

What does it mean to be friends with Jesus?

TRANSCRIPT

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NOTE: This transcript was AI-generated and has not been fully edited.

[00:00:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Jared Wilson, welcome to the podcast. We're glad to have you with us.

[00:00:05] **Jared Wilson:** Mark, thanks so much for having me brother.

[00:00:07] **Dr. Mark Turman:** So excited to talk with you about the book that we're sharing today called Friendship with the Friend of Sinners and the subtitle, The Remarkable Possibility of Closeness with Christ, which automatically raises about three questions in my mind around the term possibility.

But before we get into the book tell us a little bit about your backstory. Maybe where you're from, family, faith journey, how you got, how did you land at Midwestern seminary doing what you're doing now?

[00:00:37] **Jared Wilson:** Yeah, that's a it's a long dramatic saga, but I'll shorten it down to the CliffsNotes versions. I was born and raised in South Texas. I grew up in the Rio Grande Valley grew up in church. My, my parents were faithful church folk. My dad was a faithful churchman. He worked as a school teacher for a number of years.

And then shortly after I was born transitioned to working in retail sales. And so we moved around quite a bit as my dad worked for different companies and different stores and those sorts of things, but always faithfully took us to church. And I made a profession of faith. When I was about five or six years old and was baptized shortly thereafter and then did this sort of traditional young at least young Southern Baptist thing which is when you're about 12 or 13 You begin to have a crisis of faith, wondering if you knew what you were doing when you were five or six.

And I made another profession of faith. And so as I look back and, and think about when was the moment of my conversion I'm not sure, honestly, you know, as, as far back as I can go I, I've believed in, in the gospel and the older I get, the more I tend to trust that. Five or six year old conversion more than even the 12 or 13.

But in any event yeah, you know, made a profession of faith as a, as a child. And when I was in junior high school at a youth camp, I believed that the Lord called me into vocational ministry. and obviously I didn't know, you know, all that that would entail. And I didn't have, you know, the you know, a great grasp of what it would mean to pursue a call to ministry.

But it was during a morning devotions and I reading about God's call of Moses in in Exodus six. And there was something about my reading that morning, I believe the Holy Spirit laid it on my heart to be you know, to go into ministry. And so from then on, I just, Believe this is what I was going to do always wanted to write and do other things as well But I just knew I'm gonna be a pastor someday.

And so Right after I graduated high school. My first ministry position was a summer I graduated high school, which was as youth director for a Chinese Baptist Church that That met in our church's building Their pastor came and asked our youth pastor, you know, we need someone to shepherd our youth.

And he, he suggested me and that was my first position. That'll be 30 years next year. And so, yeah, a number of student ministry positions. Eventually led me into church planting in Nashville, Tennessee. From there we moved to Vermont where I pastored a 200 plus year old church in a little town called Middletown Springs.

Kind of the traditional white steeple church on the town green. What people, what people envision when they think New England rural churches pastored that church for a number of years. And. It was while we were there that Midwestern Seminary called and asked about me coming to work initially in the communications department to kind of help launch a website called for the church and kind of related resources basically to help come train pastors.

And, you know, our president, Jason Allen, who had at that time had just been the president for a year or two. Was essentially leading a, a resurgence of the seminary, kind of a replanting almost or revitalization of the seminary. And it was very intriguing to maybe come be a part of that team and see what we might do.

And so I was an early adopter to come down and, and, and do that. And the seminary that was eight years ago. The seminary has grown tremendously since then fastest growing SBC seminary. And I think the third largest in in the United States of all seminaries. And I serve at my church as as up until two weeks ago as a lay pastor and as a director of a residency program called the pastoral training center, where we it's a discipleship based program training young men for ministry who want to go into vocational pastorate.

And as of two weeks ago, I was voted in as a preaching pastor at my church as well. So, in addition to teaching pastoral ministry at the seminary, I'll get to have regular preaching duties at

Liberty Baptist Church. And that's kind of where we're at. I've been married to Becky for 27 years.

I've got two college age daughters. That's the CliffsNotes version.

[00:04:54] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah. Yeah. Thank you for that. That's, that's great. And sounds like you're moving in your ministry between, you know, you might say the ivory tower in the trenches on a daily weekly basis.

[00:05:04] **Jared Wilson:** Yeah. You know, and what's fantastic about my colleagues at Midwestern as well, I mean, we've really carved out this messaging for the church and we take that seriously that every course, every class we're trying to not just equip people intellectually and You know, train them academically. But we want to be asking constantly the question, how does this impact the local church?

We love the local church. And what's great about so many of my colleagues is a great number of them. The majority of them serve as pastors either by vocationally or as lay elders at their local churches. So, When you come to Midwestern and you're, you know, getting taught systematic theology one or what have you, even, you know, the more advanced courses by and large, your professor is going to be someone who knows what it's like to to shepherd a local church.

So he's going to know how to help you connect. the, the high shelf stuff to the ordinary, you know, trenches of pastoral ministry.

[00:06:01] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, absolutely. And so, so important that we keep that focus for sure so that things don't just become academic and esoteric, right? And and you also do a podcast, right?

[00:06:12] **Jared Wilson:** That's right. I I host a podcast called for the church. You can find that on our website, ftc. co, but we're also on the, on the podcast platforms, Apple podcasts those sorts of things.

[00:06:24] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Awesome. So, let's talk about this most recent work being a friend with the Friend of Sinners as one of Jesus's most enduring titles, perhaps, Friend of Sinners. But as I got into this book almost from the first paragraph, there's something of a testimonial nature or feel and tone to this book.

Many people have, we've run across multiple indications, surveys, data, that type of thing about just the wide speed sweeping reality of loneliness in our culture. Which you talk about some in your book and the reality of what COVID brought to us in terms of, of loneliness. But tell us a little bit about what drove you to, to write this book, why this book and why now, and how does it kind of grow out of your own experience?

Right.

[00:07:15] **Jared Wilson:** the seed of the, of the book I think was planted by a friend of mine named Ray Ortlund who over breakfast maybe it wasn't breakfast, it was a meal, over a meal pointed me to Exodus 33 verse 11 where it says, And thus the Lord spoke to Moses face to face as one would a friend. And there was something about. His you know, pointing that out to me, and I don't know if I'd never, I mean, I'm sure I had read it before, but it just it didn't land on me like it did when he was kind of directing me to it. It intrigued me, first of all, because I thought You know, no one can see the glory of God and live, and there's even, you know, we have scenes in Exodus of Moses, you know, hiding in the cleft of the rock as the backside of God's glory goes by, and we have him coming down from Mount Sinai and his face is radiating, you know, you know, all these sorts of things, and yet the passage says, face to face, So I wanted to know what that meant if it was a literal face to face, which I would assume would mean a kind of Christophany which is a pre incarnate appearance of the Son of God, and we think things like that may have happened in, for instance, Jacob's wrestling with the angel of the Lord.

He says I've seen I've seen the Lord we think maybe the the when the Lord comes walking in the cool of the garden with you know, when With Adam and Eve in Genesis, there's other moments, but perhaps it's not that perhaps It's just a metaphor for a kind of intimacy with God that that he spoke to Moses even if symbolically face to face as one would a friend.

And it just unlocked something in my heart that began to make its way out into a lot of my writing and and especially into a lot of my preaching as well. As I, as I travel and speak, this concept of friendship with God I just began to tease it out in a number of ways. And it, it, it reminded me you know, you mentioned my testimony and it reminded me of a time in my life in my twenties when I was Really in a deep depression in a very dark place.

My life was broken. My marriage was broken. It it just was yeah, it was a very Deep depression for me and I experienced something of the lord's closeness in that time as very often believers who go through hardships and sufferings of various kinds do that I felt closer to God. And I felt the embrace of grace in a way that I think before that I, I had grace, I had the Lord, but almost my experience of the Lord was very much as an idea.

And when I kind of merged that experience with this sort of pursuing this idea of friendship with God, Friendship with Christ it I think My conclusion is that most Christians are content to have a relationship with the idea of Jesus or the concept of Jesus And we say things like, you know, it's it's not a real it's not a religion It's a relationship and you know, you you know Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and those sorts of things and those are all fine, you know phrases but they become cliché and you know And I wonder if we really know what it means to have communion, you know, regular communion with, with Jesus as a friend, as a, as a real person. And that's kind of what unlocked the the motivation to write the book.

[00:10:49] **Dr. Mark Turman:** It just, as I read through the book, it just resonated so much with that. And You know, but this far in the ministry, right? Probably you probably don't get three or four years into ministry before you use that phrase. It's about relationship. It's not about religion. Unpack that a little bit more because it is cliché.

And and every time I hear that phrase, every time I use that phrase still today, I'm still wondering in real ways. Do I really understand what the difference is? And I love how you talk about in your book that it's actually some of both. And, and and it's probably true of every relationship that we have, right?

That there are, there are certain things, if you use the definition of religion as that, which is ritual, that which is organized, that which has rhythm, consistent rhythm to it. I mean, I basically greet my wife in the morning about the same way every day. And I go through the same kind of goodnight experience with her, you know, when it's time to go to sleep.

Same thing with my kids, same with my friends. There's a certain kind of, you know, consistent rituals that might be described as a religion of relationship with them. So kind of pull that apart so that the cliché, help us understand that there can be some real positive meaning to the cliché, but there's also some things that just, that really just need to be let go perhaps.

[00:12:24] **Jared Wilson:** yeah. I, I mean, I, I think I begin with just acknowledging, I know what people mean when they say it's a relationship, not a religion. What they're trying to do is dissuade people's understanding of Christianity as kind of a works based you know, meritocracy that you're kind of earning your way. to favor with, with God.

And certainly that is to be rejected. That's a legalistic approach to Christianity which is not, you know, which is not a Christianity at all. But the, the word religion itself, I mean, is not a, I mean, it's a biblical word. I mean, we're told in, in James, you know, this is true and undefiled religion, you know, to care for widows and orphans.

And so I think sometimes it gets a little overblown because there is no way to pursue. Christianity without, as you said, a kind of discipline, a kind of rhythm, a kind of routine in which we regularly engage with the means that God has provided for us to engage with him. So, I talk about in, in, in this book and others, what I call the divine conversation, and the divine conversation is how we relate to God as a friend or just relate to God.

And, and the means he's provided for us is that we hear from him in his word. When we open up the Bible, he is speaking to us and he hears from us in prayer. When we pray to him, we're speaking to him. And so when we have the rhythms of. You know, the disciplines of Bible you know, Bible study and prayer, that's how we engage in the divine conversation and, and that's a religious exercise.

Now it, it shouldn't be a purely religious exercise because the reason we can even commune with Christ is because we have union with Christ, which is to say we have been indwelt by His Holy Spirit. When we, when we profess faith, when we repent of our sin and believe in Jesus Christ, His work on the cross and out of the tomb as good news to save sinners.

When we believe in Him, His Holy Spirit indwells us. Paul says in Colossians that we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. We are hidden with Christ in God. So there's the recurring New Testament theme of, of spiritual union With Jesus, which he even alludes to in his high priestly prayer in John 17 He is in us and we are in him that we would be one so because of that We have a relationship with him It's the religion part that helps us engage in that relationship with him what we want to avoid is a kind of empty Religion or an empty rituals where we think it's by these religion, you know religious efforts Even bible study and prayer that God that we're somehow earning God's love or earning grace from God No, we engage in these things because we have His love because we have His grace And so I think sometimes the you know, the right distinction is just getting the order, right, you know, the historic protestant sort of approach to these things, is to hold to a distinction between law and gospel and and, and putting them in the right order that the law does not earn us the gospel.

The law is our response. It shows us our need for the gospel, but it also is our response of worship to the good news. If we get the order incorrect, we can think that somehow the law is our, as our means of leverage. To getting God's grace but that's opposite of what the Bible teaches. So we have the grace of God as a free gift and we are justified by our faith alone.

We receive that through faith alone. And so, religion is only, is only bad or wrong when we're trusting in our religion to somehow, you know, earn that relationship. But the relationship is given to us that we might engage in pure and undefiled religion.

[00:16:13] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Right. Yeah. And it just, like I said, resonated with me on a deep level. At the beginning of this year, almost 12 months ago, just felt like God kind of impressed upon me that verse out of John 17 that you referenced John 17 three, where Jesus says, this is what eternal life is. It's not about a duration of life or even a location of life.

It's about a relationship of knowing the father and knowing him. And one of the things you talk about in your book is. getting past just simply the idea of being in relationship with Christ or being the friendship, friend of Christ, but getting to the place of really wrapping our whole life, our soul around that Jesus is a real person and not an idea.

Can you take us down that road a little bit? How do you I think people listening to this podcast are going to be yes, of course. But how do you get past the idea to the reality? This is a real person who is active in our lives on a daily basis.

[00:17:16] **Jared Wilson:** Yeah I think, I mean, just the reminder of that. I think if you ask someone the question, is Jesus a real person? Of course they'll say yes. You know, if you ask the Christian, you know, the genuine Christian, they'll say yes. But the way that we relate to him is so often as an idea, it's, it's, it's just the, the natural inclination of relating to someone that we can't see, you know, we can't see him and we don't hear an audible voice.

And therefore it just makes it difficult and make, you know, to conceive of him as a real person just in our relationship. And this is why I think sometimes our Bible reading and prayer can sometimes stall out because we, you know, we were approaching these things. as matters of routine and not as matters of, you know, vital communication with the real person, Jesus.

And so what we need to do is just remember, first of all, that when he you know, was resurrected bodily, he was transformed. Yes. He, he had a a different body, but he had a real body that could be touched. So he's able to do things like somehow walk through walls. You know, he walks into the, you know, the locked room where the disciples are and he's able to do things like that.

And, and it looks like him, but sometimes it doesn't look like him, right? They recognize him and they don't recognize him. So he has a, a transformed body. And yet he's eating breakfast with them on the beach. We assume he lets Thomas touch the wound. He still has these wounds in him. And so when he ascends to heaven he's not being disintegrated into some ethereal spirit.

He's going in his incarnate body into the place where God is into, into heaven, which rightly understood is, is, is not, you know, some outer spatial place, but just the dimension where God is. And We can assume from I think the Old Testament accounts that Elijah is is in heaven in his body Somehow he was taken up right or or Enoch You know, perhaps they had to be changed in some way, but they did not die right Enoch didn't die And so Christ is in his He as God he is still omnipresent.

This is the You know, the fun thing to try to wrap our head around the son of God is omnipresent because he can't not be omnipresent. Otherwise, he would not be God and yet he is still incarnate as well. The the historic sort of you know label for this idea is called the the extra calvinisticum or the calvinistic extra because john calvin he didn't invent the concept but he spent a lot of time kind of I'm trying to elaborate on the idea that that the son of God would be both omnipresent and incarnate.

And so he's still incarnate. That's the point I'm trying to make. He's still in his body. Therefore he has eyes that we're going to be able to look into and he's got hands that we're going to be able to, you know, to hold and shoulders that we can hug. And even though we can't see him now, the hope of the scriptures hold out for us is that we will see him.

So I think of Job, you know, his hope was not that just that he would die and go to heaven someday in all of his suffering. He said, I know that my redeemer lives. And in the end, he will stand upon the earth. You know, even if worms destroy my body, yet in my flesh, I will see God. I think he's, he's thinking even if in his, his, you know, hazy way, his hope is that he's going to see God.

the returning, the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead. And, and this is what Paul holds out for us in first Corinthians 13, at the end of the, that, you know, famous love section he says, you know, for now we see as though through a glass dimly, but at, at the right time, right, we will see face to face and we will know as we are known.

So this is the hope we're going to, he's got a face that can be seen. And if we can remember that on a daily basis, When I'm reading my Bible, obviously I'm not hearing a voice from heaven, but in a way I am, I'm hearing his voice

[00:21:15] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah.

[00:21:16] **Jared Wilson:** because it's his word. The Holy Spirit has breathed these words out. And so I, I can you know, think of that.

I think this is why brother, you know, we have a long tradition in church history and as of, of kind of iconography and things like that. And as Protestants, we, you know, we rightly rejected or Protestants rightly rejected the idolatry that accompanies so much of that. And as a good Baptist, you know, I'm, I don't know about you, but I'm a Baptist.

And so I, you know, I'm even, even more so we don't want to have anything to do with the symbolic type stuff, but this was, I think the, the origin of that is to, to, to try to create some tangibility. some visualization to help us remember that Jesus is a real person, that he has a face and he has, he has, you know, arms and legs and all that sort of thing.

So we don't need to, we don't need to buy into all of that, but in some way we need to remember as we're praying that he's a real person, that he's got arm hair, you know, that sort of thing.

[00:22:19] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And, and something I think a lot of Christians, particularly Protestant Christians need to be reminded of, which is that heaven like earth, but heaven is going to be a material existence. It's not. We're all going to be turned into some kind of spirit beings that float around with wings that we need to remind each other that, you know, Jesus's bodily resurrection is a foretelling of what of what our eternal life will be, that it will be a material existence as well as a relational, you know, I can, I can imagine pastors listening to this number one question that pastors usually get from people when they're grieving is Am I going to know my loved one when I get to heaven?

And i'm like, of course it is of course you are and not only are you going to know them Relationally, but you're going to know them materially even as we're going to know Jesus materially now There's a whole bunch of this that we don't know yet and don't really have the ability to yet understand You But it is going to be material in that sense and and and that really becomes to me helpful when you think well You know, I relate to people all the time who are not physically present with me right now family friends, you know um people who are Simply at a different job or they live in a different city right now or they're on a trip somewhere I still am relating to them even if they're not physically present with me and even if I can't electronically connect to them as you and I right now, I still have some relationship that's active at that moment with them.

It's kind of, kind of brings me back to another one of the things that just really caught my attention is that so much of this comes back to that divine conversation and to to really, learning at a greater, much more intentional and intense way, what the experience of prayer ought to be. You know, you, you cite in your book, the story, the experience of Moses speaking to God face to face.

These invitations, both in Old and New Testaments, to draw near, and that that's not just simply poetic language, that's actually real invitation, not just poetic words, to draw near to God. But one of the things that Jesus says is, you will know my voice, my sheep know my voice and follow me.

I think one of the biggest challenges of being a Christian is learning to distinguish Jesus's voice among other voices. How do you know that it's the spirit, that it's Jesus talking to you and not just something you're thinking of or somebody else's voice in your head? Unpack that a little bit. How do we learn to know this is, this is really Jesus's talking to us and not some other voice that's just maybe affirming and a direction that we want to go.

[00:25:15] **Jared Wilson:** Yeah. You know, we learn in the book of acts that they were a group. called there was folks from Berea, right? The Bereans who, when Paul was teaching or the apostles were teaching, they were checking everything that, you know, that he said by the scriptures. And that was their standard. So when they would hear someone teaching or preaching.

They would say, we know this is the truth because it accords with scripture. I think in a similar way we know that it's the Holy Spirit who's laying something on our heart, or we know that this is the voice of Christ. When we see that word reflected in, in the Bible, or, or we just read the Bible, you know, if we see You know, if you're you know, reading from the word of God, you can trust this is the word of Christ that's coming here.

But when you feel, you know, quote unquote, feel led by the spirit or have something laid on your heart or something like that, if it doesn't accord with scripture, then you know that it's not from the Lord. You know, a further litmus test for me, I think, is sometimes, is this a good thing that I don't want to do that I usually suspect it's from the Holy Spirit?

You know, if I, if I have the inclination, you know, again, I don't hear audible voices or anything, but if I have the inclination to, you know, leave my comfort to go help someone in need. And I really don't want to do that. I'm assuming that's actually the Holy Spirit is actually leading me, you know, convicting me to do that because it's a good thing and I don't want to do it or, or it just puts me outside of my comfort zone.

We should be suspicious of any extra biblical word that immediately exalts us in some way or centers us in some way. Because the goal of the Holy Spirit that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to exalt Christ is to make much of the Son of God. And so I think that's another kind of gut check for us. Spiritual gut check for us is I know if I'm engaging in pride or vainglory in some way even if in a subtle way. Kind of a humble brag kind of way that that's probably my own, my own voice leading me.

And then certainly again, if there's something explicitly that's in contradiction to the word of God, I know that's not from the Lord because he would not, he does not contradict himself. But the best way to know is, you know, I think the classic illustration, although I've since heard, this is a debunked, but the classic illustration is that, you know, counterfeit by studying the real thing, not by studying counterfeits, right?

The bank tellers or the people who work for the currency department, they study the real dollar bill so that they can spot a counterfeit. And whether that's accurate or not, whether they really do that or not, that's still a good word. If we, if we know the word of God very, very well, I think we'll be better tuned to when, when twistings and deceptions come.

[00:28:04] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, so come around to that idea about the role of the church. I'm, I'm, I gotta tell you, I'm hopeful and prayerful that in my lifetime we'll see something of the, what I'm, I'm just generally calling the second coming of the church because we, we see so much in our culture, particularly American culture, about people abandoning the church.

There's such a high focus of hyper individualism that you talk about in the book and that others have written about. This idea that, Hey, me and God are good. I don't need the church. I don't need all this other thing, but the, the, the way, let me come at it from this way. Jared, it's, it's only a fairly recent thing in Christian history that all of us had Bibles that we could have at home and that we could have on our electronic devices.

And, you know, as you and I were taught as young believers, you need to have a time with God every day. You need to, you need to be in the word on your own. And as Protestant Baptist believers, we absolutely believe in the priesthood of every believer, the ability to approach God on your own. You don't have to go through another individual or another church leader, absolutely affirm all of that.

Yet I, I sometimes get, get to thinking, you know, what did that person do 300 years ago, 500 years ago, 1500 years ago? When they didn't have a bible that they could open up every morning and read a significant portion like Like you talk about in your book and like I do on a regular basis I suspect many that will listen to this podcast do as well so what did you do in that case when you could pray and hopefully they were and many of them were Very diligent in their prayer life, but they didn't have the opportunity of that side of the conversation The way you and I have it And I keep coming back to the idea.

That's, that's what the gathering of the believers was all about. That's why they continued to go to the synagogue until the Jewish people who didn't believe pushed them out. But in terms of where they're listening to God through the scripture and through the teaching that happened in the context of the community.

And, and why is that from your perspective? Why is that still important when it comes to the development of our friendship with Jesus?

[00:30:28] **Jared Wilson:** Yeah for a couple of reasons. One is, this is the, you know, the church is the norm for, for discipleship, right? The New Testament almost assumes that the way we follow Jesus is in community. That Christ purchased a church with his blood and so to try to do discipleship I mean there are things we do of course personally and individually, but to try to do a solo discipleship Detached from the life of a local church is is a is a an extra biblical concept It's it's it's a foreign concept to the norm of the New Testament Blueprint so you know the in in the book of Acts when the church is forming you see, you know, not just the The fellowship right that they are devoted to each other They have everything in common all those sorts of things, but it says they devote this is an Acts chapter 2 They devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching so they are they're hearing from the Word of God regularly from the teaching of the apostles and those who are trained and, and, and disciplined by the apostles to install this as, as elders in the local churches and that, and that sort of thing.

But the other reason is because this is what Christ has grafted us into, right? He has brought us into his body. And so when we in some way decide, Oh, I don't like church or churches, you know, you know, to corrupt or they're all hypocrites or something like that. Or as is probably more often the case, especially in the American context, when we, we go to church, but we don't really have a, Covenantal commitment to a local church.

We just sort of go as seasons of life dictate as consumer tastes dictate, you know, the kids grow up and leave. Then we go find a new church. Cause we were just there because of the youth group or something like that. We, we, we treat the church like it's. You know some sort of option on a buffet that that we have because it is in the American context It is when we treat church like that We're not getting out of the gospel all that there is to get the good news Purchases the body of Christ and it grafts us into the body of Christ and if I do not commit and, and that might look different from church to church, what, what membership looks like or what it looks like to be a part of a covenantal community.

But if I, if it's just a thing that I attend, but that I'm not committed to and that I, and that I don't have obligations toward and then where I'm not known and seeking to know and to serve. Then I'm not, you know, I'm basically saying I really only want 80 percent of the gospel. You know, I, I don't want the full experience of what Christ has for me.

And I know that it's difficult. It's, it's certainly difficult in our day and age, but you know, what's interesting, the, the de churching phenomenon, I recently chatted with Jim Davis and Michael Graham, who, who just wrote a book after conducting the largest sociological research study of, of de churching in, in, in America.

And they, they determined that the number one reason that people are leaving the church in, in, in the United States is not what we think it would be. Like, if you ask the average evangelical, why are people leaving the church? They're going to say something like liberal theology is corrupting or maybe the abuse epidemic or something like that.

No, the number one, one reason people drop out of church is they moved. So they were attending a church and then they just moved and they just didn't start going to another church or they haven't gotten around to it or something like that. It's some kind of lifestyle change. And that kind of trickles down to things like.

you know, travel sports with kids or it's just, it, it, it falls out of the, you know, the routine or out of the, you know, off the calendar. And, and I think even if it is on the calendar, if it's just a thing we're going to, we're not getting what, what God wants to give us in his grace through our experience with the local church.

So as difficult as it is, as hard as it can be as. As messy and weird as some churches can be if we find a church that faithfully preaches the gospel that really believes in the bible That that is orthodox in its theology and people are just imperfectly Awkwardly trying to figure out how to follow Jesus together Man, dive in and serve and, and, and, and discover what it, what it looks like to be known and to know the way the New Testament tells us that we ought to engage.

[00:34:53] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, and it's, and it is pretty challenging to just, as, as in any case, right, to walk into a new environment and to initiate and engage relationships with a whole new set of people, right? Especially after you've been in a place and we all somewhat remember, or we need to remember what it was like when, even if we lived in the same town growing up, when we went from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, when we went from high school to college, or we went from this job to that job, every time we walk into those new environments, we feel uncomfortable. Because we don't, we just don't know how things go. We don't know people like we did know people. And it's easy for us to just push that back and say I'll get around to that later. When, as you know, you talk about in the book, the epidemic of loneliness that our society is experiencing, even with massive techno technology, in some ways.

In some ways the technology is making us feel more alone because on social media people only put their best selves out there and so it's it's a facade And we feel like we're the ones missing out and you know I tell people all the time go to church and not and don't just go to the event but become engaged as a covenant member Because you'll soon find out that you're not you're not crazy Other people are having the same kinds of thoughts and struggles And if you, I think if you take that out theologically as your book kind of points out the Holy Spirit, the presence of Christ, this good friend of ours is not only living in our heart and soul, he's living in the heart and soul of all these other believers.

And there's a sense in which your friendship can't progress past a certain point, unless you're experiencing friendship with Jesus through other believers. Am I on the same track with you there?

[00:36:52] **Jared Wilson:** Yeah, I mean Paul talks about the people of the church being built together into the fullness of the stature of the measure of Christ. And so if we're going to have closeness with Jesus, he's saying you're going to experience this in a very integral way through closeness with brothers and sisters.

It, and that involves dying to ourselves. It involves like setting aside personal preference and sometimes comfort and all sorts of things to be able to commit in that way. But Christ is saying you can experience me through this, you know, through the bride, through the body of Christ. You know, it's called the body of Christ for a reason.

So the closer that we are connected to a local church again, that's faithfully, you know, faithfully following Jesus the closer we can get to Christ himself. It's part of, I think the felt nearness of Jesus is actually experienced through what we experience in, in, in the regular rhythms of a Christian community.

[00:37:51] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, and I, you know, I also think it's It's the place where we have to get back to an understanding of what you were talking about, covenantal relationship, part of which includes accountability to each other. You know, I can remember even as a young Christian in my teens, the, the idea of being, Hey, if you walked away from your faith, is there anybody that you have a relationship with that, that would cause them to come after you?

And this and the same thing, you know, if, if, do you know anybody that if you found out that they were walking away from their faith, would you go after them? Part of this engagement of being friends with Jesus means being friends with his other children and none of that is perfect or problem free, but the, the loneliness that will be there if we don't is way worse.

Just way worse. Yeah. Man, we could, lots of things I'd like to talk about more, but, but Jared is, what is your, if you could wrap up your hope for this book, all the, the time, energy, prayer, thought, effort that it takes to put something like this together, is how would you summarize what your hope for this book is?

[00:39:01] **Jared Wilson:** Yeah. You know, chapter by chapter. I'm trying to show what kind of friend Jesus is. The beginning of the book sort of just talks about the challenge of loneliness and friendship, and of course, the possibility of friendship with Christ. But then what I'm really trying to do is just show people Jesus. Just re familiarize.

believers with the Lord that they love and that they want to follow so that they can know or be reminded that that Christ is a gracious friend and an unhurried friend and, and a very patient friend. And that's really what I hope as, as a great takeaway that people close the book at the end and they feel rejuvenated or refreshed in their relationship with Christ.

You know, I don't, you know, purport to introduce anything new to anybody. In fact, I think if you hear something new, sometimes that's a red flag should go up. You're right. But I think being reminded of the old truths in fresh ways is, is kind of the key to ministry today. And that's really what I want to do is just help believers.

And maybe even unbelievers. See that that Christ is a friend to the real us. He's a friend to centers, not to the religious you know, versions of ourselves, not to the put together versions of ourselves, but he really does come near to us in spite of our flaws and our brokenness and even our sin.

[00:40:23] **Dr. Mark Turman:** And it, yeah, and it's a beautiful expression of that and a lot of great reminders throughout the book. And Jared, just want to take a moment and say thank you again for writing the book and for sharing a little bit of the insight around it. Want to encourage our audience. The book is Friendship with the Friend of Sinners by Jared Wilson.

The Remarkable Possibility of Closeness with Christ. There it is. Got my copyright here. You can find it at Amazon. Jared, where else can people follow your work?

[00:40:53] **Jared Wilson:** you go to jaredcwilson.com, you can find my speech speaking schedule, the list of books that I've published and links to my social media and all sorts of things there.

[00:41:02] **Dr. Mark Turman:** All right. Fantastic. Would encourage our folks to do that. And just want to thank our audience as well for being a part of the conversation today. If today's conversation has been helpful, please rate, review us on your podcast platform, as well as share this with family and friends. And that will help other people to find the conversation.

And we'll look forward to seeing you next time. Jared, God bless you. Thank you for your work. I look forward to working with you again soon.

[00:41:31] **Jared Wilson:** Same to you, brother. Thanks so much. God bless you.