

An Invitation to Closeness

by J.B. Buffington

The sermon emphasizes the importance of pursuing a close relationship with God through intentional goals and active fellowship.

Duration: 51:41

Scripture: Genesis 12:8, Matthew 17:1, Mark 3:13, Mark 5:37, James 4:8

Topics: "Intimacy"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having goals in various aspects of life, such as personal, church, family, and business goals. He highlights that without goals, life can become frustrating and unfulfilling. The preacher shares an example of a church that had a goal to pay off all their debts, which they achieved, but then lacked further goals and eventually died out. The sermon then focuses on the invitation to draw near to God, emphasizing that our relationship with God can be as close as we desire, and that God will draw near to us when we draw near to Him. The preacher concludes by discussing the wonder of relationships and the possibility of having an even closer tie with God than John the beloved apostle.

Transcript

James chapter 4, and I want to speak a while this morning on a subject, An Invitation to Closeness. An Invitation to Closeness. Let's pray before I read the text, please.

Our Father, we echo the words of that song. Let us walk close to Thee. Father, speak to us today.

May the Word of God, the Spirit of God, move in our midst this morning and draw us away from the things of the world and draw on us toward heaven and home and our Lord. We pray for those who are not saved that this might be the moment of the morning that they'll be drawn to the Savior and trust Him in Jesus' name. Amen.

James chapter 4 and a portion of verse 8. James chapter 4 and a portion of verse 8. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you. An Invitation to Closeness. There are goals that are needed in every life if that life is to be successful and be without frustration.

You need personal goals, church goals, family goals, and goals in business. And without them, then we're in trouble. When we reach one goal, it should be replaced and another goal set up.

The sad thing is that we have goals in life and we reach them and we don't have any other goals, and then we spend our lives in frustration. I preached in a church in Jacksonville a couple of years ago. Their goal was to pay off all their debts.

That's a worthy goal, so they preached and worked toward it, and the day came, they paid off all their debts. And here they were absolutely debt-free. They didn't have any other goals and they died.

I mean, attendance went down, the offering went down, we've reached, we've paid our goals, we've paid our debts, but nothing beyond. And when you get to a place like that, then you have to have another goal and another goal and another goal. There are families who have goals to rear their children, have them educated, and see them married, and their homes established.

And mom and dad have that, and then they have their children, they're grown, they've finished their education, and they're married, and mom and dad divorced. No goal beyond that. I've seen the individuals work very hard.

They work toward the day to retirement. And they set aside and nest egg and they work to retirement. One day they retire, no other goals, and they die.

I mean, they're not here, don't even enjoy their retirement. A few months and they're gone. You see, we have to constantly have something out there, something out there, something out there, or our life goes to pieces.

And if you reach your goals and you settle down, then you, the rest of your life won't be comfortable and enjoyable, it'll be a life of misery because a life without goals is a life of frustration. And we need goals and lives. Now our goals and connected with our Lord is generally connected with service.

In Acts chapter 20, Paul thought about a golden life, and he said, I have this desire, and none of these things move me, the present circumstances, neither can I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I've received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Paul said, I want to finish my course with joy. I want to preach the gospel, I want to come to the end of life with joy that I've finished that.

Well, that's a worthy goal, that's wonderful. And I repeat, our goals in connection with our Lord and a relationship with the Lord has to do with those sort of goals of service. I want to read the Bible through this year, and we'll pray more, want to win more souls, want to live a separated life, want to give more, maybe goals and connected with teaching, or a bus route, or preaching, or singing.

But all of these are secondary. If we get these in that order, the goals of service, then we have our priorities wrong, and we may do all of these things, have goals of Bible study and prayer and soul winning and faithfulness, and that's our goals, and we get our mind on it, then we can do all those things and have a life that's empty and without satisfaction and without meaning. Now consider, secondly, our God's goals of relationship and their priority.

In the Garden of Eden, God made man, and he made man and placed him on this earth, enjoyed wonderful fellowship with him. Can you think of Adam and God walking in the garden? Adam and God walking in fellowship? Adam and God, nothing between them. And I can see Adam look forward to God's visits with him in the garden day after day, God's coming to see him.

And Adam and Eve reveling in the wonder of fellowship and communion with a holy God, an eternal God, their Creator. Then one day something happened. Sin entered, and when sin entered, man was alienated, and now man ran from God.

He hides, and God has to seek him out, and he's afraid of God. And God made a way whereby Adam could come back and commune with God, but it's not like it used to be. Something happened.

He had to commune with God through an innocent sacrifice. And God made a way at the garden where Adam could approach him, no doubt where Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices. And God wanted their communion, and God wanted their fellowship.

Then God established a place called the tabernacle. That tabernacle was a meeting place of a holy God with sinful men. God was now veiled behind curtains.

You could not see him. And they had to fellowship and commune with him by faith, no longer by sight. And in that tabernacle, God made provision whereby the sinful person could fellowship with him.

It was known as the mercy seat. And in the 25th chapter, don't turn there, Exodus 25, God said, And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony.

Now here is restoration by grace. God said, I'll meet you at the mercy seat. And those who wanted to come back in a proper relationship with the Lord and enjoy communion with God, met him where God said, I'll meet you at the mercy seat.

And now man had to respond. If man wanted fellowship with God, then he had to meet him at the mercy seat. In the New Testament, that mercy seat, Christ is a fulfillment of that mercy seat.

He is our mercy seat. And any sinner who wants to have a proper relationship with God, God longs to have a relationship with thee. God made you.

God's great heart wants to include you, wants to fellowship with you. But he cannot. His holiness will not allow him to commune and have fellowship with you, apart from justice being satisfied, and Jesus went to the cross and died and put away your sins.

And now God will restore you, and God will commune and fellowship and walk with you, but you'll have to begin that walk at the mercy seat, and that's at Jesus Christ's feet. And he said, there will I meet you, and I'll commune with thee from above the mercy seat. Now, when a person turns and meets the Lord, he's saved, he's no longer a sinner, he's a son.

And he's in a relationship of possibility of great fellowship. But because he's in a proper relationship as a son does not mean that he'll enjoy the fellowship that he ought to have. That leads me to the third thing in the heart of my message this morning.

The invitation of Scripture is what? Draw nigh to God, and he'll draw nigh to you. God has made possible and erased the barrier that keeps us away from God. He's removed the sin barrier.

Now, God says, you draw nigh to me, I drew near to you in salvation. I took the first step, I removed the sin, I paid the sacrifice, my son shed his blood. And I'm waiting, you draw nigh to me, and I'll draw nigh to

you.

And we say, well, close to thee. Okay. God said, I've moved as close as possible.

You'll have to respond to my invitation. And James says, draw nigh to God, he'll draw close to you. You ought to be close to God.

God said, I'm waiting, I'd like to be closer to you, but I must wait on your response. I've moved close to you in salvation. You could not do that, and I won't do that, and I've removed the barrier, and I'm longing for your fellowship, and I'll meet you if you'll simply draw nigh to me.

And when you draw nigh to me, I'll draw nigh to you. Now, turn to Mark chapter 3. Mark chapter 3. Here is God's priority. Here is our Lord's priority.

God wants us for who we are and not what we do. He loves us. He longs for us.

Look at the priorities in Mark chapter 3 and the two or three passages of our foundation for our message. In Mark chapter 3 and verse 13, And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would. And they came unto him, and he ordained twelve, that they should be with him.

Secondly, And that he might send them forth to preach, etc. Now, what he ordained, he said he wanted them with him. And after being with him, he sent them forth to preach.

The Lord took twelve men and spent three years with them. He ate with them, he slept with them, he walked with them, they talked with him in close fellowship and communion. And when you come to the end of our Lord's ministry and you try to count up the total number of his disciples and his followers, well, you have eleven of those left, you have 120 in the upper room, and he made you don't closeness.

He first wanted them to be with him. And when they were with him and felt his heart beat, then he sent them forth into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. But he wanted them with him first of all, and secondarily he wanted the man of their service.

Turn to Philippians chapter 3. Here it is again, priorities, and we need to get this straight. We'll use two or three illustrations. Philippians chapter 3, Paul is the saved man, his goal in Philippians 3 and verse 10, and then in verse 13, you have both of those.

Paul said that I may know him, that I may know him. You know we mess up our lives because we don't know the Lord. We have all sorts of doubts and fears and unbelief, that's why, because we don't know him.

If we knew him, then what the doubts and fears and most of our problems will be solved in knowing the Lord. Now Paul said, I have a goal in life. He said, I want to know him.

I want to know him. Now down in verse 13, he said, after knowing him, verse 13, brethren, I count myself not to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Now he said, I want to know him, and then knowing him said, I want to find out, I want to the maximum reach for which he stopped me and saved me.

That's service. Turn to one other illustration. Turn to the book of Luke chapter 10.

I've stayed in homes where I was company, and I've stayed in homes where I was kinfolks, but really not kin. In the book of Luke chapter 3, verse 38, I came to pass as I went that he entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha, Luke 10, 38, a certain woman named Martha received him into her house, and she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen a good part, and which shall not be taken away from her. Here is Mary, had her priorities wrong.

Mary was concerned about service and was all wrapped up. That's necessary. But Martha was, rather.

Mary was concerned about the Lord of the service, and she sat at his feet. Our service will not be right unless we sit at his feet and hear his word. If we sit at his feet and hear his word, then our service will be right.

But without sitting at his feet and communing and getting his heart beat and his compassion and his fellowship, then what happens? We go forth, and there's something missing. But fellowship with him prepares us for service. That's priority.

Consider number four, the circle of relationships. Now, you'll find yourself somewhere this morning in a fringe of one or the other. In 1 Corinthians 15, I'll get to my message after a while.

Just let me taxi around a while. This is a long taxi. I'll take off after a while.

Just stay with me. In 1 Corinthians 15, there's 500 folks saw the Lord. They were brethren, nobody.

Nothing else said about them. They saw the Lord. They're spectators.

There are a lot of Christians who are saved, genuinely saved, but they're spectators. There are 500. They're out here on the fringe.

They stand and they watch, saved, yes, going to heaven, yes, beloved of the Lord, yes, but they're spectators. I'm glad they're spectators instead of farther out in the crowd of the lost, but they're spectators. They seem not to have any desire to draw an eye and get up real close.

They stand way away. Then I'll call another group in the upper room, and none of these is spoken of disparagingly. There's 120 in the upper room, intercessors, and I call them the askers.

They pray and they ask. They will receive from the Lord. Nothing wrong with that.

In Luke 10, the circle narrows to seven. I call them the harvesters. He sent them forth into every place where he would come, and he said, The harvest shall his plenish, the labors of you.

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, he'd send forth labors into his harvest. He's a harvester. Then it numbers the 12 disciples, and the word disciples are called learners.

Here's a multitude, and he calls 12 unto him, and they're the learners. They're going to sit at his feet. They're going to follow him with us wherever he goes.

Now would you turn to Matthew 17, and in the circle get smaller. It's down to three now. In Matthew 17, these three I call witnesses, or the inner circle, and you can choose which circle you'd like to be in.

And it's going to narrow still further. In Matthew 17, verse 1, And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John. He pulled them out of the twelve and said, Hey, come go with me.

And his brother, and bringeth him up into a high mountain of part, was transfigured before them. Here was a select group of the inner circle, Peter, James, and John, went up, saw the Son of God transfigured, saw Moses and Elijah in glory. And my, what a wonderful sight it was.

Turn to Mark chapter 5, and verse 37. Here's a lady whose daughter, twelve years old, was at the point of death. And the disciples are following him, but the scripture says in verse 37, And he suffered no man to follow him, say, Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

And Peter, James, and John went inside the house and witnessed the resurrection, the bringing back to life, restoration of life to a dead twelve-year-old girl's body. Turn to one other passage in Matthew chapter 26. Our Lord left the upper room with the twelve.

One went to betray him, and eleven followed him out to the cross of brook Cedron, and came to the garden, and he left them there. And then the scripture says in verse 36 of Matthew 26, 36, Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. You eight stay here.

And he took with them Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, that James and John, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, tarry ye here, and watch with me." There's an inner circle. They had unusual experiences, unusual insights that the eight did not know.

And then the eight had insights that the seventy didn't know, and the seventy had that which the hundred and twenty didn't know, and the hundred and twenty had that which the five hundred didn't know. And here you have a widening circle of relationships. And here the Lord takes the three up into the mouth, they see him transfigured.

They see the dead raise to life. Then they go with him, and in the garden of Gethsemane, just a stone's throw away, they sit and watch with him, supposedly, and they went to sleep. But he took them, he wanted them close to him.

Now, but there was one a little further than that, turn to John, chapter 18. There's one who went in and stayed with him during the trial, and one that stood with him by the cross. And I read in John, chapter 18, verse 15, And Simon Peter followed Jesus, John 18, 15, And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple.

That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. And there's no doubt that this is John, the beloved apostle. He stands inside doing the interrogation, he stands inside, and by the thought of God, as he's abused and ridiculed and spat upon, and John was there.

Turn now to the 19th chapter, and here are our Saviors crucified. He hangs between heaven and earth. Well, who do you think is standing in the crowd right at the foot of the cross? None other but John.

Look at verse 25, John 19, Now there stood with the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, that's a title that John always designated himself as, and then the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And here is one that goes beyond the rest of the circle, stands with him while he's on trial, stands beside the cross, bears a shame, the ridicule, as the Son of God dies. Now those are circles.

Now you'll find yourself somewhere. Do you like the circle you're in? You'll never get in another circle as long as you're satisfied in which you're in. Jesus said what? God's word said, Draw nigh unto God.

He'll draw nigh to thee. Now that's all the foundation for really the heart of my message. God's no respecter of persons.

Acts 10 verse 34, God said to all of us, Draw nigh unto God. Classify the circle that I'm in. If I enjoy being a spectator, I'll never, never, never know the Lord and the closeness that he wants me to have, and I can move up in my relationship.

My relationship as a son never changes, but my fellowship as a child of God changes, and it's dependent upon me. It depends on how close do I want to walk to the Lord? Now the Lord said you can walk as close to me as you want to. You draw nigh to me and I'll draw nigh to you.

Now there's a closer relationship still than John the beloved apostle, and this astounds me, and this is the heart of my message this morning, and I call it the wonder of relationships. Wonder of wonder. A closer tie than John who's spoken of whom the Lord loved.

What is it? Okay, let's turn to three passages of scripture. Let's turn to the book of Isaiah 41.8. Isaiah 41.8 all refers to three times God speaks about an individual, and he calls him something so precious. Isaiah 41.8, that's page 749, and then 2 Chronicles 20, verse 7. 2 Chronicles 20, verse 7. And James chapter 2, verse 21, if you can hold those three passages.

2 Chronicles 27, 20, verse 7. Isaiah 41.8, James chapter 2, verse 21. Now let's see, what's the closest of relationship? In Isaiah 41, I'll read first. God speaking to Israel, But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob, whom I've chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

God said he's my friend. Now we think about God. Now God's everybody's friend.

We're saying what a friend we have in Jesus. Now God's not talking about being a friend of us. He's talking about Abraham.

He said, Hey, Abraham's my friend. Now turn to 2 Chronicles 20, and here is Jehoshaphat in dire circumstances. They're surrounded.

And Jehoshaphat and the children of Israel are descendants of Abraham, and they plead the fact that they're related to Abraham. Abraham was their spiritual father. Now watch Jehoshaphat, please.

Verse 7, 2 Chronicles 20, Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham, thy friend forever? Hey, you gave this land to Abraham, he's your friend, and you gave it to him forever. Now somebody's trying to run us out of it, and

we're Abraham's seed. And remember, Abraham was your friend.

Now turn to the book of James chapter 2, James chapter 2, verse 23, And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God. Now I don't know of a closer, I do not know of a closer relationship in the scripture than being called the friend of God. Now is that possible for me to have a title of friend of God? I didn't say now, God being my friend.

God's everybody's friend. God's all children of Christians' friend. But now, why did God call him Abraham, my friend? I asked Luke about four or five things.

Number one, he called him a friend. Turn to Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 24. Proverbs 18, verse 24.

There are folks who say, I don't have a friend in the world. I wouldn't tell anybody that. You'd tell it on yourself.

He that hath friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. And here it says now, to have friends, you have to be a friend. God said, Draw nigh to me, and I'll draw nigh to you.

And Abraham said, I'd sure like to be close to you. And he responded, and friendships must have response. And Abraham responded to God's desire for him to draw nigh to God.

And Abraham said, I want to draw nigh to God, and he drew nigh to God, and friends are always close. Friends are always close, so close. And Abraham, God said, now he's my friend.

I'd like to be around him. And Abraham said, God, I'd sure like to be around you, too. He was a friend.

Why? Because of the fact that he responded to God's great heart. God wants friends. And we seek the friendship of the world, that which is opposite to God, and wonder why we can't have friendship with God.

He that, he's a friend of the world, is an enemy of God. And I have to choose my friends. And sometimes then I have to decide who's my friend.

Sometimes when I choose friends, I lose others who call themselves friends. I lose them. I have to choose friends.

And Abraham drew nigh to God. Draw nigh to God, and he'll draw nigh to thee. And you find Abraham all this journey, drawing nigh, drawing, drawing, drawing, drawing, drawing.

And after a while, God said, hey, that's my friend. Now, I have a book here published by a preacher. And he gave me a copy, and he wrote in the book, To My Dear Brother in Christ, My Closest Friend.

Now, he calls me his closest friend. It began a few years ago. We went to school.

I don't mind calling your name. Dr. Raymond Hancock wrote that book, gave that book to me. I don't, our paths crossed in school.

Ah, he came, stayed about a year and a half, and I stayed six years, and I was gone. I was ready to leave when he came. Our paths crossed, and I knew very little about him.

He's over here in Providence Baptist in Riverview, and our paths crossed occasionally. And as our paths crossed, and what happened, we began to fellowship one with another, and draw close together, and draw close together. And it's been a response of need and fellowship, and it's been closer, and closer, and closer.

And I spent this week preaching for him, and we were walking down the street one day, and he said to me, he said, I trust you with my life. Now, how'd it start? A lot of folks that I know wouldn't trust me with their life. How'd it start? It started going closer and closer, and I respond, and he responds, and I respond, and he responds.

And God said, now you respond, and I'll go now to you, and you know. And what happened? God moves up, and we don't move. Of course, I'd like to be your friend.

I want you for a friend. God said, I am a friend, but I'm more than that. I want you to be my friend.

And God responded, and Abraham moved up, and moved up, and God responded. Abraham moved up, and God responded. And here in the Bible, God does not call anybody else in the Word of God his friend, except Abraham.

He doesn't call John the Beloved my friend, but he called, he said, now Abraham my friend. There Abraham responded. Secondly, would you turn to James chapter 2, verse 23.

The second thing, and the reason why God called Abraham friend, was the fact that there was a mutual trust of each other, and you can't have friendship without trust. And it's spoken of in James chapter 2, one outstanding thing in the Scripture, verse 23. And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and he was called a friend of God.

Now what? It's all this matter of a mutual trust. God trusted Abraham, and Abraham trusted God. Turn to Genesis chapter 18.

God's talking to the angels, and they're standing over the city of Sodom and Gomorrah, and fixing to do something about Sodom and Gomorrah. And here is what God has to say about his friend Abraham, and it was a declaration of the fact that he knew Abraham, and he trusted Abraham. And I read it, and the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him.

What? That he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. God said, Now I know Abraham. He's my friend.

He's going to rear his family to keep my commandments and obey the Lord. And I know him, and Abraham trusted God. The Scripture says in Hebrews 11, verse 8, when God called Abraham to go out into a land which he should have to receive, he said he went out not knowing whither he went.

Now what happened? God said, Now Abraham, you head off down there. Now Abraham didn't understand, but God said, Abraham said, Now I don't know what. I know God, and I trust him.

And Abraham went out even though the end of it was hid from him, and he trusted God. He believed God when he could not trace him. He went out simply because God said, Now let's trust.

If we want to be a friend of God, then we have to trust him. God said, Trust me. And friends do a lot of trusting.

Friends do a lot of trusting. Friends draw knives. They spend a lot of time together.

Friends trust one another. And so Abraham called a friend of God because of the fact he trusted him when it didn't make sense. Here's God saying, Now Abraham, I've got something I want you to do.

Take your son, your only son whom you love, and offer him for sacrifice. Now you don't find any argument with Abraham. Abraham went up and did that which didn't make sense, for his son was to be the promised seed.

And if I kill him, I have no other seed. And Abraham said, He's my friend. He said, Good.

I trust him. And Abraham was called a friend because of the fact a mutual trust one of another. And God said, You want to be a friend of mine? Trust me.

You want to be a friend of mine? My friend, then draw a knife at me. Then number three, constant communion, constant communion. The Lord liked to turn to the 18th chapter of Genesis, the 18th chapter.

Now the scripture says, There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. And in Genesis chapter 18, you find again and again God talking to Abraham and Abraham talking to the Lord. Now, do you want to be a friend of God? All right, then you're going to have to spend some time of constant communion.

You like to talk about the same thing. You like to commune together, and time will not permit. But in the 12th chapter, the 13th chapter, the 15th chapter, the 17th chapter, I'll read the 18th chapter in just a moment.

In the 12th chapter, it said And Abraham built an altar and called on the name of the Lord. He built an altar and he called on the name of the Lord. He built an altar.

He called on the name of the Lord. And Abraham talked with God. And Abraham talked with God.

In the 18th chapter, verse 23, And Abraham drew near and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? And the matter of friendship, going to be a friend of God. Then you have to have communion. You have to have talk with God.

And he walks with me and he talks with me. Now, I tell you what, we can take all of our time before television and sports and everything else, and we're not going to be much of a friend with God because we're going to take time to talk with God. And I want to tell you, I spent a whole lot of time with Raymond Hancock, talking with Raymond Hancock and others, and I'm friends, why? Because of the fact of constant communion.

You see, it just depends upon if we like to circle out there to spectators, and we sang that song, Draw me nearer, nearer, close to thee, close to thee. Are you as close as you want to be? Are you satisfied with your relationship with the Lord? Then the Lord said, Draw nigh to God, and he'll draw nigh to thee. The fourth reason he's called a friend is because of the fact of constant love.

In Proverbs 17 and verse 17, don't turn there, let me read this, A friend loveth at all times. A friend doesn't ditch you today. A friend doesn't discover something they didn't know about you and then ditch you.

A friend loveth at all times, in all circumstances, in all weather, a true friend, a friend loveth at all times. Now when I think about Abraham and the things, you'll never find Abraham bitter with God. Now watch, God was pulling Abraham close to him, and Abraham just moved up and moved up and moved up and moved up.

God said, Okay, Abraham, get thee out of our land from that kindred into the land that I will show thee. And Abraham said, Okay, God, I sure will. And Abraham left it.

And Abraham had to move away from Mom and Dad. And then when he got into the land, Abraham had to move up, hey, you're going to have to get rid of a lot. And God made it so that a lot would make the choice and not Abraham.

And Abraham let God take the choice. And Abraham moved closer to the Lord. And then it came to the matter of his son is out of the will of God.

And he had to send him away. Abraham moved closer to the Lord. And then it came to the fact that his only begotten son, his beloved son, and he offered his son.

And what happened? He moved step by step, step by step, closer to the Lord, he responded to God's invitation, draw closer, draw closer. It cost him something. But you never find him bitter.

What? A friend loves at all times. He loved the Lord when the Lord told him, leave your job and your business and follow me. He loved the Lord when he had to separate from rock.

He loved the Lord when he had to leave Mom and Dad behind. He loved the Lord when he had to set aside Ishmael from the plan he had for his life. He loved the Lord when the Lord asked him to give the best of his life.

Why, that's a friend. That's a friend. But I assure you, Abraham is drawing closer in fellowship with the Lord.

We sing, draw me nearer. God said, OK, draw not at God, now draw not at you. Turn to Genesis 14, two other things that made him a friend of God.

Genesis 14. Now, a man made a million dollars on that verse. Dale Carnegie, he that hath friends must show himself friendly, went to the Word of God, took the Bible principle and made a million dollars on it.

Wrote how to win friends and influence people. And the third, the fourth reason why David, Abraham was called a friend of God, because he's jealous for God's glory. In the twelfth, in the fourteenth chapter, let's read now.

Abraham went out to battle. He won the battle. He came back and Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, met him and blessed him and refreshed him and revealed that God owned everything.

Abraham gave tithes of all. And then the scripture says in verse 21, And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I've lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abraham rich.

He said, I'm concerned about God's glory. God gave me the victory. And God gave me all of this, and I don't want any of it.

And he gave it back to him. He said, I don't want even a shoestring, lest that you would say that you were responsible for my riches, and I want it known that God is responsible for my blessings. And he gave all the riches back to him and said, I don't want a thing in the world to do with it.

Abraham was concerned and jealous for the glory of God. No wonder God called him a friend. And lastly, in the book of John 15, it says, the scripture, greater love hath no man this than a man lay down his life for his friends.

A friend will die for you. Now, I'll ask you a question. How many people do you know you believe would die for you? I'll guarantee you there won't be the multitude.

How many people do you know you say, they're my friend? Greater love hath no man this than a man lay down his life for his friends. Abraham gave something greater than his own life. He laid the life of his son down, the life that he loved better than life himself.

And he went beyond laying his own life down. Abraham would have gladly died, if necessary, rather than his beloved son Isaac. And what was he? Rather with a friend doesn't withhold anything.

A friend will die for you. Now you say, my friends, a lot of people say, I can't get saved because of my friends. Will those friends die for you? Then they're not friends.

Jesus died for you. He's a friend. He's a friend.

Now here we have Abraham, my friend. Now look at some advantages of this. And I said lastly, I didn't mean the last of the sermon, but the last of those points.

I didn't want you to jump to the conclusion. I'm not there. When you're friends, what happens? Well, turn back to the 18th chapter.

There are some things that secretly shared nobody else knows. And Genesis 18, verse 17, the Bible said this, and the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? God said, I'm fixing to judge Sodom and Gomorrah, and I don't think I ought to keep this back from my friend Abraham. And that's where Abraham began to plead for Sodom and Gomorrah because of Lot being there.

Secrets. And there's things that God shows to those who walk in fellowship with him that nobody else knows. Fine.

He's my friend. I heard a preacher talking about Dr. Joe Henry Hankins, a great preacher, and he's dead now. But Dr. Joe Henry Hankins said he grew up on a farm and a large family.

And his uncle, his brothers, his daddy's brother came to live with them. And then he became very ill. And everybody thought the world of Uncle Jack, I'll call him.

I forgot the name. And so he became very ill. And man, they'd prayed for him and prayed for him and just knew he was going to die.

And the doctor was there. And finally, one morning he did die. And the doctor was there, checked him out.

No pulse, no heartbeat. And they'd been over close to and put the ear on the chest and tried to hear something, no pulse. And they finally pulled the sheet up over Uncle Jack's head.

He said, I was a little boy and I stood there and watched. And then Daddy said, well, I'll have to go tell Mama. And she's outside at the chicken house.

Mama's outside praying. And said, son, go tell your mama to come in that Uncle Jack just died. And he said, Daddy, I don't want to go.

He said, come go with me. So he said, he took his dad by the hand. Dad went outside and told Mother, said, Jack just died.

Mother said, what do you mean just died? Said, I've been talking to the Lord. The Lord told me he's going to preach and live and preach the gospel. Said, well, I don't know what you're talking about, but I just know he's dead.

The sheet's in there. He's in there with a sheet over his head. He's dead.

The doctor says he's dead. She said, I don't know anything about that, but I just know what the Lord told me. And she said, move aside.

And she went in the room and said, Jack, get up. And he sat up. And Joe Henry Hankins, somebody said, do you think Jack was dead? Said, I don't know whether he's dead or not, but I just know he sure sat up when Mama said, sit up.

Now what? Abraham said, I hide from Abraham the thing that I'll do. And God said, Abraham, my friend. And he took him into the things that nobody else knew.

And God, listen, makes compacts and God shares secrets. And there are folks who walk close to God and know the heart of God and nobody else knows why. Because in fact, they're friends.

They're friends. Hey, you satisfied where you are? You're as close as you want to be with the Lord? Well, let's turn to the New Testament now. And here's the key.

Let's turn to the New Testament. And I am going to quit sometime this morning. In John chapter 15, verse 14, you want to be a friend of the Lord? Want to be called a friend? Now, Jesus gives this key.

He are my friends. If you do whatsoever, I command you as obedient. Abraham, how'd you become a friend? God said, leave your land.

He obeyed. Left mom and dad, obeyed. He left his nephew, obeyed.

He left Ishmael, he obeyed. He offered up Isaac, he obeyed. And you do not find one place where God called on Abraham and asked him to do something that Abraham disobeyed.

And God said, hey, that's my friend. I can call on him anytime, anywhere. And he responded.

Ray Hancock knew I was his friend. He called me one Saturday night, two, three years ago. He said, hey, I need you for a revival meeting.

I said, yeah. I said, when? He said, tomorrow. I said, do you know this is Saturday night? And I was supposed to preach tomorrow at Calvary Baptist Church.

Yeah, I know, but I need you. When can you come? Maybe come tomorrow night. He had had an evangelist, Brother Ron Comfort.

Ron Comfort had an accident and couldn't preach and had worked and prayed and had it all set up. And here on Saturday night, he said, hey, would you come preach for me tomorrow night? Now, not just every preacher across America is going to call and ask me to come preach for him tomorrow night. And I present that church.

And I said, I'm sure people in my church will go along with that. And on Sunday morning, he said, fine, go ahead and do that. God said, Abraham's my friend.

Whatever I ask him to do, he'll do. And I can call upon him, and it may be inconvenient, but he'll do it. Now, Jesus said, if you, you are my friends, if ye keep my commandments, you do whatsoever I have commanded you.

That's the key is obedience. Can God call on us when we're tired? Can God call on us when we're tied up? Can God call on us when it's not convenient? Can God call on us in hours of the night? Can God call on us, and we'll change our plans? That's friendship. Abraham's my friend.

I can call on him anytime, anywhere. He'll change his plans, and he, oh, he had plans for Ishmael, and God said, no, no, can't you? No, that's not it. It's Isaac, it's Jacob.

I get Isaac, get him right, that's wrong. God knows which one I'm talking about. And so he said, he'd change his plans.

And Jesus said, you are my friends, if you do whatsoever things I've commanded you. You want to be a friend of the Lord, then you have to be available. You have to respond.

That's friendship. Now, in the next verse, verse 15, henceforth I call you not servants of the servant, knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I've called you friends for all things that I've heard of my Father. I've made known unto you, and my friend, hear me, there are secrets in the Word of God that you're not going to find out, and I'm not going to find out, until I'm available when God calls.

And then what happens? He opens these precious secrets, and opens them up, and opens them up, and opens them up, and other people read them, but they don't know them, they don't, they don't fathom, they cannot comprehend them. And here he said, I'll show all things between my Father, nothing held back, I'll show you all secrets. That's a friend.

Want to be a friend? Want to be a friend? Now, this question, now which circle are you? Are you spectator? Are you the one that asks, always asking? Are you a harvester, you're busy sowing? You can be busy sowing, I'm not saying slack up on that, I don't mean that, but you're always in a harvest field. In Luke chapter 15, the son that stayed home was a hard worker, he was always in the field, but he didn't know his daddy, he didn't know dad, he never felt the heart of dad. Dad's broken hearted about the wayward son, and here was the son that stayed home, and there are those who are the harvesters, but never understand the heart of God for others, and consequently won't come into the table, and feast, and laugh, and sing because of the heart of God, so glad over those who've wandered away, come back.

Or you may not be that, you may be closer than that, you may be the 12 of the disciples, that's why I sure like to sit, and I come to Sunday school, and I study, and I hear the word of God, amen for that. I may be the closer circle than that, that's the inner circle of my heart, God's taken you aside, and so many wonderful things, and there's been a precious fellowship, a thing just to the mount of transfiguration, place of death, and a place of agony, and I've shared that with my Lord. Or you may have the circle that, boy his name's blasphemed, and you stand alone at your job, you stand alone at school, you stand alone in your community, while he's blasphemed, and his name's drug in the mire, and you stand, and you stand, and you stand while he's crucified, but that's closer than that.

God never called John, my friend, but he called Abraham, he's my friend, he's my friend. Now Charlie Dodd, God said, draw nigh to God, he'll draw nigh to you, he's as close to every one of us today as we allow him to get. Now that's a big statement, you get a hold of that.

He's as close to me as I allow him to get. You've heard of some folks who say, well I'd like to get closer, but I just can't get closer to that person, I'd like to really get close to him, but I can't get, he holds us away. The Lord doesn't hold anybody away, he's as close as we allow him to be.

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to thee. Now in closing to the lost people, you don't belong to any of those circles, you don't like to think about getting close to God, you run from God, you'll give the invitation in a moment and it frightens you to death, and you'll hold the back of your pew rather than making a response to get close to God and him saving you. You don't want to go to hell, but you're going to get saved.

And this is the reason we go knocking on doors. You see, sinners don't seek God, they run from God, and soul winners go out there telling people how to get saved, and tell them that God's not like what you think he's like, and he loves you and gave you a son, what are they trying to do? Trying to get you to understand that God is your friend, and he gave his son to die for you, and you can get saved. And you may be here this morning, you're way, way from God, and you are by choice.

Now as a Christian, the greatest hunger of a Christian's heart that's right with a God is to be, Lord throw me nearer, nearer. We've never been close enough. Nearer, nearer, nearer.

Where are you in the circle? There are some folks that maybe used to be closer to God than you are today, and you got to run with the wrong crowd, and you got away from God. Or you may be like Jonah, God called him to do something, he went the other way, he said, no, I don't want to do that, and he's running from God. And yet we come to this invitation this morning, and God puts out an invitation to close them.

He says, draw nigh to God, and he'll draw nigh to you. You want to be closer? Okay, it's your move.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26281.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jb-buffington/an-invitation-to-closeness/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net