

What it means to be a Friend of Jesus

© Tim Dubberly, July 23, 2000

Text: James 2:20-24

Introduction:

Friendship is one of the most wonderful relationships upon the face of the earth. Friends are closer than brothers or sisters. Friends love you for what you are not what you can do for them. True friendship is born through circumstances that happen in life, like similar interests, which can be anything. Also friendships have been formed through adversity, like war or hardship, maybe, even the loss of a loved one. Friendship can form through many different events, however, there is one thing that is true about all true friendships, a friend loves at all times, as Solomon said in Proverbs 17:17.

Since friendship is so wonderful, imagine being the friend of God. Some would not believe this to be possible; but Abraham was called the “friend of God” here in these verses.

Kevin Costner’s career began due to his friendliness.

g It was the movie {Silverado} that launched Kevin Costner's acting career. But first he had to weather a huge disappointment. After completing his role in {The Big Chill}, Costner was called to a meeting with Lawrence Kasdan, the film's director. Kasdan explains: "I told Kevin that I felt terrible about it, but I had to cut out the ending and his part was gone. To my amazement, Costner was totally cheerful, sanguine, delightful. 'Larry,' he said, 'this has been the experience of my life. It has shown me what kind of actor I want to be, and I wouldn't trade it for anything. You have nothing to apologize for--you have given me a great gift.' It was at that moment that our friendship started. I was already planning {Silverado}, and suddenly I thought, I'm going to write a part for Kevin Costner in that."

May CD

When we face the disappointments of life, do we blow up at God or do we simply trust our friend. There are some “reasons” why Abraham was called the friend of God. He didn’t just say it without a reason; He said it because of what Abraham did.

- I. Abraham chose to put his faith in God.
 - A. Faith is only as good as the object you put it in. There were some who put their faith in a big ship once upon a time. It was called the Titanic, the unsinkable ship. However, because of the bad metal that was used it sank and most all her crew died with her.
 - B. The faith I am talking about is in God. The Bible says in verse twenty-three, "Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." So what do we do with one of the most quoted scriptures in the Bible by many, "For we are saved by grace through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."
 - C. Faith is the foundation of your hopes. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Faith is what fills up your barrels of hope. If you try to hope God will take care of something without believing it by faith, your barrel is empty and you will not receive anything from God.

- II. Abraham believed God and then added action to his faith.

- A. Notice how James, the author of this book, deals with faith and works. He starts around verse fourteen and deals with the success and failure of faith and works. Together they are a success and apart they are a failure.
- B. Abraham was called the friend of God because when God called him out of his pagan belief to trust in a living God, Abraham left his family and followed after God. Abraham not only believed God he acted upon that faith. Abraham had found a friend in God.

Think about it, God so loved the world He gave. What greater gift than the giving of Himself.

g In Eastern lands the story is told of the great Shah Abbas, who delighted in mingling in disguise with the common folk of his realm. Once, dressed in wretched rags, he descended to the lowest level of the palace, where one of his humblest servants sat tending the furnace. Each enjoyed the other's company, and by and by the furnace tender shared his lunch of black bread and water with his companion. This led to many another visit, and a deepening friendship, though the servant had no idea of his new friend's identity.

At last, the shah revealed his identity, and waited, ready to grant whatever petition the servant might make. But the other sat silent, gazing on him with love and wonder. "Haven't you understood?" asked the shah. "I can make you rich and noble. I can give you a city. I can appoint you as a great ruler. Have you nothing to ask?" "Yes, my lord, I understood," the furnace tender replied. "But what is this you have done, to leave your glorious surroundings, to sit with me in this dark place, to partake of my coarse fare, and to care whether my heart is glad or sorry? Even you can give nothing more precious. On others you may bestow rich presents, but to me you have given yourself; it only remains to ask that you never withdraw this gift of your friendship" (Mark 10:45; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2, 25).

May CD

- C. Works of righteousness, by themselves, have never saved anyone. There are many today that believe if they look just right, act just right, and do things for God, then they will certainly go to heaven. Then there are those who believe that if they have faith then they don't have any responsibility to live right. But it takes faith with works to bring the blessings of God.

III. Abraham obeyed God and that is why He called him His friend.

- A. Faith mixed with works equals obedience. Obedience is the carrying out of another's will. Abraham left his home because he was carrying out another's will. He was ready to offer his son in order to carry out God's will. God knew then how much Abraham feared and loved Him.
- B. Abraham was "justified by works" when he obeyed God. He put faith and works together and carried out God's will. The Bible teaches us that obedience is better than sacrifice.
- C. Abraham was a patriarchal father while Rahab was just your average person. She was not even a Jew. But she also became a friend of God. For she also "was justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?"

Conclusion:

You can become a friend of God today. And just like Abraham, God will talk with you. He will lead you into all truth and He will give you an opportunity to obey Him in carrying out His will.

Solomon said in Proverbs 18:24- "that a friend must show himself friendly;" and that there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. Jesus has come to be our friend. He has shown Himself friendly. He has loved us when no one else loved us. He has stayed with us even when we rejected Him.

James went on to say in chapter four that if we chose to be a friend of the world we will be making an enemy out of God. So we can see that we need to treat the world of sin like an enemy and God needs to be our choice.

g Friend! What a precious word. Most of us concur wholeheartedly with William Shakespeare who said:

"Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel."

One of the privileges of friendship is being able to speak frankly. Little by little, and day by day, we become accustomed to saying what we think we ought to say instead of what we really think. How comfortable and how pleasant it is to speak freely without having to be on guard. As the Arabian says, "A friend is one to whom we may pour out the contents of our hearts, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will sift it, keep what is worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away!"

Another privilege of friendship is that of being understood. Perhaps it was this quality which caused George Eliot to write: "Animals are such agreeable friends. They ask no questions; they pass no criticisms." Understanding is to be expected of friends. Total agreement and acceptance? Not necessarily! As one anonymous writer has said, "The strength and sweetness of friendship depends on sincerity tempered by sympathy."

A third privilege of friendship is the privilege of silence. If one is but a mere acquaintance we feel that we must talk. So we turn to such exciting subjects as the weather, our ailments, and our latest surgery. But what a joy it is to have a friend that will even understand your silence and not say, "My friend is not my friend anymore because he is not talking."

Friends have mutual interests. They enjoy doing the same kinds of things, and talking about their shared interests. That's why there is such great camaraderie between fishermen, woodworkers, gardeners, authors, etc.

Friends are mutually devoted to each other. When you are in trouble it is not merely your friend's duty but his privilege to stand by. If he is in trouble, you count it a privilege to help.

Friendship is this . . . and a whole lot more. But it causes one to ask, "Are God and I friends?"

May CD

References

May, Steve (1999) 1001 Contemporary Illustrations. Raleigh, North Carolina: Heaven Word Inc.