

# Friends

by Richard E. Bieber

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*Jesus calls us to see Him, the Heavenly Father, our brothers and sisters, and the world as our friends, and to experience the joy of friendship with God and others.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:18, Luke 11:5, John 15:12, Ephesians 4:32, 1 John 4:7

**Topics:** "Christian Friendship", "Gods Love"

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## Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the importance of seeing Jesus not only as our Lord but also as our Friend, emphasizing the need to cultivate a deep friendship with God, Jesus, and our fellow believers. He highlights the transformation that occurs when we view God as a loving friend who desires to give us more than we can ask or think. Bieber challenges listeners to embrace forgiveness, unity, and love towards one another, reflecting the friendship we have with Jesus. He urges the congregation to break down walls of isolation and self-righteousness, reaching out to those who are still outside the Kingdom as friends, just as Jesus did with tax collectors and sinners.

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## Transcript

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you...."

John 15:12-15

All of us who at some point turned from our old life and followed Jesus into the Kingdom are aware that we have now been brought into a set of new relationships ...Jesus is now our Lord....God is our Father...We're brothers and sisters. To put it another way, we've been brought into a family relationship with God who is our Father, with Jesus who is our Elder Brother, and with each other.

But for most of us, most of the time, our family relationship with God and with each other is like many family relationships.

- A father and son may be father and son and yet have never become friends ...really friends.

- A husband and wife may be married for twenty years...they may have been faithful to each other as husband and wife for those twenty years, live in the same house, sleep in the same bed, eat at the same table, and yet they have never become friends ...really friends,

In the same way, I may think of Jesus as my Lord....

but do I really see him as my friend?

Our Father who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name,

- God is my Father....but

is he my friend?

Here are my brothers and sisters,

- washed in the same blood,

- anointed in the same Spirit,

I belong to them and they belong to me forever. But

do I see them as friends?

If I can't see Jesus as my friend it becomes very hard

to commune with him through the day...to practice his

presence, to walk with him and talk with him. If I

can't see the heavenly Father truly as my friend,

prayer becomes a difficult thing. How can I pray if

in my mind he seems to be indifferent, looking the

other way?

What kind of fellowship can I have in this assembly

if I can't see these brothers and sisters as friends?

They may be hardheaded.....like I am,

a little crazy....like me,

irritating,

vain, unstable....like me. But how can

I serve the Lord with gladness, together with them,

unless I see them as my friends?

And if I'm having trouble thinking of these brothers

and sisters as friends, how can I help but be para-

noid when some needy soul comes in out of that storm

out there and asks for help? How can I possibly be

a friend to the poor,

the maimed,  
the lame,  
the blind, who live in the streets of the  
cities of this world?

What a change will come over our lives when we begin  
to see Jesus not only as our Lord, but also as our  
Friend.

"This is my commandment, that you love one  
another as I have loved you. Greater love  
has no man than this, that a man lay down  
his life for his friends. You are my friends  
if you do what I command you...."

And what has he commanded us?

- To love one another.
- To lay down our lives for each other as he  
laid down his life for us.

As we do this, we experience Jesus' presence in our  
midst as our friend.

- He eats with us.
- He manifests himself to us in the breaking of bread.
- He gives us his own body for food and his  
blood for drink.

No longer do I call you servants, for  
the servant does not know what his master  
is doing; but I have called you friends,  
for all that I have heard from my Father  
I have made known to you.

Even now as we hold fellowship with him, Jesus takes everything the Father gives him and passes it on to us through the Holy Spirit. We're not just Jesus' servants who really don't know what he's up to.... we're his friends. He makes known to us what he's doing in heaven and on earth right now.

- He gives us his peace.
- He imparts to us his life.
- He opens our eyes to see things as he sees them.

God help us to see Jesus today as our friend who

- knows us by name,
- walks by our side,
- guides our steps,
- lives within us.

What a change will come over our lives when we begin to see the heavenly Father as our friend.

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he

is his friend, yet because of his importunity  
he will rise and give him whatever he needs.  
And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given  
you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it  
will be opened to you. For every one who asks  
receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him  
who knocks it will be opened. What father among  
you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of  
a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an  
egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who  
are evil, know how to give good gifts to your  
children, how much more will the heavenly Father  
give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Luke 11:5-13

The friend we go to at midnight to ask for bread is our  
heavenly Father who does give because he is our friend.

It's because we don't see the Father as our friend  
that we're afraid to ask. We're not sure how he feels  
about us...we've been rejected so often, maybe the  
Lord will reject us too.

- "No he won't, he's your friend!"

We're afraid that if we knock on that door and the  
Father looks out and sees it's us, he'll slam the door  
and tell us to get lost.

- "No he won't."

In this age of mercy...every one who asks receives,  
he who seeks finds,

to him who knocks it will be opened. The Father is our friend. He wants to give us more than we could ask or think.

"...if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

What a change will come over our lives when we begin to see our brothers and sisters, for all their shortcomings, as friends.

"Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"

Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven...."

Matthew 18:18-22

The power to bind on earth and it shall be bound in heaven, to loose on earth and it shall be loosed in

heaven, is contingent on a unity of friendship that is so real it is willing to forgive seventy times seven.

The privilege of being able to gather in Jesus' name and know that he is here as our friend, is contingent on a unity of friendship that is true and faithful and forgiving in his name. How can we be gathered in his name and stay at odds with each other? It's a thing of attitude. It's looking around at these faces and choosing to see that these brothers and sisters...for all their shortcomings, and all my shortcomings... are my friends.

It has nothing to do with how many hobbies we have in common, how much time we spend with each other, whether we have the same political views. It's an act of the heart that I make in the spirit of the Lord. I look at these people and know that they're not just my spiritual brothers and sisters...they're my friends.

What a change will come over our lives when we begin to see those needy ones out there as friends.

...for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him;... Luke 11:6

The friend who has come on a journey and needs some hospitality is a person who has not yet tasted the goodness of God. He's still outside the Kingdom, but

he's a friend.

Jesus was deridingly called a friend of tax collectors and sinners, as if that were a bad thing. But he was a friend of tax collectors and sinners, and he still is. And if we're his friends, we are their friends too.

These walls we build between ourselves and the "people of the world", as we so often call them,

- as if they were our enemies,

- as if we were superior,

- as if we must somehow keep ourselves spiritually sanitary by avoiding these people,

these walls of isolation and self-righteousness have

to come down. We have only one enemy...Satan and his kingdom. Those people who are victims of Satan's

lies are not our enemies ----

("We wrestle not against flesh and blood...")

---they're our friends!

"This is my commandment, that you love one

another as I have loved you. Greater love

has no man than this, that a man lay down

his life for his friends. You are my friends

if you do what I command you. No longer do

I call you servants, for the servant does not

know what his master is doing; but I have

called you friends, for all that I have heard

from my Father I have made known to you..."

Today the Spirit of the Lord is calling us to put

away our paranoia and see Jesus for what he is:  
our friend, and let him draw us to himself and make  
us, through his shed blood,  
friends of God,  
friends of each other,  
friends of those wounded who are still  
staggering around out there in the world.

At this table we commune with Jesus, our crucified  
and risen Friend. And as we do he tears away the  
veil anew making God our Friend. We become members  
one of another. One loaf,  
one cup,  
one body... .friends.

And after we commune we become broken bread and  
poured out wine for the world...friends of the lost ones.

As we eat his body and drink his blood, may the Lamb  
Of God who takes away our sin warm our hearts and  
make us friends of God,  
friends of each other.  
friends of the lost.

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