

Friend of God

by K.P. Yohannan

K.P. Yohannan's sermon emphasizes the profound nature of true friendship with God, highlighting the sacrifices involved and the blessings of intimacy with Him.

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-2, John 15:13, Acts 10:34, Hebrews 11:9-10, James 2:23

Topics: "Cost Of Discipleship", "Friendship with God"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the profound nature of true friendship, contrasting the superficial connections of childhood with the sacrificial love exemplified by Jesus, who laid down His life for His friends. He shares poignant stories, including that of a soldier who risked his life for a friend in battle and Ram, a young man who left his affluent Hindu family to follow Christ, illustrating the costly nature of true discipleship. Yohannan draws parallels to Abraham, who left everything to follow God and became known as a 'friend of God,' highlighting that true blessing lies in intimacy with the Almighty rather than material wealth. The sermon challenges listeners to seek a deeper relationship with God, inviting them to consider if they truly desire such friendship and intimacy with Him. Ultimately, the message is a call to embrace the cost of discipleship and the honor of being called a friend of God.

Transcript

Like most young kids, my son, Danny, loved to play at the playground when he was young. Oftentimes, after being at the playground for only 10 minutes, he would come running back over to me, excitedly asking, "Can me and my friend go play together on the swings?!" "What friend?" I would reply, knowing I had only brought him and his sister to the playground. "That one!" as he turned to point out a boy he had just met. After a couple swings together on the monkey bars, they were "friends."

But true friendship runs much deeper than that which marks childhood. It is not just happy, cozy feelings. True friendship is in no way self-centered. It is laying "down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). Consider the following example of true, costly friendship: Out of the furnaces of war come many true stories of sacrificial friendship. One such story tells of two friends in World War I, who were inseparable. They had enlisted together, trained together, were shipped overseas together, and fought side-by-side in the trenches.

During an attack, one of the men was critically wounded in a field filled with barbed wire obstacles, and he was unable to crawl back to his foxhole. The entire area was under a withering enemy crossfire, and it was suicidal to try to reach him. Yet his friend decided to try. Before he could get out of his own trench, his

sergeant yanked him back inside and ordered him not to go. "It's too late. You can't do him any good, and you'll only get yourself killed." A few minutes later, the officer turned his back, and instantly the man was gone after his friend.

A few minutes later, he staggered back, mortally wounded, with his friend, now dead, in his arms. The sergeant was both angry and deeply moved. "What a waste," he blurted out. "He's dead and you're dying. It just wasn't worth it." With almost his last breath, the dying man replied, "Oh, yes, it was, Sarge. When I got him, the only thing he said was, 'I knew you'd come, Jim!' "1 One of the true marks of friendship is that it is costly. Friendship, by nature, involves sacrifice.

Give Me Jesus There's a well-known song with lyrics proclaiming, "Take the world, but give me Jesus . . ."2 For most, this song remains a matter of emotion and feeling. But for one young man I met on the mission field, this song had a deeper, more intimate reality. Ram grew up in a prestigious Hindu family as part of the high Brahmin caste. He lived with the many benefits of being a Brahmin and was denied nothing in his life. But he grew up never knowing anything about the Savior, Jesus.

It wasn't until he received a Gospel tract while studying in college that he learned of the Lord Jesus Christ. Convicted of his sin and moved by Jesus' love for him, Ram soon made a definite commitment to follow Christ and become a child of God. As he learned about being a disciple of Jesus, one of the first steps he took was to be baptized, making public his declaration as a follower of Jesus. When his family heard of his baptism, they became outraged, for the act of baptism was a public announcement that he was walking away from his previous life.

In the Eastern cultures, religion is tied into every aspect of life--family, job, relationships--everything. It is not like changing the political party you are associated with. For Ram to walk away from Hinduism meant he was turning his back on the belief of his parents, his whole family and his village. And being from a respectable, high-class family, this had huge repercussions and brought shame upon his family. Ram's parents and relatives tried their best to persuade him to come back to Hinduism.

But when their gentle persuasions, tears and pleading failed, his family gave him an ultimatum: deny Christ or leave home, never to be part of the family again. The reality of walking away from the parents and the sister he loved dearly, including all extended family and the inheritance entitled to him as the son, was a tremendous sacrifice that flashed before his eyes. But a choice must be made. Walking away from everything he had, Ram left his home with only the clothes on his back to an unknown future.

He had chosen Christ. In God's mercy and grace, Ram ended up in one of our Bible colleges with the determination to prepare himself to become a servant of God. This is where I met him and heard of his tremendous and difficult testimony. When asked if he regretted leaving his family and wealth behind, he gently responded with absolute confidence and humility, "They can have the whole wide world. All I want is my Jesus." He went on to explain about the pain and sadness in his life when he thinks about his parents and sister he left behind.

But he said, "My greatest sorrow is that they do not know the Lord Jesus Christ the way I know Him. If they knew Him and could see His face, they too would walk away from everyone and everything else. That's the price that must be paid to know Jesus and to be His." Ram's story reminds us a lot of the life of Abraham, who, having heard the voice of God, left his home and all familiar circumstances in Ur of the Chaldeans to follow his God. Many people, when they hear the name "Abraham," immediately think of "father of many nations" or how, in a miraculous manner, he and his wife, Sarah conceived Isaac in their

old age.

And of course, it is impossible to forget about his incredible act of obedience as he prepared to sacrifice the son of promise. What a man Abraham was! Our minds easily classify him as a saint, and rightly so. But what makes all of this even greater is the fact that Abraham was nothing special. He was an ordinary man just like you and I. Raised in an idolatrous home, Abraham grew up knowing nothing about the living God. In between the stories of the incredible things that happened in his life, you'll see a man who was fearful and weak, lying to protect himself and his family.

Abraham was no superstar. Yet the living God called Abraham to come and walk with Him, inviting him to enter into a covenant and to know Him. "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. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing' " (Genesis 12:1-2). And when all was said and done, Abraham was blessed and called a "friend of God" (James 2:23).

If Abraham was just an ordinary man, how was it that he became a friend of God? It is friendship with the Almighty, intimacy with Him, that was the true blessing in Abraham's life. True Blessing Thousands of sermons are preached today on the blessings of Abraham and how we, too, can lay claim to the very things promised him. But much of these teachings refer exclusively to material blessings and how it is possible to achieve material prosperity in this world. Have we forgotten that he who was blessed (Abraham) gave up everything, walking away from the material blessings afforded him by his family?

Ancient history tells us that the Chaldeans, of which Abraham was a descendant, were by no means frugal shepherders. They were a luxurious people, eating and drinking from golden spoons and cups and all the finest of ancient culture. This is what Abraham left behind--an established family and luxurious circumstances--to follow the living God in total obedience. This was the way of blessing. Throughout his life, Abraham lived in tents, not in mansions (see Hebrews 11:9). Hebrews 11:10 (NIV) tells us that "he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

Abraham was not looking for the blessing of things in this world and material possessions as the end and reward of his obedience. But he looked for and saw something most preachers and shallow Christians are not able to see today. If you were to ask Abraham what he would consider the greatest blessing in his life, he would surely echo Brother Ram: "to know the living God and be known by Him and to have Him as my friend." This is the blessing of Abraham and the most incredible honor in life: to be called the friend of the Almighty God.

We too are given the same invitation to friendship as was given to Abraham. And if we are truly seeking to have intimacy with the living God and not being satisfied with the things of this world, we, like Abraham, will know the friendship of God. God longs for that intimacy, that fellowship with us. He wants to share with us His intimate feelings and concerns. Our relationship with Him cannot be based just on the fact that now we are saved. We cannot just have the attitude that says, "Praise the Lord.

Now I am saved. Now I am born again." No. There is more! We must grow to the place where the Lord can say to us, "Tom, Lucy, John (whatever your name is), I just want to talk to you." Then we answer, "Lord, what do You want to tell me? What do You want to say to me? What do You want me to do?" That kind of close relationship is what He wants--a friendship. He wants that friendship with us because He loves us and wants to share Himself with us. A friend of God. What an incredible honor!

Do you truly long to have this kind of intimate and close friendship with God? If the Lord were to make a statement about you, would He be able to say, "He or she is My friend"? Think about it. The invitation the living God gave to Abraham is extended to you as well. Friendship is offered. But this friendship and intimacy do not come instantly or without a price. If Abraham was a man just like us and he became a friend of God--and God is no respecter of persons (see Acts 10:34)--then it must be possible for us to become the friends of God as well. How does this happen? Notes 1 Gary Inrig, *Quality Friendship* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1981). 2 Frances Jane (Fanny) Crosby, "Take the World, but Give Me Jesus," 1879.

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