

Invitation to Personal Friendship with God



1. In the Beginning

1.1 Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden

- When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, there was no religious system, no ritual to follow, and no worship service schedule to keep.

They walked with God and enjoyed His presence and His creation, and worked the garden – the animals, flowers, trees, rivers, etc. They worked for enjoyment and fulfilment.

- When they disobeyed and were driven out of the garden, God placed cherubim (the archangels who guard the holy presence of God against the intrusion of anything unholy) and a flaming sword in the east of the garden to bar man's access.

1.2 The Holy of Holies – the Veil that barred man's access to the Holy of Holies was ripped open

- The veil that guarded the holy presence of God was torn in two from top to bottom when Jesus cried out with a loud voice on the cross '**Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit,**' and gave up his spirit (Lk 23:44-46, Mt 27:50-51, Mk 15:37-39) and the way into the holy place was opened by His blood (Heb 10:10-14, 19-20).

The cherubim that guarded the Garden of Eden against sinners – the cherubim images were also woven into the veil that kept the Holy of Holies closed to sinners. Only the High Priest could enter it just once a year with animal blood to make atonement for Israel's sin.

- Jesus entered the Holy of Holies ahead of us as our eternal High Priest with His holy and precious blood, and He invites us into God's holy presence (Heb 6:19,20; 7:24-25) now to commune with God intimately.
- In the OT, two men were referred to as God's friends. Abraham was called a friend of God (2 Chr 20:7. Is 41:8. James 2:23), and the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Exo 33:11).

Now God's holy presence is open to all who are washed clean and made holy by Jesus' blood. And Jesus offers personal friendship to His disciples who follow and obey Him. (John 15:14-15)

2. Jesus' Hidden Intention in Calling the Twelve Disciples

2.1 To BE with Jesus

- Jesus had a deeper hidden intention when He called the twelve disciples to Himself with 'Follow Me.' He was inviting them to deep personal friendship with Him.
- **Mark 3:13** And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. **14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him** and that He might send them out to preach, **15** and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:

The disciples were called to BE with JESUS FIRST, and only after that to be sent out to preach, and to have power over sickness and demons.

2.2 To follow Jesus through death and resurrection

- When Greeks seek after Jesus and his ministry was going international, Jesus went in the opposite direction.
- **John 12:23** But Jesus answered them, saying, "**The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.** **24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.** **25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.** **26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also.** If anyone serves Me, him *My Father* will honor.
- Serving Jesus means following Him SO THAT where Jesus is, we are there with Him – in joy and suffering, death and resurrection. We embrace suffering and rejection as well as joy and honour in following Christ.

2.3 To share in all of Jesus' Inheritance from God the Father

- Just before His suffering and crucifixion, Jesus opens a special and intimate conversation with His disciples. Jesus shares His inmost thoughts and plans and secrets with them. And He calls them His friends.

John 15: ¹⁴ You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Jesus is looking for friends with whom He can share all of God's plans and purposes - even Jesus' throne, glory and power.

John 17: ²⁴ "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

- But Jesus' invitation to personal friendship is not on offer for just anyone. It is for His faithful disciples who have remained with Him through thick and thin, and tested through time.

Jesus eliminates Judas from this group before He starts this special conversation with the eleven disciples.

3. Abraham God's Friend

- Abraham is called God's Friend 3 times in the Scripture!

- **Isa 41:** ⁸ But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of **Abraham My friend.**

2 Chr 20: ⁷ Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of **Abraham Your friend forever?**

- Abraham did not know in his lifetime just how highly God regarded him as His friend. What did Abraham do that brought him to a place where God calls Abraham 'My friend – forever'?
- **James 2:** ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²² Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? ²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "**Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.**" **And he was called the friend of God.**

3.1 Responding to God's Word

- One night, Abraham sat discouraged at home. A while ago he and his men rescued Lot, his family, and many people in a mighty battle. He even had a holy encounter with Melchizedek the priest of the Most High God. Abraham responds to God's 'I am your shield, I am your exceedingly great reward,' with 'But I have no son! A servant in my house will inherit everything!' Not even a brother, cousin or nephew because Abraham left his country, his family, everything for God's promise of making him a great nation (Gen 12:1-3). He and his wife were just getting older. Abraham was probably sensitive after his nephew and his family left to go back home.
 - **Gen 15:** ⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." ⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." **And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."** ⁶ **And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.**
- Abraham trusted the Lord when He brought him outside and showed him the countless stars in the night sky, and told him that's how many children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren He will have.
- When we say YES to God when He speaks, and align our hearts with what He says, we enter into right relationship with Him that pleases God. And Abraham's friendship with God begins here as a little seed.
- Trust is the bedrock of any relationship. I trust the contract I signed will hold. I trust my employee will do the work he signed up to do. I trust my business partner's honesty and competence. I trust the train will come on time most of the time. I trust eBay will send me the product I already paid for.

Friendship is built on intimate trust - my friend will stay by my side, faithful, loyal and true to me through ups and downs, good and bad.

3.2 Abraham's Growing in Faith and Trust

- Abraham started his journey of friendship with God when he put his faith in God when He spoke to him. He came to the pinnacle of his faith when he obeyed God's command to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice, believing God's word to him will NOT fail, that God is worthy of his complete trust, that God will raise up Isaac up from the dead and fulfil His promise to him, that 'In Isaac your seed will be called.'
- **Heb 11:17** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," ¹⁹ concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Abraham's faith in God who raises from the dead, became the pattern for our faith. God will offer up His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for our sins, and raise Him from the dead to become our saviour forever.

3.3 Entering into God the Father's Heart

- That day Abraham entered into the heart of the heavenly father when he obeyed God's command to offer up his only begotten son, Isaac as a sacrifice.

Gen 22:6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

- This is the picture of God the Father and God the Son walking together to Mt Calvary – just the two of them. God the Son carried the wood for the burnt offering on his back – the cross on which he was to be nailed. God the Father carried the fire and the knife.
- **Gen 22:15** Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, ¹⁶ and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— ¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

That day, Abraham, became God's friend forever.

4. Growing in Friendship with God

4.1 Constant Conversation with the Lord

- **1 Thess 5:16** Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Is this a punishing Scripture? How much prayer is enough? No, it is God's invitation to know His joy and delight over me, to invite His holy presence and intimate involvement into every nook and cranny of my life – even in sleep. Our prayers will overflow with thanksgiving.

- Smith Wigglesworth learned to walk and talk with God. *I don't often spend more than half an hour in prayer - but I never go more than half an hour without praying.*
- How does a mother of three with a fulltime job spend decent time with the Lord? Walk with Jesus and invite Him into every hour of every day – cook with Jesus, do grocery shopping with Jesus, ask for Jesus' help in your work, and invite Jesus into your family in all things.

4.2 Learn to be very honest with God

- The deeper the friendship, most gut-level honesty there is, and less façade or mask-wearing because we are safe and secure in their presence.

Jesus cried out on the cross, 'My God, my God why have you forsaken me?' A new believer once asked, 'Did Jesus complain on the cross?' No, Jesus expressed His pain to the Father in complete honesty - because he was completely safe and secure with His Father.

- Intimacy is spelled INTO-ME-SEE. Those whom you trust, you let them see into your heart. Let's learn to be deeply honest with the Lord about your joys, pains, fears, flaws, and hurts.

When you bring to the Lord your wounds and failures honestly and hear His voice of love and correction, it cleanses and heals you, so you don't become bitter. Instead the stumbling stone in your life becomes a stepping stone to greater maturity and freedom in God.

We learn to be honest with the Lord when we see how honest David was in his cry to God, how honest Job is in his pain, and how honest Jeremiah was in his discouragement.

* Testimony of a wife who learned to be honest with God.

5. Reflection

1. Jesus offered His friendship to the faithful disciples. Are you growing as a disciple and friend of Jesus?
2. Do you find Abraham's friendship with God inspiring? What do you want to learn from Abraham?
3. What is your struggle or challenge in entering into a deeper friendship with the Lord?