

“A Friend of God”

Summary

Today, we delve into the profound concept of friendship with God. This isn't just a casual acquaintance, but a deep, transformative relationship that God desires with each of us. We explore how Abraham's friendship with God changed the course of human history, affecting generations to come. The message challenges us to consider our own proximity to God. Are we standing far off like the multitudes, or drawing near like Moses who spoke to God face to face? This proximity isn't about physical distance, but about the closeness of our hearts and the depth of our commitment. We're reminded that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross wasn't just for our salvation, but to purchase our friendship. This revelation should prick our hearts and lead us to respond to God's invitation for deep, personal communion. As we reflect on this, let's ask ourselves: are we neglecting this great invitation, or are we choosing the 'good part' like Mary, sitting at Jesus' feet?

Main Points – A Friend of God

Sermon Summary: This sermon explores the profound concept of friendship with God, emphasizing that it is the ultimate purpose for which humans were created. Pastor Zach highlights how God values friendship, as evidenced through biblical figures like Abraham and Moses. The sermon underscores that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross purchased this friendship for humanity, reconciling us to God and allowing us to draw near to Him. The message encourages believers to prioritize closeness with God, choosing to sit at His feet and hear His word, rather than being distracted by worldly concerns.

Key Points:

- God created humans for His pleasure and desires friendship with us
- The value God places on friendship is demonstrated through His relationship with Abraham and its impact on Israel
- Jesus' sacrifice on the cross purchased friendship with God for humanity
- We can choose to draw near to God or stand far off, like the Israelites did with Moses
- Mary's choice to sit at Jesus' feet represents the "good part" of prioritizing intimacy with God
- Repentance is a response to God's offer of deep friendship
- God continues to invite people into close relationship with Him

Scripture Reference:

- Isaiah 41 (Abraham as God's friend)
- John 15 (Jesus laying down His life for His friends)
- Ephesians 2:12-18 (Reconciliation through Christ)
- Luke 10:38-42 (Mary and Martha)
- Acts 2:32-37 (Peter's sermon and the people's response)

Stories:

- The contrast between Moses' close relationship with God and the Israelites standing far off
- The parable of Mary and Martha, illustrating the importance of choosing to be close to Jesus
- The wedding feast parable in Matthew 22, showing God's desire to fill His house with friends
- John using Jesus as a pillow, symbolizing closeness to Christ

Small Group Study Guide – A Friend of God

Opening Prayer:

Begin by thanking God for His desire to be close to us and for the opportunity to discuss His word together.

Key Takeaways:

1. God values friendship with humans highly, as demonstrated through His relationships with Abraham and Moses.
2. Jesus purchased friendship with us through His sacrifice on the cross.
3. We can choose our level of closeness to God - we can stand far off or draw near.
4. Knowing God's ways (not just His acts) comes from being close to Him.
5. God is still speaking and inviting us into deeper relationship with Him.

Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Zach mentioned that he didn't know God wanted to be his friend for the first 15 years he was in church. What was your understanding of God's desire for relationship when you first came to faith? How has it changed?
2. Reflect on the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). In what ways do you relate to Mary? To Martha? How can we prioritize "sitting at Jesus' feet" in our busy lives?
3. The sermon highlighted the difference between knowing God's acts and knowing His ways. How would you describe this difference? Can you share an example of how you've experienced this in your own life?
4. Pastor Zach said, "We can be as close to Jesus as we want." What do you think prevents people from drawing closer to God? What has helped you grow closer to Him?
5. How does understanding God's desire for friendship change the way you approach prayer, Bible study, or worship?

Practical Applications:

1. This week, set aside 15 minutes each day to "sit at Jesus' feet" - read His word, pray, or simply be still in His presence.
2. Reflect on areas of your life where you might be "standing far off" from God. Choose one area and take a step to draw closer to Him in that aspect.
3. Write a letter to God as you would to a close friend, sharing your thoughts, feelings, and desires for your relationship with Him.

4. Practice viewing your daily activities through the lens of friendship with God. How might this perspective change your approach to work, relationships, or challenges?

Closing Prayer:

Thank God for His invitation to deep friendship. Ask for His help in drawing closer to Him and knowing His ways more intimately.

Scripture for Further Study:

- John 15:12-15
- James 2:23
- Exodus 33:11
- Psalm 25:14

Discussion Questions – A Friend of God

How does the concept of being a 'friend of God' challenge or expand your current understanding of your relationship with God?

In what ways might our modern church culture sometimes discourage the kind of deep, intimate friendship with God that Abraham and Moses experienced?

How can we practically cultivate a closer 'proximity' to God in our daily lives, especially when faced with distractions and busy schedules?

What might it look like in your life to choose the 'good part' that Mary chose, sitting at Jesus' feet, in a world that often values productivity like Martha's?

How does understanding God's desire for friendship with us potentially change our approach to evangelism and sharing our faith with others?

In what ways might we be 'standing afar off' from God in our own lives, and what steps can we take to draw nearer?

How does the idea that God created us for His pleasure impact your view of your purpose and worth?

What are some practical ways we can respond to God's invitation for deep friendship and communion in our daily lives?

How might our perspective on difficulties or challenges in life change if we viewed them through the lens of deepening our friendship with God?

In what ways can we cultivate a hunger for God's Word and presence similar to what the speaker described experiencing as a new believer?

Scriptures – A Friend of God

Here are the scripture references mentioned or alluded to in the sermon:

1. Job 16 or 14 (alluded to, not exact)
2. Revelation 4:11
3. Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 (alluded to regarding Lucifer)
4. Psalm 8:4 ("What is man that you are mindful of him?")
5. Romans 11:36
6. Isaiah 41:8
7. 2 Chronicles 20:7
8. John 15:13-15
9. Philippians 3:12-14 (alluded to)
10. Exodus 21:5-6 (alluded to regarding bond servants)
11. 1 Corinthians 2 (alluded to regarding depths of God)
12. Ephesians 2:11-18
13. 2 Corinthians 5:17-18
14. Exodus 20 (alluded to regarding people standing afar off)
15. Deuteronomy 5 (alluded to regarding Moses speaking to God)
16. Psalm 103:7
17. Luke 10:38-42 (Mary and Martha)
18. Jeremiah 15:16 ("Your words were found and I ate them")
19. Hebrews 1:1-2 (alluded to)
20. Acts 2:32, 36-37
21. Matthew 22 (alluded to regarding the wedding feast)
22. 1 Timothy 4:14
23. Hebrews 2:3 (alluded to)

Devotional – A Friend of God

Here's a 5-day Bible reading plan and devotional guide:

Day 1: Embracing God's Friendship

Reading: John 15:9-17

Devotional: Jesus calls us friends - what an incredible privilege! This passage reminds us that God desires deep, intimate friendship with us. He chose us and laid down His life to make this relationship possible. Today, reflect on what it means to be a friend of God. How can you cultivate closeness with Him? Remember, friendship with God isn't about perfection, but about proximity - drawing near to Him with an open heart. Take time to sit quietly in His presence, listening for His voice and sharing your heart with Him.

Day 2: From Enemies to Friends

Reading: Romans 5:6-11

Devotional: We were once enemies of God, separated by our sin. But through Jesus' sacrifice, we've been reconciled and brought near. Meditate on the magnitude of this transformation. How does it change your perspective on God's love for you? On your identity? Today, thank God for His relentless pursuit of friendship with you. Ask Him to help you live in the reality of this reconciliation, approaching Him with confidence and gratitude rather than fear or shame.

Day 3: Choosing the Better Part

Reading: Luke 10:38-42

Devotional: In our busy lives, it's easy to become like Martha - distracted by many things. But Jesus gently reminds us that one thing is needed: sitting at His feet and listening to His word. Today, evaluate your priorities. Are you making space to simply be with Jesus? Challenge yourself to set aside distractions and spend focused time in His presence. As you do, ask Him to speak to you through His word and to align your heart with His.

Day 4: Responding to God's Invitation

Reading: Matthew 22:1-14

Devotional: God extends an invitation to intimacy with Him, but how do we respond? Do we make light of it, caught up in our own pursuits? Or do we eagerly accept, recognizing the incredible honor of being invited to His table? Today, imagine God personally inviting you into deeper relationship. What excuses might you be tempted to make? What fears or doubts hold you back? Bring these honestly before God, asking Him to help you fully embrace His invitation.

Day 5: Known by God

Reading: Psalm 139:1-18

Devotional: God doesn't just want casual acquaintances; He wants to know us deeply and be known by us. This psalm beautifully illustrates how intimately God knows and cares for

us. As you read, let the truth of God's personal knowledge and love for you sink in. Where do you struggle to believe or accept this? Ask God to reveal Himself more fully to you, and to give you courage to be fully known by Him. Remember, it's in this place of vulnerability and trust that true friendship with God flourishes.