

Dinner With Shakespeare

After watching two back-to-back episodes of *Shakespeare Uncovered* on PBS recently, I really hope that I get to talk to Shakespeare in the after-life someday. I hope he'll be there. I love his plays, his wit, his clever turn of phrases, his understanding of human nature – our foibles and our frailties. I think he's brilliant and I imagine us sitting down for dinner in a pub somewhere, clinking glasses of ale, me magically possessing the ability to converse in Elizabethan English. Wouldn't that be cool?

And then, of course, I thought, *and what biblical character (besides Jesus) would I first like to have a conversation with when I arrive at my final destination?* I pondered that one for a while. There are so many – what was it like for Lazarus to be dead and then come back to life? And Esther. Her story is amazing! What courage and nerves of steel she must have had. What was it like for Jonah to spend three days in a whale... gross, but fascinating. Or Noah, building the ark and getting all the animals to walk into it, much less finding all those animals. Did he actually bring insects and worms? Couldn't he have left the flies and mosquitos behind? Or Adam and Eve. What was it like to live in that fabulous garden? And Eve conversing with a snake....was talking with animals a normal part of her day? What was it like for Peter to walk on water, even if it was for a moment?

And there's the biggie, the Apostle Paul. Even though he wrote so much of the New Testament, and is widely known for his famous love chapter in 1 Corinthians 13, which is so eloquently written, he doesn't personally compel me. He often, to me and some others in home group, comes off as arrogant and sarcastic. And very intense, with a tendency to be a bit preachy.



Instead, I'm going with John, one of the twelve disciples. I love the book of John, which was written by him, and is so poetic and full of visual imagery. He does more than just straightforward journalistic writing – the who, what, when, where and why. His writing is storytelling, not just black and white. He colors it in.

And then there's the book of Revelation, which he also authored. Whoa! That is one fantastical vision full of symbolism and mystery, some of my favorite things. I can't say I truly understand it all, but I read it with awe. I want to talk to a guy who was given a vision like that, and who writes so interestingly.

But the most compelling reason I'm going with John is because he refers to himself as "the one Jesus loved" in John 13:23. That so endears him to me. He made a leap that I believe many of us can't quite do – believe that Jesus' love is extremely personal. I'll bet any one of those disciples sitting around that table with Jesus, even Judas, could have referred to themselves as "the one Jesus loved" too and been right.

We had a discussion about John's declaration in the same home group a couple of years ago about this statement, but he didn't come out on the endearing side for most of the group. They saw him as conceited and arrogant, as in "who does he think he is?" I disagree. I see him as confident in Jesus' love. I said it then and I still stand by it. **That's** who he thought he was. **That's** who he knew he was!

I want to be that person who refers to herself "as the one Jesus loved." What could be better, being so confident in being personally loved by Jesus?

I have not always been sure or confident of Jesus loving me, Chris Macy. Of course he loves me as one in the mass of humanity that he loved and came to save. He had to, that's what he's all about. And as long as I'm being honest here, it took a long time before I could say with assurance that I loved him. It freaked me out to even think that I would have the audacity to say I loved God. I questioned myself in the beginning a lot about this and I couldn't bring myself to say the words, I love you God, I love you Jesus. I heard other people saying it and who was I to judge if it was true? Really, I was envious. If only it was that easy. I just wasn't sure how you can love God, the creator of the universe.

Why would he need my love, or want it? He was God. And, I thought *isn't it a bit phony and shallow to say you loved God just because of all the things he did for you?* Those things really bothered me. My understanding was nil and my experience was very limited at that time. Now I know that we don't have to know how to love him – he shows us by loving us.

Now the passage in 1 John 4:19 where it says, we love him because he first loved us makes sense. As I have seen and experienced him working in my life and loving me through everything, despite how I act, and all the blocks I've thrown up in his face, and the faltering baby steps, one step forward, three steps back; the indecisiveness within myself, withholding and the downright lack of trust I've shown him, I can't help but love him. His love encompasses so much more than only what he does for us. I walked away years ago, and he truly loved me back.

I would even go out on a limb and dare to say to you at this present time, I finally believe God loves me because of who I am. I can only say that because I've been able to make the leap with his help and because of him. Because I have gotten to know him and let him know me. Of course he has always known me – but there is something powerful about honestly revealing yourself willingly from your heart to God's heart and when he responds the way he does.....that's love.

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