and My own know Me, 15. as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16. And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed My voice. So there shall be one flock, one Shepherd. 17. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. 18. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from My Father."* When Jesus died and fulfilled His Father's will, things changed. No longer was God a distant Being. He was near and close. As Paul said in Acts 17:26-28, *26. "And He made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the Earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, 27. that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find Him. Yet He is not far from each one of us, 28. for 'In Him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are indeed His offspring.'" Dare to be a friend of God! You will be glad you did!*

May the Lord bless you!