

Before discussion can begin on Jesus within friendship, it is important to define friendship and to think of the process and structure of friendship as well.

Friendship: a commitment to treating a significant person as equal through recognizing their needs and loving them as they are, and in the process achieving a mutual sense of worth and purpose.

Process of Friendship

1. *Invitation:* being called to be yourself for someone who is drawn to your goodness and gifts and wants to learn more about you. It is freely chosen and entered into out of joy.
2. *Encounter:* the process of communicating trivial facts, personal and ridiculous feelings, emotions and life experiences. It is often an uneasy time in which fear and excitement need to be balanced.
3. *Building Process:* the gradual removal of masks and the gradual emerging of your true self. You test the waters and when you are comfortable and not threatened, you begin building on what has been shared and what you feel to be inviting. You become what the other person needs you to be for them while they become what you need them to be for you. This can be conscious or unconscious.
4. *Fusion and Separation:* beginning to feel that nothing can separate the friendship because you are so similar, close, and just enjoying each other's company. You are being for them what they need you to be. However, sometimes you can't be that, and you fight, separate, reunite, fight, separate, reunite, etc. You had become one, but you realize you can

be one and be separate and the friendship will still exist. You can be individuals and still be connected.

5. *Mutual Acceptance of Gifts, Limitations, and Purpose:* As the relationship grows, you pick from it what you find nurturing and discard what you find poisonous. You use the gifts you have gained and the limitations you have recognized in self and others to put meaning into your life. You put into perspective the purpose that person plays in your everyday life and you in theirs.
6. *Continuation, Breaking, and Re-establishing:* You make time and nurture the relationship or you prune it. You may need to remove yourself from it and establish new ties. You may fluctuate between breaking and starting the relationship, based on specific issues or places that each person is in during life.

Structure of Friendship

1. *Surface:* the superficial aspect of the relationship. It represents how the relationship appears to the other persons, regardless of truth.
2. *Core:* contains the glue that keeps the relationship together. The glue is made up of vulnerabilities, limitations, challenges, disclosures, and comforting. The "symbolic union," which only you and the other know the depth of, is at the center in the core.
3. *Magnetic Component:* the mutual nurturing and drawing from the relationship in times of crisis and joy. It represents bringing "the received" to the other.