

James 2:23; Abraham: God's Friend

Everybody needs a friend. In fact Philip Chesterfield says 'a friend is a present you give yourself'. There are people who leave the entirety of their lives without a genuine friendship. Without a friend is to be like John the Revelator, on an island of Patmos far from the crossroads of human interaction. You and I need someone who is loyal and loving, somebody who is trusted and true, someone who will be devoted in dark hours, present in moments of pain, sympathetic in times of sickness and nearby when the road gets rough and the hills get hard to climb.

True friendship is hard to find

A friend is one who knows you and still loves you. As William Ward puts it, 'a true friend knows your weaknesses but shows you your strengths; feels your fears but fortifies your faith; sees your anxieties but frees your spirit; recognizes your disabilities but emphasizes your possibilities.'

But, a good friend is hard to find. A real friend is one who attacks you in the front, who goes around saying nice things about you behind your back. Is it not true that a man is known by the company he keeps? The world judges you by the quality and character of the persons you call 'friend'. A good friend is hard to find.

What looks like a friend may not be a friend! Cain and Abel had the same genetic background, they were brothers by blood, had the same parents, but the book says that Cain slew Abel in the field. Samson and Delilah were lovers. Delilah proves that even your lover may not be your friend. Delilah was the one who cut the seven locks of hair on Samson's head and put him into the hands of his enemies. Job had three so called friends- one named Eliphaz, one named Bildad and one named Zophar- but in the time of Job's deepest distress, in the time of his greatest need, all they were able to do was to sit for seven days and never say a word.

Even Jesus discovered that his closest associates could not be counted on. Deacon Peter denied him, deacon Thomas doubted him, and the treasurer of the board of disciples, one Judas Iscariot, sold him out for thirty pieces of silver and a field of blood.

The friendship of Abraham and God

There is a unique friendship in the bible. James said it existed between God and Abraham; 'Abraham was called the friend of God'(James 2:23).

Only Abraham- no one else in biblical history (with the possible exception of Moses)- only Abraham was known as 'the friend of God'. What does it take to be a friend of God?

1. Abraham believed and God believed Abraham

In the first instance Abraham believed God. When God said to him 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you...' the scripture says Abraham left as the Lord had told him.

Abraham did not only believe God, but God believed Abraham. You remember on top of that mountain in the region of Moriah. God said 'Do not lay a hand on the boy, do not do anything to him. Now I know you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.' That's what friendship with God is all about; it is about one believing the faithfulness of the other.

2. Abraham and God knew how to talk to each other

Secondly, the friendship of God with Abraham was predicted on the fact that they knew how to talk with each other. Not only did they talk with each other, not only did they maintain a lively communication, but they did not always agree with each other. In order to have a good friendship you do not need somebody that agrees with you all the time, takes your side on every issue, and always think your point of view is the best point of view. Good friends can argue and still be on the same side.

God and Abraham had an argument about Sodom one day. God decided the only thing he could do would be to destroy it. But Abraham objected saying 'I wanted to ask what would you do if I found fifty righteous men or forty five or twenty or even one righteous man in the city?'

God said, well Abraham you have a good point; if you find one I won't destroy the city. What I am trying to say is that God and Abraham were good friends. If you are to be a friend of God, you've got to talk to him and he has to talk to you.

3. Abraham and God had encountered birth experience

Friends share some common stuff. It took Abraham 100 years to have a son. And then there came a time when his friend asked him to sacrifice Isaac. Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father? The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb. Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.'"

Well it took God 42 generations to answer Isaac's question "where is the lamb?" maybe Abraham asked God, why did you let Isaac live when I was ready to sacrifice him? But God told Abraham 'my friend I had to let your son live in order to save the nation. I had to let your son live because in Isaac was Jacob, and in Jacob was the twelve tribes of Israel. But Abraham, My Son died to save the world. My son died to answer Isaac's question. Where is the Lamb? He is the Lamb, which takes away the sin of the world. He is the dying lamb.

Jesus our friend

There is a friend who can stick closer than a brother. One day he said: 'I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.' His name is Jesus.