

## ***How to Be A Friend of God***

Friend Day & Baptism

April 30, 2006

*During the reign of Queen Victoria in England, a London Doctor visited a 72 year old lady named Maria Vincent. Her husband had left her several years earlier. She was poor and lived in humble surroundings. Though it was late in the Fall, this undernourished woman had neither warm clothes and no source of heat for her house. The doctor couldn't believe her friends would allow her to live like that. When asked about it, Maria said she had no friends. Later in the discussion she corrected herself. She admitted that there might be one, but was sure that she had forgotten about her. The doctor pressed her for the identity of the friend. And finally Maria told him that it was the Queen herself. She said that the two of them had been childhood friends.*

*The doctor left, not sure that he believed Maria, but when he got home he wrote the Queen a letter relating the incident. A few days later he received a letter from the Queen. The story was true. The Queen had not forgotten. Enclosed in the letter was enough money to provide for all of Maria's needs. For the remaining years of her life, Maria Vincent lived comfortably as a friend of the Queen.*

### **1) Who Would You Like to Have as a Friend?**

In hearing that story about this woman who was a friend of the Queen, you may think of someone that you would like to have as a friend. It could be an actor or actress that you really admire. It might be the owner of a large company or the President of the United States or some other political leader. It might be your favorite singer or your favorite athlete. If we are impressed with someone to the point of dreaming of being their friend, we need to remember that each of us has the opportunity to be a friend with one that is more powerful than any business man, President, actor or anyone else. We can become a friend of God.

It has always been God's desire to be a friend to people. We can look all the way back to the Old Testament where we find individuals that had fellowship with God. There are three places in the Bible that refers to Abraham as a friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7, Isaiah 41:8 & James 2:23)

**James 2:23** *Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.*

### **Background of Abraham.**

**Genesis 12:1-4** *I Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." 4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran*

**15:6** *And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.*

**22:2** *He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you."*

We see Abraham's faithfulness to God and then how he was later referred to as a friend of God.

In the New Testament, we find that during the earthly ministry of Jesus, He was on occasion called a friend of Publicans and sinners and He told His disciples He considered them his friends. The apostle Paul tells us more about God's desire for friend when he explains that Jesus' death on Calvary was to give us who are often do things against God and an opportunity to respond to His love in salvation and become His friend.

### **2 Corinthians 5:19-21** (The Message)

*19 God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. 20 We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you. 21 How? you say. In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God.*

We should be cautious and not take too much for granted. The fact that God want to be your friend is not the only factor determining your relationship with Him; you too must desire to be a friend of God. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells of individuals who recite their accomplishments for God. Then God responds, "'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.'" (Matt. 7:23)

Jesus holds out to us the opportunity to be His friend. You must receive or reject friendship with God. The choice is yours.

## **2) What is a Friend of God**

As I mentioned earlier, the Bible on three occasions calls Abraham "a friend of God" Looking at the life of Abraham and his relationship with God, we can see that many of the things that are true of friend in general are true of a friendship with God.

**A. A friend of God knows him personally.** Abraham knew God. The Bible tells how God came and talked to Abraham and made a covenant with him. We may not hear an audible voice, but God does speak to us today. God desires to have a personal relationship with us. Many people know about God, they know that His love was enough to send Jesus to die for the sins of the world, to be buried & to be resurrected, as we just celebrated a couple of weeks ago at Easter. Many people know John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world that he gave his one & only son that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life."

It is not just enough to know about God and things that God did. We can know about a celebrity, but it is different when you meet that person & become friends. God wants you to meet him & to know him personally.

**B. A friend of God loves God.** Abraham loved God & demonstrated that love by serving Him. He was not perfect. He made some rather significant mistakes, but He was faithful in doing God's will.

Sometimes we get a distorted idea about what love is. We may think it relates to doing grand things. I read about a man who after dinner one night he decided to show his love for his wife by reciting poetry. In the poem he shared how he would climb the highest mountains to be near her, swim wide oceans, cross deserts in the burning heat of the day and even sit ate her window to sing love songs to her in the moonlight.

After listening to him go on for some time about his great love, shed ended the conversation by asking, "But will you wash dishes for me."

If we love God we will do more than sing about it and talk about we will do something about it.

Several years ago I was at a youth conference in which Tony Cartledge the editor of the Biblical Recorder was speaking. He began by saying we can chant, "I love God, yes I do, I love God, how about you. . . . I love more. I love more.. . . Loving God is to be demonstrated by our actions.

**C. A Friend of God is interested in the things of God.** As two friends share common interest, if we desire to be a friend of God we are to be interested in the things that God is interested in. What do you think that would include?

- people having a relationship with Him?
- changed lives?
- issues of poverty, hunger, diseases?
- divorce, violence, pain, suffering . . .

We should have an interest in the things of God. When God told Abraham that he was to be a Father of a new nation that was to be a focal point of God's work, Abraham was interested. Abraham didn't always do things God's way, he first thought it could be through his servant and then through a son born to Hagar. Those were common heirs of that time period, but God's way was even greater.

Our goal is to be interested in the things of God & to do things God's way.

**D. A Friend of God enjoys fellowship with God.** If we really want to be close to God then we are to spend time in prayer. We read about Abraham & his conversations with God. We are to go to God with our concerns, but also our praises. We are to spend time with God, to connect with God. It is not to be only about what we can get from God, but also to know God.

We fellowship with God through prayer, through spending time with other Christians, through sharing our faith, through caring for others in need, & through reading the Bible. We fellowship with God by being with God & allowing God to work in and through us.

**E. A friend of God will be loyal to the cause of Christ.** There were times in the life of Abraham which he was not the best example. On two occasions he told people that his wife was his sister, because he feared that because of her beauty he would be killed and she would be taken by a King. He made some mistakes, but he also had an endurance to stay with God and to his work. In Genesis 17:5, God gave Abraham a new name. The name Abraham means “a father of many nations.” Abraham was 99 years old at the time. Could you imagine someone asking him his name? He responds “Father of many nations.” And then they ask, well, how many children do you have? “None yet.”

Even after the birth of Isaac, Abraham was prepared to kill his own son at the command of God, believing that God would raise him from the dead. **Heb 11: 17-19** *17 By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, 18 of whom he had been told, "It is through ac that descendants shall be named for you." 19 He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead—and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*

If we truly desire to be a friend of God we will be loyal to Him.

#### **What is a friend of God**

- one who knows him personally
- one who loves Him.
- One who is interested in the things of God
- One who enjoys fellowship with God.
- One who will be loyal to the cause of Christ.

### **3) How Do you Become a Friend of God**

#### **A) You become a Friend of God by Faith**

**Genesis 15:6** *And he (Abraham) believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.*

In **Ephesians 2:8-9**, it states, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Salvation comes through faith. That is not simply believing something, it is having faith to believe in what you can't see & in things that you can't prove. It means trusting Christ as your Savior. It is to realize that you have sinned & you can't reach God on your own.

**Romans 3:23** *since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;*

**Romans 5:8** *But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.*

**Romans 10:9-10** *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved*

**B) We Strengthen our Friendship through obedience**

Jesus said, (John 15:14) You are my friends if you do what I command you. It is our responsibility to follow Christ and to do what he leads us to do. In living the Christian life, the bar is high and we will fall short at time, but we are to have high goals in what we do for Jesus. It is through this obedience that we strengthen that friendship with God.

**C) Friends become better Friends through Fellowship**

Proverbs 18:24 Some friends play at friendship but a true friend sticks closer than one's nearest kin.

Almost three-fourths of Americans claim to be Christians, but only a small fraction consider church the place to deepen their faith. Less than 20 % of American adults believe participation in a congregation is critical to spiritual growth, "These figures emphasize how soft people's commitment to God is," evangelical researcher George Barna said in the report. Americans are willing to expend some energy in religious activities such as attending church and reading the Bible, and they are willing to throw some money in the offering basket, but when it comes time to truly establishing their priorities and making a tangible commitment to knowing & loving God, most people stop short." (Biblical Recorder ABP – 4/21/06)

**Conclusion**

It would be great to be a friend of a Queen & be taken care of as a friend of the Queen. It would be great to be a friend of someone really famous. It is even greater to be a friend of God: to know God personally, to really love God, to be interested in the things of God, to fellowship with God & to be concerned about the cause of Christ. If you have never accepted Christ as your Savior, I invite you to accept Christ, begin that relationship, become a friend of God. If you are already a Christian, but you realize that you have not been as close to God as you should, you may feel a need to recommit your life to God, to be a better friend through your faith, your obedience and your fellowship.