

# Becoming a Friend of God

by Brian Long

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*Becoming a friend of God begins with God's friendship to us, which starts with God choosing to be our friend and reconciling us to himself through the death of his son.*

**Duration:** 35:18

**Scripture:** Genesis 18:16, Genesis 22:1-2, John 15:9-12, James 4:17

**Topics:** "Friend Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of obedience rooted in faith and motivated by love. He highlights the need to examine our actions and motivations, not just focusing on what we don't do, but also on the good we ought to do. The preacher references the story of Abraham as an example of faith in action, specifically pointing to the test where God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. The sermon concludes with a call to love others as Jesus loves sinners and to respond to God's calling with faith and obedience.

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## Transcript

We're going to turn to John, chapter 15, this morning. The Gospel of John, chapter 15, we were actually here on Wednesday night, but we were looking more at the first few verses Wednesday night. This morning, we're going to begin in verse nine, John, chapter 15, verse nine.

And I want to speak to you about becoming a friend of God, a friend of God. John, chapter 15. Verse nine, Jesus says.

As the father loved me, I also have loved you abide in my love, if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants for a servant does not know what his master is doing, but I've called you friends for all things that I heard from my father.

I have made known to you, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the father in my name, he may give

you these things. I command you that you love one another. There is at least one man in this holy Bible.

That God singles out specifically by name and he calls him his friend, one man that God looked down from heaven and said of that man specifically, he is my friend. What a title, brothers and sisters. Who was that man? Abraham.

Listen to the scripture. Isaiah 41, verse eight. But thou, Israel, are my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen the seed of Abraham, my friend.

God says that Abraham, my friend. Second Chronicles, chapter 20, verse seven, King Jehoshaphat addresses God in one of his prayers this way. Art not thou our God who did drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people, Israel, and gave it to the seed of Abraham, thy friend forever? James chapter two, this is in the New Testament, verse twenty three.

And the scripture was fulfilled, which says Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God. God called the man his friend.

There is no title, no title that supersedes that. I can remember before I was saved and just longing more than anything to have this title, world champion bull rider. Now, I look back at that and see it from this perspective in the Lord's perspective, the emptiness of that.

What if I did have that? It'd be nothing but to have this title friend of God, friend of God. There was a time that I can tell you, if I were honest, I wanted to be a great preacher. I want to be a great preacher.

And if I were honest, yeah, I want my name to be known as a great preacher. Now I perish that thought, perish the thought. I have no greater desire before God than to have God call me his friend.

Isn't that a desire worth having, brothers and sisters, to have God Almighty look down upon you and say he is my friend, she is my friend, Sandra is my friend, Justin is my friend. I have friends. Almighty God saying this, I have friends gathered right there at Cornerstone this morning.

Oh, to be a friend of God. There is no title that could compare to that. President of the United States means nothing compared to being called a friend of God, MVP of the Super Bowl, most famous popular celebrity in Hollywood, richest man in the world.

Who cares? It's all empty. It's all vain. But to be friend of God, to be called a friend of God, how can this be said of us as it was of Abraham? What is it that would cause the Lord Jesus to look at us? Single us out specifically by name and say he is my friend, she is my friend, they are my friends.

Well, again, in John chapter 15, he tells us very clearly. But I want you to see to this morning that becoming a friend of God doesn't begin with our friendship to God. It begins rather with God's friendship to us.

This is where it all begins. Verse 16, you did not choose me, but I chose you. That's where it begins.

It begins with God choosing to be our friend, choosing to befriend us, choosing to reconcile us unto himself through the death of his son, the blood of his son. Because the truth is, brothers and sisters, we will all all born in sin. We were all born enemies of God.

That's what Romans chapter five says. If when while you were enemies of God, God reconciled you to himself through the death of his son, we were enemies of God and God chose us. Imagine being a little boy on the playground and you're going to play football and you're the worst athlete on the playground.

But the two captains go to pick teams and the first captain chooses you first to be on his team. Imagine how that little boy feels. That that is no comparison to almighty God choosing us.

And I use that illustration because I want you to see it wasn't that God saw something in us. Oh, I see something in him. So I better choose him.

I don't really see anything worthy in that one. So I won't choose that one. That is not our God.

He chose us on the basis of nothing that we could offer him, but because of who he is, he's a God of amazing grace. He's a God of indescribable mercy and love. He first came to us.

He initiated. I was talking to my daughter Kaylee yesterday on the phone, she was telling me about this friend of hers and she said, dad is so beautiful. He reached out to this boy that has cerebral palsy and he said he's not looking at him in a condescending way.

He's really befriending him. He took him to every show in Silver Dollar City, even though he had to carry him in his arms to every show. This this cerebral palsy boy that had cerebral palsy had nothing to offer this other young man, but he chose him.

He chose to pick him up. He chose to take him from one show to the next show, to the other. He said she said, dad, they're going to take him to some camp, some sports camp, because he loves sports.

I can't remember which sport, but going to take him to his to this camp and the whole week he's going to be his arms and his legs. He's going to carry him when they run. He's going to throw the football or whatever it is, you know, he's going to be his arms and legs.

He chose him again. Brothers and sisters, that illustration pales in comparison to this almighty God, the sovereign ruler of heaven and earth who needs nothing, looks down and chooses us. This is the word.

These are the words of Jesus. You did not choose me. I chose you.

I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. That is, I've chosen to be your friend. Romans 5 8 says, but God commended his love toward us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God made the first move. He reached out to us on the cross in the person of his only begotten son, Jesus Christ. The friendship begins with him at the cross of Jesus Christ.

What that should do to us when we in our in times in my life and when we have been so proud thinking, I'm not going to make the first move, I'm not going to take the initiative. They should take the initiative. Who took the initiative when it came to you being saved? It wasn't you.

It wasn't me. It was God. You did not choose me.

He said, I chose you. I chose to be your friend. I chose to reconcile you.

And then he goes on to say in verse 13 here of John 15, greater love has no one than this than to lay down one's life for his friends. That is what Jesus did. He laid down his life.

He called sinners who were enemies. He called them friends. And then he was called a friend to sinners by the Pharisees.

Greater love has no man than this. That is, lay down his life for his friends. Life is the most precious thing that a man has.

His life is all that he is. His life is himself. And the sacrifice of a person's own life is the greatest and highest demonstration of love that anyone could ever, ever give.

Jesus Christ is so much more than just an innocent man. This is the holy son of God laying down his life for you when he was crucified in your place and mine on the cross. He died for our sins.

Greater love, greater love has no man than this, that he laid down his life for his friends. He is the friend that loves us to the uttermost. He is the friend that is spoken about in Proverbs chapter 28.

I think it's verse 24. He is the friend that sticks closer than a brother. You see, there are two things about a genuine friendship to two characteristics that you see in every genuine friendship.

And I want to share them with you today. And I started both of them with the letter L. So hope with hopes that we remember them. Number one, loyalty.

Number two, love, loyalty and love. There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. That is loyalty.

Jesus is no fair weather friend. Jesus is not one who's with you today and then gone tomorrow. Jesus is with you through thick and thin.

He is the friend that sticks closer than a brother. This is the loyalty of Christ. But now Jesus moves from talking about him being our friend to the other side of the friendship.

And that is now to us becoming his friends. So just as he is faithful to us, he calls us to be faithful to him. And those who are called friends of God are faithful to God.

There's a loyalty to God. There is an allegiance to God. There's a loyalty to him, a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

Look, if you will, with me at James chapter four. Turn there. Keep your place in John 15.

Because I want you to I want us to go back and forth from James to John James chapter four. You will see here how friendship with God requires loyalty. It requires devotion.

It requires faithfulness. James chapter four and verse four, adulterers and adulterous, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the scripture says in vain, the spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously? God is a jealous God.

God loves us, jealousy, and you can either be a friend of the world or you can be a friend of God, but you cannot be both. There is a loyalty that is demanded. He who is a friend of the world is an enemy of God.

And I'll say it this way also, because Jesus said it clearly in John chapter 15. He who is a friend of God will be an enemy of the world. Remember what he said? Don't be surprised.

I'm paraphrasing, of course. Don't be surprised if the world hates you. Remember, it hates you because it first hated me.

He that is a friend of the world is an enemy of God. He is a friend of God, is an enemy of the world. And by the world, we're talking about this world system, everything that the world esteems, everything that is popular and prestigious and prominent and, you know, patriotic and all of that, that everything the world patronizes.

To be popular in the world, to be a friend of the world, is to be an enemy of God. It's very clear there. Where does my allegiance lie? Is it to Christ or anything else that this world has to offer me? Friendship with Christ, Jesus, friendship with God demands a loyalty, a loyalty, an allegiance, an absolute devotion to Christ.

He says in John, chapter 15, verse 14, you are my friends if you do whatever I command you. There must be a loyalty, a trust, a loyalty. Now, when it comes to Abraham, look in James with me again in chapter two.

It says in James 2, 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. He believed God, he trusted God, that's this this loyalty, there must be a trust, there must be a faith in God, a trust in him.

And I want you to follow me, if you will, just to see the loyalty, the trust and the obedience that Abraham had to God. Let's go to Genesis chapter 12. Why was this man called a friend of God? Genesis chapter 12.

In Genesis chapter 12, verse one, this is before his name was changed, but this is the same man, Abram. Now, the Lord had said to Abram, get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. Sometimes we read the Bible so quickly.

I want you to pause for just a minute and listen to what God is commanding of this man. Put your put yourself in his shoes. I had a vivid dream last night that the Lord has sent me to China and I did not know the language.

I was in the midst of Chinese people. I was in the midst of persecution. I did not know how to communicate with anybody except for to love and to pray.

But maybe the Lord gave me that just because I was studying this. I don't know. Maybe it's something in the future.

I don't know. But think of this, brothers and sisters. And it became so real to me in this dream.

Think of this. You who have lived in the same place all your life. You have had the privilege to be grown up among relatives and family.

What if the Lord were to say this? This is what he said to Abraham. Get out of your country. Leave the United States.

Mexico, China, Afghanistan. Get out of your country. From your family, you're leaving your family.

From your father's house, your mom, your dad, your relatives to a land, I will show you you don't even really know where you're going. Abraham was called a friend of God. What would he do? Friendship requires loyalty.

Friendship also requires love. And there is only one way, according to scripture. Let me say the preeminent way to measure our love for God is obedience, loyalty and love.

And love is always demonstrated through obedience. What would Abraham do? Get out of your country, leave your family, leave your father's house to a land I will show you. Then he gives him a promise.

I'll make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Now watch this. So Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken to him and Lot went with him. When we read that quickly, we don't feel the sting of it.

You know, is it that easy just to get up and leave my country and leave my relatives and leave everything that I'm familiar with? And listen to this, not as a young man. Young man's ready to go, not as a young woman, a young woman may be ready to go, but when he was 75 years old, get up and go. This man was loyal to God.

This man trusted God. This man loved God and his love was demonstrated through obedience, action. He went.

He heard from God and he went. That's love, that's loyalty, that's a friend of God. James chapter two, if we back up, he says again of Abraham, verse 18.

Someone will say you have faith and I have work, show me your faith without your works and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well.

Even the demons believe in tremble. In other words, anybody could say, I believe God. But what if he says, leave your relatives, leave your country, go to a land? I will show you now.

Do you believe God now? Do you trust him? Even the demons believe, he says, in tremble. But do you want to know, oh, foolish man, that faith without works is dead was not Abraham, our father, justified by works when he offered Isaac, his son on the altar. Do you see that faith was working together with his works and by works faith was made perfect and the scripture was fulfilled, which says Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God.

You see, then, that a man is justified by works and not by faith only. It goes on to say in verse 26, for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead. Love without obedience is not love.

Love with no action is not love. Friendship where there's no loyalty and there's no love is not a true friendship. Faith without works is dead, just as if you remove the spirit from my body, my body would die on this platform.

Rich Mullins sang and wrote a song. It's like it's faith without works is as useless as a screen door on a submarine. I'll never forget that one.

It's like a song you can't sing, a screen door on a submarine. You say that you have faith. Here is faith.

Faith works, faith goes to action, faith obeys. Abraham trusted God and obeyed him because he was loyal to God. He loved God.

And that was his first test to leave his country, to leave his relatives and to go even as an old man to a place that God would show him. But here's here's another major test. He just mentions it here in James.

He's referring to Genesis chapter 22. Listen carefully. Verse one, it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham, and he said, here I am.

Then God said, take now 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 of which I should tell you now again, it's easy to read quickly when you know the rest of the story. But put yourself in his shoes, the closest that we've ever come is when God was saying, will you trust me with Luke? I'm calling you, Martha, I'm calling you, Brian, to lay him down on the altar. I trust me.

That's faith, brothers and sisters, it's not as easy as we just sometimes flippantly talk about faith and trust and obedience. But this man heard from God, take your son, not just your son, your only son, not just your only son, your only son whom you love. Take him.

And offer him up on that mountain as a burnt offering, what was his response? Verse three, Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, took two of his young men with him and Isaac, his son, he split the wood for the burnt offering. He arose and went to the place in which God had told him. Then on the third day, Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

And Abraham said to his young men, stay here with the donkey, the lad and I will go yonder and worship and we will come back to you. That's faith, but it gets more than that, it goes so far. This took a long time to get up on the mountain.

He had plenty of time to change his mind, but he trusted God. He believed God. He was loyal to God.

He loved God. And when he laid his son on that altar and lifted the night, he had every intention of bringing it down. He had such faith in God, Hebrews tells us that he believed that God would even raise his son from the dead.

That's faith, that's trust, that's loyalty, that's devotion to God, that's love and obedience. God stopped him, Abraham, Abraham, now I know that you fear me. And in essence, I believe you could also say, I know you trust me, I know you love me.

I know that you fear me, Abraham, you are my friend. It's what I want. I want to be a friend of God, faith in Christ is essential, obedience to Christ is a must.

Faith pleases God and without faith, it's impossible to please him. But what kind of faith was it that Abraham had? What kind of belief in God was this that God could look upon this man with such joy and delight and say he is my friend? It was faith that was demonstrated by obedience, rooted in it was obedience, rooted in faith, demonstrated by obedience, and it was motivated by love. We need to ask

ourselves, brothers and sisters.

Why do I do what I'm doing? Jesus again said in John 15, you are my friends, if you do what I command you, if you do what I've told you to do, a lot of us can boast and we can pat ourselves on the back and we can say and we can boast about what we don't do anymore. God, you know, I love you because I don't smoke anymore, I don't fight anymore, I don't cheat anymore, I don't lie anymore, but that's all what we don't do. James also tells us he that knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it to him, it is sin.

There are sins of omission just as much as there are sins of commission, sins of omission or knowing the good you should do and not doing it. What not just not what you don't do, I mean, what kind of friend is that? What kind of Leon, you know, I'm your friend because I don't talk bad about you, I don't cheat you, I don't insult you, that's fine, brother Brian, that's all what you don't do. But what do you do to be my friend? You see it, what do we do to show God we love him, that we trust him? It's not just what you don't do.

Jesus says husbands love your wives as he is, as I've loved the church. What do you do to show love for your wife? It's not Martha, I love you and because you should know I love you because I don't insult you, I don't disrespect you, I don't cheat, I don't lie, all that rest. What do you do? What do you do to show me love? Wives, what do you do to show your husband's respect and submission and love? Children, honor your mother and father.

What do you do to show honor, love for your mom and dad? Love your neighbor as yourself, Jesus said, what do I do to show my neighbor I love him? What do I do to show my brother and sister? Brothers and sisters, he made it so clear, you are my friends, if you do whatever I command you, and in the same context, he says over and over and over again, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I've loved you, do you? Don't boast that you, well, I don't do him wrong, I don't do him harm, but what do you do to show him you love him? What do you do to show her you love her? This is his command, love one another, love one another as I have loved you, that is his command. Are we loyal to him? Will we love him? Will we demonstrate that love by an obedience that is motivated by love for Jesus? And here's the beauty, brothers and sisters, of becoming a friend of God. Abraham was a friend of God.

Here's the beauty of it. Jesus always reveals his heart to his friends, only to his friends, look at John chapter 15 again, John 15, verse 15. No longer do I call you servants for a servant does not know what his master is doing, but I've called you friends for all things that I heard from my father, I've made known to you.

I. There are things that are shared with. Friends that no one else knows. And it's the same with God, Martha had no idea what I would be preaching today and yesterday as I'm working in the afternoon out of the blue, totally unexpected phone rings, I say, hello, she says, I just want you to know you're my best friend.

I can talk to you and tell you things I would not tell anybody else, that's friendship. So what did she say? None of your business because there's friendship, right? There's friendship there. There are things that you share with your closest friend.

With your soulmate, your wife, your husband, no one else knows. Things about me that no one on Earth knows, but my wife and vice versa, and it's the same with you. Jesus is saying that you're not I don't refer to you as slaves anymore.

I'm not calling you servants. Servant doesn't know what his master's business is, but I'm telling you what my business is. I'm revealing my heart.

I'm revealing my ways to you, everything that the father tells me, disciples, I'm telling you. It had happened with Abraham. Oh, this is beautiful.

Watch this. Abraham, who was a friend of God. Before God was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis chapter 18.

Verse 16, then the men rose from there and looked towards Sodom and Abraham went with them to send them on the way, and the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I'm doing? You hear that? God Almighty saying of a man, Shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do? And he didn't. He revealed to Abraham exactly what he's going to do because Abraham was his friend. Brothers and sisters, there are things, truths, revelations that God Almighty will only reveal to those who love him.

Who belong to him and who love and obey him. Jesus said the same thing in John chapter 14. If you love me, you will obey me.

He that loves me keeps my commandments and he that keeps my commandments. I will come to him. My father and I will come to him, make our abode with him.

He also says I will manifest myself to him. I will reveal myself to this man, this woman and that man or woman will know the heart of God in greater depths than anybody else. There remains a veil, a blinding.

On on the world and even on much of Christendom because of it for this reason, disobedience. The Lord will not continue to reveal his heart and his ways to someone who's willfully disobedient to him, but to the one who loves him, who is loyal to him. Who God says go and he goes, God says do this and he does this.

God speaks and she obeys that woman. That man will be a friend of God and they will know God's heart. They will know his secret.

They will know more of his thoughts. Shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do? What an amazing. Privilege that God would not even send judgment on Solomon Gomorrah before he revealed it first to his friend.

No wonder he was a friend of God. He said, God, far be it from you to destroy the righteous with the wicked. What if you find 50 there, 50 righteous? We still destroy it.

Will not the judge of all the earth do right? God says, if I find 50, I won't destroy it, Abraham. God, if you if you find 45. This is a man interceding.

He's already he's got the heart of God, the same merciful heart of God because he knew God. He gets all the way down to 10. But was it five interceding, praying that God would not send a judgment till he revealed his secret to his friend? Brothers and sisters, do you want to know the heart of God like that? Do you want to know the secrets of God? You want to know the ways of God that we must love him and prove your love for him by obedience.

And what is his first commandment? Love one another. Love one another and be pledge your allegiance to Christ alone. Your loyalty to heaven.

Let me say one more thing before we close. When you have a close, close friend. First thing you want to do anything for them, right? You also.

You also begin to love what they love. You listen to their interests because you love them. Can I tell you what's number one on the heart of God? After his glory, this is everything is about his glory.

But when it comes down to to where we live and what we see every day, what is most upon his heart? Our souls, our people, if you love God, if I love God, if I really know the heart of God, I love I love God, I want to obey God. Here's his commandment, love one another and go. Go.

Preach the gospel, make disciples. He loves people, and if he is your friend and you are a friend to him, you will love people. You will love sinners as Jesus loved sinners and ate with them and be broken and poured out for them.

Amen. Let's stand to our feet, please. Will you bow your heads with me as we just allow God to search our hearts and allow his spirit to speak to our hearts during this time of response, when God speaks, it demands a response.

I'm going to ask you some questions, brothers and sisters, you just please answer them in the quietness of your heart. Do you want to know God the way Abraham knew God? Can God call you his friend? God is calling you to do. It may seem like something very big to you.

It may seem like something very small, but if God has spoken to your heart, his word demands a response. What is your response? The only response for a child of God whom God can call his friend is yes, Lord. Yes, Lord, yes, I will trust you and obey.

Immediate obedience, because delayed obedience is disobedience to God, the Bible says today, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart. Immediate obedience. Complete obedience, because partial obedience is disobedience to God.

Father, I'm asking you now to search with the spotlight of God, of your word and of your spirit, search our hearts and reveal to us anything in our own lives that would grieve your spirit, any area of disobedience today, Lord God, we want to repent of it and obey you, for we long, Lord God. To be called your friends, to know you intimately, to know your ways, your heart, your secrets, and I pray, Father in heaven, that you would speak to every single one of us and pass not a single one of us by and give us the grace to respond to you this morning. In Jesus name, amen.

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