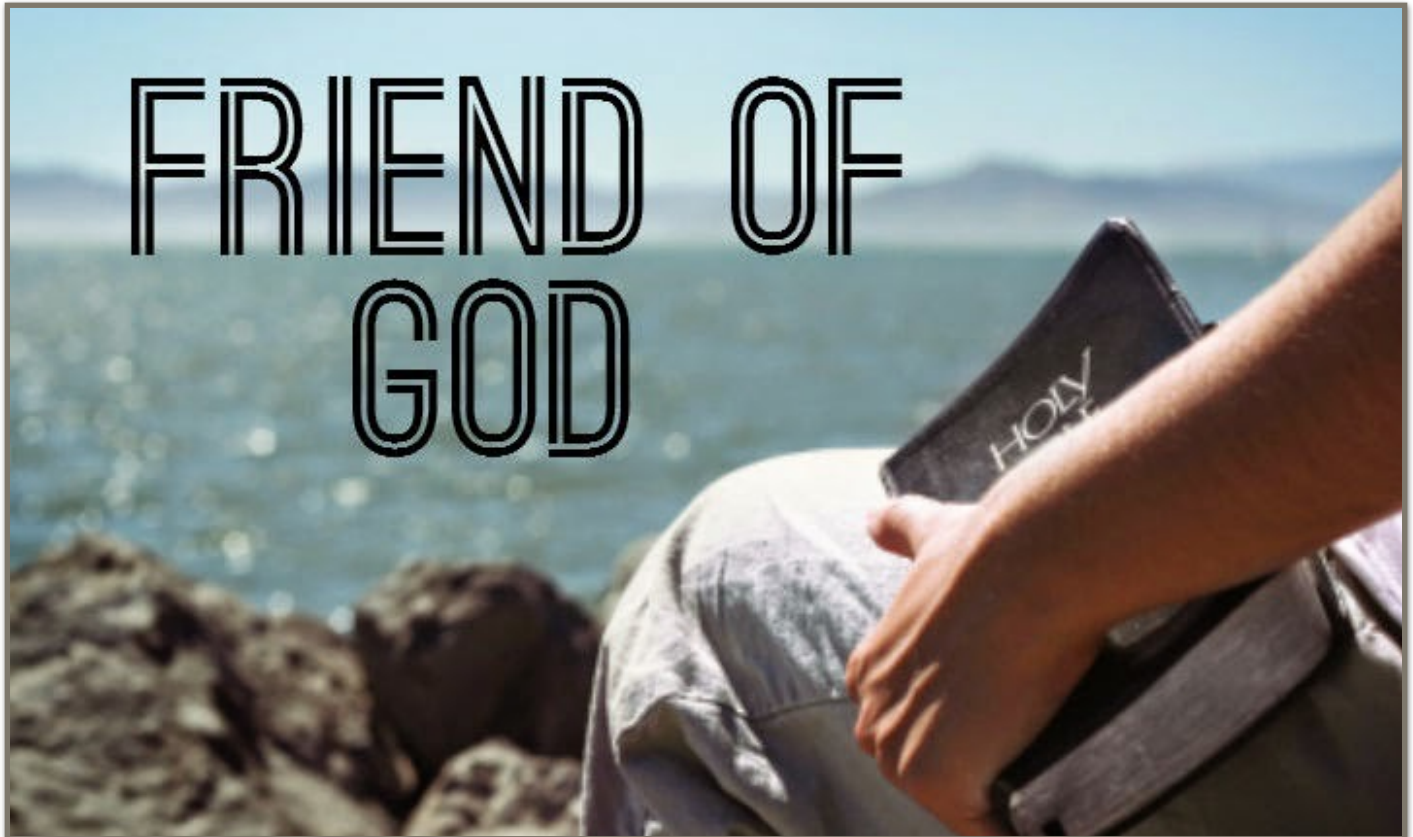


In SPIRIT and TRUTH



Does Jesus Call You “Friend” ?

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his FRIENDS.” John 15:13

When we talk about being a “friend of God”, one of the first mistakes that many people make is in assuming that it is solely their choice, by deciding to “accept” Jesus Christ or not. However, the Bible makes it clear that Jesus chose His original 12 disciples, and later reiterated (more precisely) that *He does the choosing*, as stated in *John 15:16*, “**Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you**”. Now, before we go any further with the subject, it is important that we understand the connotation of the word *friend*. The common dictionary definition would be, *a person on good terms with someone, often associated with feelings of affection*. However, from examination of the use of “friend” in the Bible, there is a much broader view of its essence based upon the biblical qualifications for friendship, as expressed by Jesus Christ. The revelation knowledge obtained from scripture should provide the understanding of why we are in no position to *choose God*; but rather, we can only *hope* to be among “*the chosen*” by God.

Friendship With God Is Conditional

In John, chapter 15, we learned from Jesus' teaching that the foundation of true friendship is built upon love. Jesus commanded His disciples to love one another, and exemplified His love by His death on the cross, for the sins of the whole world...

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his FRIENDS. Ye are my FRIENDS, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:13-14).

Hence, from this passage of scripture we learn that *friendship with God is conditional; it is based upon sacrificial love for God, and a willingness to obey His commandments.* Just as Jesus laid down His life for us in obedience to the Father, we also must be willing lay down our lives, by dying to our selfish desires of the flesh, to follow Him... Matthew 16:24, *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”*. In other words, if we want to be friends of God, our desire to obey Him must be greater than the desire to please ourselves.

Friendship With God Requires Intimacy

When one receives the gospel of the kingdom and is “born again”, he begins a journey to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. As we mature in our relationship with Christ, we are transformed *from servants to friends...* to do His will on earth, even as Jesus did the will of the Father, in heaven (John 15:10-15). However, because most Christians have not been properly discipled, many rely on the leadership of the Church to steer them in the direction of God's will for their lives. Unfortunately, even those who are devoted to the religious service of men, may also be unable to hear God; and “as the blind leads the blind”, they may all find themselves outside of the will of God: Matthew 7:22-23... *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

Knowing God implies having spiritual intimacy with Christ. It involves sharing quality, private times of spiritual communion, to understand the Lord's thoughts concerning us. Because Jesus *knew* His disciples, He trusted them as friends, and even shared secrets of the kingdom of God with them.

“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does: but I have called you FRIENDS; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” John 15:15

JESUS CHRIST



KING OF KINGS

Friendship With God Requires A Pure Heart

When Jesus was on earth and ministered to the multitudes, it was His will that all men follow Him and have eternal life; however, even though many received *the call*, only few were *chosen*. Why? Because the conditions of their hearts would not allow them to be chosen (Matthew 13:18-30). Jesus was God manifested in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16); therefore, He was able to look beyond the outward appearance to judge the hearts of those who wanted to follow Him.

One such example is given in Matthew 19:16-30, an account of when a rich man approached Jesus asking, “*Master (teacher) what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*” Jesus explained that obeying the commandments of the Law was not enough. He asked the young man if he would be willing to sell all that he had to give to the poor. We are told that when the man heard this, “*he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions*”. Jesus was not surprised at his response, for He knew that it would be hard for a rich man to give up possessions to follow Him.

Jesus sometimes required an immediate response (without excuses) from those who would follow Him. This is why the first 12 disciples were chosen; because Jesus knew their hearts, and when called, they stopped what they were doing, and *promptly* followed Him (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; John 1:35-51). There were also some who asked to follow Jesus, then gave excuses and made requests for delays. However, Jesus did not accept their requests to first bid loved ones “farewell”, nor their excuses to bury the dead. He was able to discern their hearts, and understood that they were those who would “put their hands to the plow and look back”, not being fit (suitable) for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62).

Last, but not least, for those desiring to be friends of God, there must be the understanding that Jesus seeks relationships with those who are *sanctified*... those who *willingly* separate themselves from the world to follow Him, and understand that *being friends with the world, makes them the enemies of God (James 4:4)*.

So as we consider being friends of God, we must not forget that *God does the choosing*. He is looking for those who seek Him with a pure heart, and says that He will know them by their fruit (Matthew 7:15-20). Jesus also desires spiritual intimacy (communion) with His friends. He is pleased to have fellowship with those who are interested in sitting at His feet to learn of Him (like Mary), rather than being distracted by busyness and the affairs of this world, like Martha (Luke 10:38-42).

***Would you consider yourself to be a Mary or a Martha?
Again I ask, “Does Jesus call you friend?”***

