

UNFORCED

Imagine I walk into a room full of people. There's a gun in my hand. I wave it around with a crazy look in my eye. Everyone gives me their full, undivided attention.

I say, "Gimme your wallet." He obeys.

I say, "Sit down." She can't do it fast enough.

We all know that people's behavior can be controlled.

It happens in back alleys . . . and in marriages all the time. It happens in whole nations dominated by military dictators . . . and in homes where the children tremble with terror to encounter dad. I know. I was one of those kids.

Back to the room full of people. Now I do something a little more personal.

I point the gun straight at your head. Yeah, you. I place the cold barrel against your skin, and I say, "Love me! Give me your trust. Now! Be my friend . . . or else."

Could you? Not, would you? But could you?

Is it even within the realm of possibility for you love me, to trust me, to be my friend, under force?

Sure, you might lie to me: "I love you, please don't kill me."

But that's just it—you'd be lying. Because love and force are mutually exclusive.

Did you get that?

Love and force are mutually exclusive.

They can't even occupy the same emotional space. Force disables the ability of the human heart to give trust. The kind of love friendship is made of simply can't be coerced.

Not even by God.

That's pretty amazing, isn't it, since God happens to be the most powerful Person in the universe?

I mean, if anybody could be a dictator and get away with it, it would be God, right? If anybody could force us into subjection and be answerable to no one but Himself, God could. But get this—contrary to popular opinion—He simply chooses not to. He could force our submission, but He doesn't.

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And why not?

The answer is both simple and profound: God is love, and it's love alone that He wants. And love can't be coerced. God is interested in something so much higher. Something incredibly beautiful . . . and amazing . . . and wonderful. He's interested in friendship.

It may feel a little weird to think of God in that light, but remember that room I entered with a gun in my hand?

Well, Jesus entered a room too, so to speak. He entered our messed up world, and He came with no gun in His hand, with no tactics of force or manipulation. He came wielding a different kind of power—a power most of us don't expect from Almighty God.

He explained it like this: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). Then He did it. He gave His life in a monumental act of self-sacrificing love.

Love is what He's all about.

Not control.

If you look at all the professed god's of history, and all the religions that claim to represent God, you'll never encounter anything remotely close to what Jesus spoke of.

God is love, and it's
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He wants.

Here comes God in the flesh saying to us, "I don't want you to be My slaves. I want you to be My friends" (John 15:15, paraphrase).

Friendship is what God's all about.

Not slavery.

He's saying: "I don't want our relationship to be motivated by fear. I want our relationship to be based on a freedom in which the only motive is love."

Seriously!

It's almost too good to be true, isn't it?

The most powerful person in the universe, the omnipotent Maker of all things, wants my friendship!

If this is true, then saying "No" to God would be nothing short of insanity wouldn't it?

Remember that gun in my hand?

Now all my defenses are down.

Game over.