

Friendship with God

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What is a friend? When you think of your best friend, what qualities come to mind? When you think of being a friend, what attributes are essential? Loyalty? Trustworthiness? Love? True regard for the welfare of the other?

Does a friend know you? Do you know your friend? Do you enjoy your friend talking with you, wrestling over ideas with you? Do friends protect each other? Do friends share secrets, celebrate achievements together and support each other during loss?

Jesus talked with His disciples, shared His life with them, explained God's methods, principles and plans to them. They struggled to understand, but Jesus wanted them to. He longed for them to comprehend what He was doing. As Christ approached Gethsemane He took three of the twelve to the inner Garden, longing for their understanding, their empathy, their encouragement, their prayers, and their support. What a privilege offered to these disciples: intimacy, understanding, and friendship with God! Would you like such a relationship? God is calling you to be His friend.

But what does friendship with God look like? How would you describe a relationship in which someone sought you out, told you in this relationship you must always obey everything he told you, never question, are not allowed to think and reason, are forbidden from understanding and required to

sacrifice greatly? Would you call it friendship?

I have heard it suggested that this is what God wants from His intelligent creatures: blind submission, non-thinking servitude, the obedience of a well trained dog or a mindless slave. But this is a lie from the father of lies. God created us in His image and we are to be “thinkers not mere reflectors of other men’s thoughts!” {Ed 17}. “Our reasoning powers were given us for use, and God desires them to be exercised. He invites us to ‘Come now, and let us reason together’ (Isaiah 1:18). In reliance upon Him we may have wisdom to ‘refuse the evil, and choose the good.’ Isaiah 7:15; James 1:5.” {Ed 231}

In this warfare between God and Satan for our minds (2Cor 10:3-5), God has 100% of the truth on His side. Satan is the father of lies. He has no truth. Therefore, Satan relies on teachings that convince people they must “believe without evidence,” “obey without understanding,” because then we are truly blind and powerless to his assaults. Jesus said, “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32). How can a person who doesn’t think, doesn’t ask questions, doesn’t reason, ever know anything, much less be a mature Christian who “has developed by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong”? (Hebrews 5:14).

Abraham was a friend of God and what characterized his relationship with God? Certainly God wanted friendship with Abraham and Abraham was obedient to God, no doubt about it. But what kind of obedience did Abraham render? Blind, non-thinking, ignorant servitude, or the obedience of an understanding friend? When God came to destroy Sodom, He told His friend Abraham on His way. Did Abraham respond? “God said it; I believe it, go smoke ‘em”? No! Abraham was a friend of God and he argued, graciously of course, with God. “Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25).

Abraham knew God, cared about God, cared for God’s reputation and dialogued an opposing view. This is friendship with God. Moses, another man of antiquity the Bible describes as a friend of God, also demonstrated the same friendly relationship. He knew God and when God was going to destroy Israel, Moses argued with God saying, “take my name out of your book.” Moses, like Job, was jealous for God’s reputation. “What will the nations think of You if, after bringing this people out of Egypt, You kill them?”

True friends are thinking, intelligent, understanding friends who care for the wellbeing of the other!

Jesus, God in human form said, “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.” John 15:15 NASB

Notice, a slave doesn’t know and understand his master’s business. He just obeys and does what his master tells him to do. But Jesus says NO to that as friendship. He says friends know Him and He has made known to us what He has heard from the Father.

Is there a difference between a “serving friend” and “friendly service”? God does not want mere friendly service (obedience). God wants friends who know Him, love Him, and understand His character, methods and principles and freely choose to obey because they agree with Him. This is what God is calling us to – a never-ending friendship with Him!

“Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by

God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. Our message is that God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends. Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends!" 2 Cor 5:17-20 GNT