

THE Three Faces OF GOD

Part 3: The Face of the Friend

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Gerald Thurman & Wes Porter

Our culture is fascinated by spirituality, yet we are more confused about who God is than ever before. Some believe that God is simply an idea; others believe that God is everything. Still others believe that there are many Gods and that we, as human beings, have the opportunity to become gods someday. In the midst of the confusion, it should be comforting to know that God tells us – through the Bible and through the life of His Son, Jesus – exactly who He is. God doesn't hide from us, but instead wants us to know and recognize Him so that we can relate to Him more fully and experience the blessing of His involvement in our lives.

One of the most fascinating aspects of relating to God is relating to Him as our **friend**.

Central Point . . .

Friendship with God is an amazing concept, and yet the Bible teaches that it is actually attainable.

James 2:23 *The full meaning of "believe" in the Scripture sentence, "Abraham believed God and was set right with God," includes his action. It's that mesh of believing and acting that got Abraham named "God's friend."*

To understand what it means to be a friend of God, we must understand what it means to be friends with **anyone** who has power.

There are four essential elements of a "powerful" friendship...

- Being **chosen**.
- Offering **cooperation**.
- Gathering **information**.
- Having **influence**.

These elements must be present if we are to be friends of an **all-powerful** God.

Abraham, a Friend of God

The story of Abraham is from the 18th chapter of the book of Genesis...

Genesis 18 *GOD appeared to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent...GOD said, "Shall I keep back from Abraham what I'm about to do?"¹⁸Abraham is going to become a large and strong nation; all the nations of the world are going to find themselves blessed through him.¹⁹Yes, I've settled on him as the one to train his children and future family to observe GOD's way of life, live kindly and generously and fairly, so that GOD can complete in Abraham what he promised him."²⁰GOD continued, "The cries of the victims in Sodom and Gomorrah are deafening; the sin of those cities is immense.²¹I'm going down to see for myself, see if what they're doing is as bad as it sounds. Then I'll know."²²The men set out for Sodom, but Abraham stood in GOD's path, blocking his way.²³Abraham confronted him, "Are you serious? Are you planning on getting rid of the good people right along with the bad?"²⁴What if there are fifty decent people left in the city; will you lump the good with the bad and get rid of the lot?"²⁵Wouldn't you spare the city for the sake of those fifty innocents? I can't believe you'd do that, kill off the good and the bad alike as if there were no difference between them. Doesn't the Judge of all the Earth judge with justice?"²⁶GOD said, "If I find fifty decent people in the city of Sodom, I'll spare the place just for them."²⁷Abraham came back, "Do I, a mere mortal made from a handful of dirt, dare open my mouth again to my Master?"²⁸What if the fifty fall short by five--would you destroy the city because of those missing five?" He said, "I won't destroy it if there are forty-five."²⁹Abraham spoke up again, "What if you only find forty?" "Neither will I destroy it if for forty."³⁰He said, "Master, don't be irritated with me, but what if only thirty are found?" "No, I won't do it if I find thirty."³¹He pushed on, "I know I'm trying your patience, Master, but how about for twenty?" "I won't destroy it for twenty."³²He wouldn't quit, "Don't get angry, Master--this is the last time. What if you only come up with ten?" "For the sake of only ten, I won't destroy the city."³³When GOD finished talking with Abraham, he left. And Abraham went home.*

Focal Point . . .

The Four Elements of Friendship at Work

God was going to act, but before He did, He had a meaningful **conversation** with Abraham in which Abraham *influences* the mind of God.

God is the same today as he was when Abraham lived...

Hebrews 13:8 *"For Jesus doesn't change—yesterday, today, tomorrow, he's always totally himself."*

...which means that God still wants friends with whom He can share His plans.

God offers each of us the opportunity to influence His choices. The problem is that what God offers is very different from our perspective on conversing with or **praying** to God.

We try to influence God by convincing Him to give us the things we believe will make us **happy**.

However, we lack *information*. By focusing on our own **agenda** we miss what God intends to do, and we miss our opportunity for influence.

But God wants to give us information...

He asks the question, "*Shall I keep back from Abraham what I'm about to do?*"

His answer is "no", because a friend doesn't...

1. Disguise **intentions**.
2. Deny **access**.

A friend shares **secrets**...

John 15:15 "*I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've settled on you in on everything I've heard from the Father.*"

Secrets are not shared with everyone who wants to gain information. They are only shared with those who cooperate.

Cooperation with God is called **obedience**...

Genesis 18:18-19 *Abraham is going to become a large and strong nation; all the nations of the world are going to find themselves blessed through him. ¹⁹Yes, I've settled on him as the one to train his children and future family to observe GOD's way of life, live kindly and generously and fairly, so that GOD can complete in Abraham what he promised him."*

Abraham cooperated with God, and though he was not perfect, he was **pliable**.

The Bible provides three examples of Abraham's cooperation with God...

1. The Leaving of Ur (Genesis 12)
2. The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17)
3. The Sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22)

When God gives us the opportunity to cooperate, He is telling us that he has *chosen* us.

John 15:16 "*You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you.*"

Turning Point...

The beauty of being chosen...

The God of the universe is saying that you're **wanted** as a friend of God.

Our challenge...

Seekers – If you are one checking out the claims of Christianity, know that the future God desires for you is to experience His Friendship. That begins when you establish a growing personal relationship with Him. The good news is that to receive it, you simply have to ask Him.

To invite Christ into your heart, you can simply pray,

*"Heavenly Father I **admit** that I have left you out of my life, but this morning, I **believe** that Christ is your Son and that He died for my sin of rejecting you and that you raised Him from the dead. I **confess** Him to be my Lord and Savior.
In Jesus' Name, Amen*

Believers – simply ask God,

*Heavenly Father – How am I doing in allowing You to truly be my Friend?
In Jesus' Name, Amen*