

Session 8 Friendship with God:

The Way to Safety, Success, and Satisfaction (Jn. 15:14-15)

“Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures as I delight in Your beauty” (Ps. 36:8; 37:4)

I. REVIEW: THE CONVINCING POWER OF HEROIC LOVE (JN. 15:13-14)

- A. Jesus identified laying down one’s life for another as the greatest expression of love (Jn. 15:13). Jesus’ love for us was publicly manifested by laying down His life for us on the cross to satisfy God’s justice (Rom. 3:26) and to model the extravagant love that the Church would display for Him and for others through history and in an unprecedented way in the final 3½ years of this age.
- ¹³“**Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life [to rescue from trouble] for his friends.** ¹⁴**You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.** ¹⁵**No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.**” (Jn. 15:13-15)*
- B. Jesus told them they would be His friends if they obeyed what He had just taught them (15:13-14). Here, He prophesied of their friendship with Him—knowing that ultimately they would be faithful unto death in their love for Him—even knowing that they would leave Him that night (Mt. 26:31).
- C. Jesus defined one of the essential aspects of having a deep friendship with God when He explained that a servant does not know *what* his master is doing (or *why* he was doing it) that He had made known to them all that the Father showed Him to emphasize in His messaging—see Matthew 21-25.
- D. This promise of friendship is for any who are willing to sacrifice their life and resources *to rescue people* for love (15:13) and *to promote the messages* that the Father wants emphasized (15:15). This gives context for what He had in mind when saying, “if you do what I command you” (15:14).

II. A GLORIOUS FRIENDSHIP: THE NATURE AND QUALITIES OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP

- A. We look at human friendship as described in Scripture to gain insight into the holy friendship that God offers us. Moreover, we see qualities in human friendships that have been commonly recognized throughout history in the different cultures of the nations.
- B. Let’s consider a few truths about human friendship; this is not a comprehensive presentation of all the virtues of friendship. *Jesus expresses to His people all that is true about deep friendship.* In John 13-17, Jesus especially emphasized truths that helped them overcome shame and bitterness.
- C. A friendship is a relationship between those who have a bond of mutual affection, enjoyment, trust, and support. True friendship is a great gift. God created us with a longing and need for friendship.
- ¹⁸...God said, **“It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper...”** (Gen. 2:18)*
- D. The deepest, most rewarding relationships are those that enjoy friendship. Even the strongest romantic attraction between people will die if it lacks friendship. A strong bond between parents and their children will diminish if it lacks friendship. Friendship does not need a binding contract as marriage does nor family blood as children have but friendship implies *mutual desire to be together*.

- E. Loyal friendship contends for each other's kingdom destiny, personal honor, and family blessing. Jesus will "outdo" His people in showing them great honor forever (Ps. 8:5; 1 Cor 3:22; 1 Pet. 1:7).
¹⁰**Love...with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.** (Rom. 12:10; ESV)
- F. ***Friends are trustworthy:*** Friends are trustworthy in how they act and in what they say in about to each other. They uphold their stated values and commitments; thus, you can believe in them even when you do not understand what they are doing. Jesus is the most trustworthy friend who loves His people at all times—even in the face of their weakness, deficiencies, and failures.
¹⁷**A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.** (Prov. 17:17)
- G. ***Friends share compassion and empathy:*** Friends stand with one another in difficult circumstances including spiritual struggles and failures. They seek to understand what their friends are feeling and then respond accordingly. This fulfills the law of Christ and thus expresses the personality of Christ.
²**Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.** (Gal. 6:2)
- H. ***Friends are honest:*** They speak honestly to those they love about blind spots in their character or plans. They speak up in seeking to be helpful even when it disagrees with what their friends want. Many confuse God's correction with rejection. God disciplines those He delights in (Prov. 3:12). People are in trouble when He ceases to correct them—Jesus was silent before Herod. (Lk. 23:9)
⁵**Open rebuke is better than love...concealed.** ⁶**Faithful are the wounds of a friend...** (Pr. 27:5-6)
- I. ***Friends are loyal:*** Friends keep their promises and do not speak negatively about their friends. They have a loyal heart of support towards a friend who stumbles and then sincerely repents. Your secrets are safe with a true friend so you can be open and vulnerable. Jesus covers His people who repent of their failures—giving them confidence to run to Him and not from Him after they stumble.
⁶**Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a trustworthy man?** (Prov. 20:6; NAS)
⁸**Above all things have fervent love...for "love will cover a multitude of sins."** (1 Pet. 4:8)
1. A friend does not use private information about a friend against them or in a way to hurt them.
²⁸**A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.** (Prov. 16:28)
 2. In His relationship to His people when they sin, Jesus honors what He said in Matthew 18:15.
¹⁵**"...if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone ..."**¹⁶**But if he will not hear [repent], take with you one or two more..."** (Mt. 18:15-16)
- J. ***Friends delight in mercy:*** Friends delight in showing the mercy that they have received. God gives mercy to those who fear Him and who seek to obey Him—mercy give them a way out (Ps. 130:4).
¹⁸**Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity...because He delights in mercy.** (Mic. 7:18)
⁴**But there is forgiveness [mercy] with You, that You may be feared.** (Ps. 130:4)
- K. The quality of Jesus' friendship far surpasses anything that we can imagine.
⁹**"Eye has not seen...the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."** (1 Cor. 2:9)

- L. Jesus as our friend rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep (Rom. 12:15). He understands all aspects of our life that are unknown, unnoticed, and misunderstood by others. We will never ever be alone—Jesus' is always engaged and attentive to us—in this age and forever.

¹⁵***Rejoice with those who rejoice...weep with those who weep... (Rom. 12:15)***

1. ***He celebrates with us in our victories.*** He rejoices with us in our triumphs. Jesus alone knows our true greatness in His grace and our nobility in redemption as His Bride.
2. ***He know our deepest desires.*** He knows the depths of our longings, dreams, and intentions to love Him and to help others—even when we fail to walk them out.
3. ***He honors our sacrifices.*** We occasionally make heroic sacrifices out of our love for Him. We have joy and strength in knowing that He recognizes these as love for Him.
4. ***He understands our pain.*** Jesus sees our pain and walks with us through difficulties, disappointments, and setbacks physically, financially, socially, spiritually, etc.
5. ***He helps us in our struggle with sin.*** He walks with us through every season of life. He sees our pain when we fail and understands our weak human frame (Ps. 103:10-14).

III. FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD IS THE ONLY WAY TO SPIRITUAL SAFETY

- A. Jesus' multifaceted message in John 13-17 was spoken to equip His disciples to walk in *joy* (15:11; 17:13), and *not stumble* or fall away (16:1), in the face of great pressures. Jesus spoke this in context to the persecution that they would face (15:18-26). The word translated stumble is from the Greek verb *skandalizo* which means to give up one's faith by being ensnared by sin (Lk. 21:35-36).

¹***These things I have spoken to you, that you should not...stumble [fall away; ESV]. (Jn. 16:1)***

- B. Paul prophesied of a falling away in the end times (1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5; cf. Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2 Pet. 2:1-3, 20-22). Paul presented it as being as obvious and significant as the appearing of the Antichrist on the world stage. This apostasy is the greatest social tragedy in human history.

³***Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [Jesus' return] will not come unless the falling away comes first and the man of sin [Antichrist] is revealed. (2 Thes. 2:3)***

- C. The Lord has promised to make a way for His disciples to walk as overcomers (1 Cor. 10:13).

¹³***...God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:13)***

²***I saw...those who have the victory over the beast [the Antichrist]... (Rev. 15:2)***

¹¹***And they overcame him [Satan and the Antichrist] by the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 12:11)***

⁷***“...for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” (Rev. 19:7)***

⁹***...the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations... (2 Pet. 2:9)***

²⁴***Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless... (Jude 24)***

IV. FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD IS THE ONLY WAY TO SUCCESS IN GOD’S EYES

- A. Obedience to Jesus is the only reliable pathway to true success or greatness. He calls one’s life choices “great” as they obey Him. This is attained without regard for outward achievements/impact. It is based on the size of one’s heart response to Him. We are not left guessing what He calls great.
¹⁹Whoever breaks...the least of these commandments...shall be called least in the kingdom... but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 5:19)
- B. The call to love God is the point that Jesus *emphasized most* in John 13-17 (14:15, 21, 23, 24, 31). Jesus defined loving God as being deeply rooted in a spirit of obedience. He calls us to love God on God’s terms or by His definition of love. He is the most qualified to define love (1 Jn. 4:16).
- C. Serving Jesus faithfully and denying our lustful desires are “the theater” that God chose for us to express our love to Him. Jesus takes this personally. Some think of lust as only about immorality, but lust includes covetousness, anger, bitterness, retaliation, complaining, slander, and more.
- D. Each of us has a different struggle according to our own personality and life circumstances. Thus, we each have a different “*assignment*,” from which we offer our gift of obedient love to God.

V. FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD IS THE ONLY WAY TO SATISFACTION OR JOY IN THIS LIFE

- A. Jesus promised to satisfy and strengthen His people with joy to enable them to have a vibrant heart that overcomes dark emotions in the face of pressures and temptations (15:11; 16:20-24; 17:13). Joy is a feeling of deep satisfaction, pleasure, or delight that things are good or are working for our future good—according to how God defines good. For more on this, see my message on Session 11 (John 15 Pt. 1) titled “*The Promise of Joy and the Illusion of Happiness* (Jn. 15:11) and Session 9 (John 15 Pt. 1) titled “*The Superior Pleasure of Obedient Love*” (Jn. 15:10-11)
¹¹“These things I have spoken...that My joy may remain in you...” (Jn. 15:11)
- B. **Satisfaction:** Many define *joy* and *happiness* in different ways. I speak of “*divine joy*” as that which is imparted to us as we relate to Jesus. I speak of “*natural happiness*” to describe the good feelings we have related to favorable circumstances—relationships, possessions, achievements, etc.
- C. The greatest satisfaction and pleasures available to the human heart are the spiritual pleasures that come to us as **God reveals God to us**. This happens most in context to friendship with God.
- D. Joy is found in discovering that “**He is enough for me**”—that is, in relating to Him and living for Him. “*God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.*” **John Piper**
- E. Jesus is “the” true vine (15:1). He is the source that satisfies the human heart and empowers us to love. He is the vine that satisfies us far more than wealth, prominence, entertainment, romance, etc.
¹“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. (Jn. 15:1)
- F. Friendship with God is the only reliable pathway to true spiritual safety, success, and satisfaction.