

## **Friendship With God**

### **Introduction**

Friendship is one of our most beautiful and intimate relationships. Only with a friend can we share our lives, our hopes, and our joys. In the past, when people tended to live in one place for long periods of time, they placed a high value on friendship. Today, however, it is often difficult to have a true friend. Fortunately for us, there is One who wants to be our friend. Let's see what friendship with God entails.

### **Our Study**

#### **The Scripture: Proverbs 17:17**

*"A friend loves at all times."*

1. How does this scripture describe a friend? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### **The Scripture: Proverbs 18:24**

*"There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."*

2. What kind of friend is described here? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Friends who love us at all times, and whose closeness to us even transcends family relationships, are rare. True friendship demands commitment, and few are willing to take the responsibility necessary to live up to this biblical standard of friendship. While Jesus lived on earth, an essential part of His message was that God wanted to reestablish His covenant of friendship with man that had been broken by Adam and Eve's sin.

To better understand what this means, we need to consider the Old Testament idea of friendship. In ancient times when two people wanted to be friends or allies, they established a "covenant of friendship." The terms of this relationship were all-encompassing. Friendship meant you would protect the other person, even at risk to your own life. It meant that all your possessions were at your friend's disposal. The covenant was sealed by the two people eating together, and in essence, you established a covenant with whomever you ate and drank. This is the idea reflected by David in Psalm 41:9 when he complained to God, "Even my close friend, whom I trusted, *he who shared my bread*, has lifted up his heel against me." David could rightly complain, because to turn against someone with whom you had "shared bread" was considered a heinous crime. This helps us to better understand why the Pharisees were so critical of Jesus.

#### **The Scripture: Mark 2:15-17**

*"While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and 'sinners' were eating with Him and His disciples, for there were many who followed Him....The teachers of the law who were*

*Pharisees...asked His disciples: 'Why does He eat with tax collectors and "sinners?'" On hearing this, Jesus said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'*"

3. What was Jesus doing? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What was the Pharisee's question? \_\_\_\_\_

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In their self-righteousness, the religious leaders did not understand that God considered them as sick as the so-called sinners. Yes, God wants to reestablish a covenant of friendship with us. Every time we "eat and drink" His body and His blood, we are either establishing or confirming that covenant--both with Him and with those with whom we share the meal.

The Old Testament gives us a wonderful model for friendship--that between David and Jonathan, King Saul's eldest son. Chapter 17 of the book of Samuel has just described David's victory over the giant Goliath. In these verses David has been brought before King Saul and there he becomes friends with Jonathan.

**The Scripture: 1 Samuel 18:1-4**

*"Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself....And Jonathan made a covenant with David....Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with the tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt."*

5. How did Jonathan feel about David? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What did Jonathan do? \_\_\_\_\_

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A covenant was a sacred pledge of loyalty between two people or parties that usually spelled out the responsibilities for each side, and was binding on their descendants. We will discuss this later in the study.

David's victory over Goliath saved the kingdom for King Saul, and David became a very successful officer in Saul's army. At first Saul doted on David, even giving him his daughter for a wife. But as David's popularity with the people and his fellow officers grew, Saul became exceedingly jealous of David to the point of wanting him dead.

**The Scripture: 1 Samuel 19:1-4**

*"Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan warned him, 'My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Go into hiding and stay there. I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I'll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out.'"*

7. What did Jonathan tell David to do? \_\_\_\_\_

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Saul promised he would do no harm to David, but not too long afterward, an evil spirit came over him and he again plotted David's death. Think of the position this placed Jonathan in. He was torn between loyalty to his father and to his covenant friend. Jonathan placed his friendship with David above loyalty to his father.

**The Scripture: 1 Samuel 23:15-18**

*"David learned that Saul had come out to take his life. And Saul's son Jonathan went to David and helped him find strength in God. 'Don't be afraid,' he said. 'My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you.' The two of them made a covenant before the Lord."*

8. What did Jonathan do? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What did he tell David? \_\_\_\_\_

10. What did the two men do? \_\_\_\_\_

What a wonderful friend Jonathan was. He could have commiserated with David, agreeing that he had a right to self-pity, but instead he encouraged him in the Lord even while realizing that someday David would rule over Israel, a position that belonged to him.

Jonathan's friendship with David mirrors the Lord's friendship with us. Let's look at some of the ways that Jonathan gives us a picture of Jesus.

- \*He is the son of a king.
- \*He is one in spirit with us.
- \*He has made a covenant of friendship with us.
- \*He defends us.
- \*He reconciles us to His father.
- \*He is loyal to us.
- \*He strengthens us in God.

Except for a few isolated examples in the Old Testament, friendship with God is primarily a New Testament concept. Only two people in the Old Testament are called "friends" of God.

**The Scripture: Exodus 33:11**

*"The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend."*

11. How did the Lord speak to Moses? \_\_\_\_\_

Abraham is also called a "friend of God" because of his close relationship with God. Think what that means. The King of the entire universe wants to be our friend.

**The Scripture: Romans 5:10**

*"If when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!"*

12. What were we before Jesus reconciled us to God? \_\_\_\_\_

13. What reconciled us to God? \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, friendship with Jesus is ours. Let's look at one quality of friendship with Jesus that is especially important to the Christian.

**The Scripture: Psalm 25:14 in the Living Bible**

*"Friendship with God is reserved for those who reverence Him. With them alone He shares the secrets of His promises."*

14. With whom does God share the secrets of His promises? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What an exciting promise! How often do we wish we knew what was on God's heart. Here, then, is the answer.

Jesus said much the same thing when He talked with His disciples shortly before His death.

**The Scripture: John 15:15**

*"I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My father I have made known to you."*

15. Why does He say He calls them friends? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**The Scripture: John 15:13,14**

*"Greater love has no one than this, than he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command."*

16. How are friends of Jesus recognized? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

17. What is the ultimate test of friendship? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus proved His friendship with us when He died on the cross for us.

There is another meaning of the word *friend*, however, and it is this meaning that many biblical authorities believe Jesus was using in the fifteenth chapter of John when He called the disciples His friends. "He (Jesus) knew of this custom of certain ones being called 'friends of the emperor', [a title of high honor]. There was real point to His words and they were not lost upon His disciples. Think of what faith this involved on His part and theirs. The King of kings was on His way from the upper room where they had celebrated the Passover together for the last time, to His crucifixion and death, the rejected King of Israel. Yet in all the dignity of His royal position as King of the Jews in the Davidic

dynasty, He said, 'I have called you friends.' Yes, they were friends of the Emperor who would be raised from the dead, ascend to heaven and some day come back to earth to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords."\*

Let us prove our friendship with the Lord by being obedient to Him.

\*(*Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* by Kenneth Wuest, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan.)

Much of this material previously appeared in the Aglow workbook, *The Art of Being Single*, by the author.

## The Answers

1. One who loves at all times
2. One who sticks closer than a brother
3. Eating with tax collectors and sinners
4. "Why does (Jesus) eat with tax collectors and sinners?"
5. One in spirit with David and he loved him as himself
6. He made a covenant with David and gave him his robe, tunic, sword, bow, and belt
7. To go into hiding. He would learn Saul's attitude toward David.
8. He helped David find strength in God.
9. That Saul would not lay a hand on David and that David would be King of Israel. He said he would serve under David.
10. They made another covenant before the Lord.
11. Face to face, as if to a friend
12. God's enemies
13. Christ's death
14. Those who reverence Him
15. Because He has shared everything He learned from His Father with them
16. They do what Jesus commands
17. To lay down one's life for another

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