

LOVE THE LORD



Lesson Seven - What does it mean to be a friend of God?

August 2023

Summary of key points

- Jesus came to die for our sins so that we can be reconciled into friendship with God.
- Friends are loyal and reliable.
- We experience hurt and pain from human friendships, but God is not like any friend we have had.
- We need to forgive our friends or this will hinder our prayers.
- Friendship with God requires us to be humble and turn away from friendships of the world.
- Friends talk openly with one another, and we can do so when we pray to God.

Watch the lesson online

https://youtu.be/RIcS_kc6r34

Transcript

Welcome to lesson seven of Love the Lord where we discuss what friendship with God involves.

Let us begin by inviting God to speak to us personally through this study. Please follow along as we pray together. Click pause at any point if you need more time.

First, let's thank God for His perfect character and will for us.

Next, please tell Him about the things that have been stressful and ask for His help and guidance.

Let us put down our burdens of sin. Confess the ways you have sinned against God and against others, and ask for His forgiveness.

Please also confess the ways others have sinned against us, and forgive them in Jesus' name.

Next, let us ask God to purify and open our hearts to receive His teaching.

Finally, please repeat these words, "In Jesus' name, I silence all distractions and voices that are not from God. Amen."

Let's begin the lesson for today. What does it mean to be a friend of God?

One of the things that Jesus came to do by dying on the cross to pay for our sins was to restore our friendship with God. Many friendships in this world are driven by selfish motives, based on what we can gain from one another. But this is not the way with God. Jesus came to reconcile us into friendship with God while we were still His enemies. So, what does friendship with God look like?

Romans 5:10-11 For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God. (NLT)

A genuine friend will be loyal, reliable, trustworthy, and faithful. They may not be perfect, they may have their flaws but we will love them just the same. This is how God looks at us.

Proverbs 17:17 A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need. (NLT)

Our ultimate Friend we have is Jesus, who gave His life for us, who is always loyal and faithful to us. This may be difficult for some of us to picture because we may have had painful experiences with human friendships.

John 15:11,13 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. (NLT)

There are people in this world who destroy their “friends”, sometimes without even knowing what they are doing. One good example is Job, whose friends came to console him during a time of great tragedy, but they only ended up condemning him and making him feel much worse.

Proverbs 18:24 There are “friends” who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother. (NLT)

From Job's perspective, his friends wrongly...

1. Accused him | *Job 6:14 “One should be kind to a fainting friend, but you accuse me without any fear of the Almighty. (NLT)*
2. Mocked him | *Job 12:4 Yet my friends laugh at me, for I call on God and expect an answer. I am a just and blameless man, yet they laugh at me. (NLT)*
3. Betrayed him | *Job 6:27 You would even send an orphan into slavery or sell a friend. (NLT)*
4. Turned against him | *Job 19:13 “My relatives stay far away, and my friends have turned against me. (NLT)*
5. Scorned him | *Job 16:20 My friends scorn me, but I pour out my tears to God. (NLT)*
6. Hated him | *Job 19:19 My close friends detest me. Those I loved have turned against me. (NLT)*

7. Forgot about him | *Job 19:14 My family is gone, and my close friends have forgotten me. (NLT)*

Can you relate to how Job felt? Have you ever had friends who

1. Accused you?
2. Mocked you?
3. Betrayed you?
4. Turned against you?
5. Scorned you?
6. Hated you?
7. Forgot about you?

We want to assure you that God knows about your pain and He is angry about what your friends have done to you.

Just look at what God said to Job's friends. Let's read from Job chapter 42 together, "*...I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken accurately about me, as my servant Job has. So... offer a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer on your behalf... When Job prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes. In fact, the Lord gave him twice as much as before!*" (Job 42:7-8,10 NLT)

When Job kept his heart pure before God and prayed for his friends, God restored Job's fortunes and gave him twice as much as before. Notice that even though it was Job's friends who paid the price for the offering, it was Job who was blessed twice as much. This is how God rewards us for following His righteous ways.

If this topic touches a sore point in your heart and stirs up uncomfortable emotions inside you, it could be a sign that there are friends who have hurt you whom you have yet to forgive. Forgiveness releases us from their offences and heals our hurts. We will now slow down and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to any residual pain in your heart. He is our loyal, reliable, trustworthy, and faithful Friend who wants to help us.

If you are ready to allow God to cleanse your heart from any bitterness and pain that your friends had caused you, here is a guided prayer.

1. Tell God how painful it was when your friends hurt you. Describe all your emotions. Don't hold anything back.
2. Confess how grieved or angry you may still be.
3. Thank God for being the perfect Friend to us, He is not like those people who have hurt us.
4. Now, release forgiveness to those friends in Jesus' name.
5. Repent of condemning, slandering, or hating them.
6. Finally, ask the Holy Spirit to restore your joy to twice as much as it was before.

We praise God for your prayer. The Lord rewards those who are humble and are willing to give up their old ways.

This was an important time of reflection and confession before God and He will reward you for being humble. As you forgave those friends, the ones who hurt you, did you feel burdens lift off your shoulders? Does your vision appear clearer and brighter? That is the result of having the Holy Spirit minister to you to purify your heart and cleanse your spirit.

Jesus taught us something important about relationships and how they affect our prayers. Let's read from Matthew chapter 5 verses 22 to 24 together, *"But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell. "So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God."* (Matthew 5:22-24 NLT)

God does not welcome prayers when we hold on to bitterness, grudges, and resentments towards other people and not address unresolved relationship issues.

Ephesians 4:31-32 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (NLT)

God does not ask us to do anything that He has not done for us first. Jesus came to reconcile us back to God while we were still His enemies.

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" (NLT)

Consider this for a moment. At any point in your life, have you ever wrongly

1. Accused God?
2. Mocked God?
3. Betrayed God?
4. Turned against God?
5. Scorned God?
6. Hated God?
7. Forgotten about God?

Do you know how He felt when you did this to Him? Yet God is a loyal and faithful Friend who will not forsake us.

Now that we are reconciled into friendship with God, let us give Him first priority in our hearts as we should. God is fiercely loyal to those who fear Him and do what He commands.

Psalm 25:14 The LORD is a friend to those who fear him. He teaches them his covenant. (NLT)

He will speak to us through the Holy Spirit and reveal all that He has in store for us and guide us along the right path.

John 15:14-15 You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. (NLT)

When we show that we can be fiercely loyal and faithful friends back to God, He will even entrust us with the true riches of heaven. At the same time, we need to choose to be humble and determined not to be sidetracked, because our loyalty to God will always be tested by the world.

Luke 16:10-11 "If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? (NLT)

God has strong words for those who prioritise friendships with the world over friendship with God. We will go back to being His enemies. Why is this so?

James 4:4 You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. (NLT)

Because Satan is the god of this world. Every time we give our loyalties to anything from this world, Satan gains yet another foothold to blind us to our friendship with God and fill our hearts with unbelief.

2 Corinthians 4:4 Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. (NLT)

For instance, Satan will tempt us to place higher priority on

1. Chasing money and financial security
2. Coveting the latest trends and possessions
3. Building up our self image and reputation
4. Fighting for our personal justice
5. Pleasing our family

Can you see how there is a constant tug-of-war in our hearts between all these friendships with the world?

Let us now give ourselves an opportunity to evaluate the importance of each of these friendships in our hearts.

1. How important is money and financial security to you? High Moderate Low
2. How important are your possessions to you? High Moderate Low
3. How important is your self image and reputation? High Moderate Low
4. How important is personal justice to you? High Moderate Low
5. How important is your devotion to your family? High Moderate Low
6. Now, how important is your friendship with God to you? High Moderate Low

Do you notice any idols in your heart that keep you from loving God with all your mind, all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength?

We truly need to humble ourselves and allow the Holy Spirit to transform our desires. Let us read from Ephesians chapter 4 together, “*throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.*” (Ephesians 4:22-24 NLT)

Renewal requires us to humble ourselves before God, so that we can remain loyal to God.

It is the humble whom God will call His friends. A good example is Moses whom God spoke to as His friend.

Exodus 33:11 Inside the Tent of Meeting, the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend... (NLT)

Moses was more humble than any other person on earth.

Numbers 12:3 (Now Moses was very humble—more humble than any other person on earth.) (NLT)

He was faithful to God in everything he did.

Hebrews 3:5 Moses was certainly faithful in God’s house as a servant. His work was an illustration of the truths God would reveal later. (NLT)

God trusted Moses and spoke to His friend face-to-face. God even personally came to defend Moses against criticism from Aaron and Miriam, Moses's brother and sister.

Numbers 12:6-8 And the Lord said to them, "Now listen to what I say: "... Of all my house, he is the one I trust. I speak to him face to face, clearly, and not in riddles! He sees the Lord as he is. So why were you not afraid to criticize my servant Moses? (NLT)

God trusted and loved Moses so much that He listened to Moses, His friend, when he pleaded with God to turn away from His anger and not destroy the rebellious Israelites. God listens to the selfless prayers and requests of His friends.

Exodus 32:11-12 But Moses tried to pacify the Lord his God. "O Lord!" he said. "Why are you so angry with your own people whom you brought from the land of Egypt with such great power and such a strong hand? ... Turn away from your fierce anger. Change your mind about this terrible disaster you have threatened against your people! (NLT)

Can you picture yourself having that level of friendship with God? When we offer pure hearts up to God, He will respond to us too.

Proverbs 22:11 Whoever loves a pure heart and gracious speech will have the king as a friend. (NLT)

Let's read Jesus' words in Revelation chapter 3 verse 20 together, "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends." (Revelation 3:20 NLT) God wants us to open our hearts to Him and fellowship with Him in friendship.

True friends can share anything with one another without fear of rejection. We can freely and honestly talk about the burdens on our hearts. It is the same with God.

1. Do you tell God all about your worries and your cares? | *1 Peter 5:7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. (NLT)*
2. Do you give God your burdens and ask for His help? | *Psalm 55:22 Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall. (NLT)*
3. Do you pour out all your complaints to Him? | *Psalm 142:2 I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles. (NLT)*
4. Do you cry out to Him in your pain and your grief? | *Psalm 18:6 But in my distress I cried out to the Lord; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry to him reached his ears. (NLT)*
5. Do you confess your sins against Him and ask for His forgiveness? | *1 John 1:9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. (NLT)*

Being authentic with God as our Best Friend also benefits our other relationships, because we don't have to give anyone else our burdens since we have already given them to God. It is one way we can become a blessing to other people around us, rather than a burden to them. We pray that you grow to love and fear God as your most precious, good, and faithful Friend for all eternity.

Matthew 11:28-30 Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." (NLT)

We end today's lesson with two questions for you to reflect on as well as a testimony to watch. Please prepare your answers before your discussion group meets. We pray that you will be blessed. See you next time.

Time for reflection

1. What have you hesitated to talk to God about?
2. How will today's lesson change the way you pray?

Watch the testimony for this lesson



Personal notes