

## Friend of God Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, March 31, 2019

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Main Theme – A 2-part series considering the ‘benefits and implications’ of friendship with God.

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### WORSHIP & PRAYER

### WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Monthly Events**
  - Potluck Supper –TODAY Following – AM Service
  - Women’s Ministry –Tuesday, April 9, from 6:30–8pm
  - Men’s Ministry –Saturday AM, April 13, from 9–10:15am
- **Special Events**
  - Holy Week – April 14 –21 – Special Services Throughout the Week

### MORNING OFFERING PT. 1

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work  
 -Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

### MORNING OFFERING PT. 2

I would like to commend this assembly for your generosity to Justin and Janet Henry (i.e., guest speakers last Sunday – missionaries to the women and children of Bolivia). This church provided the largest Sunday morning offering I have EVER seen for a visiting missionary: over \$1,800.

-May the Lord bless you for your generous giving!  
 -May the Lord continue to bless the ministry of our new friends!

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN’S CHURCH**
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## INTRODUCTIONS

As always it is wonderful to see you. I do look forward to these moments of worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you today. Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. We have much to cover in a relatively short amount of time.

## SETTING THE STAGE

We are mere weeks away from Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter (i.e., HOLY WEEK). In fact, Palm Sunday (April 14) is just THREE weeks out. With the TWO Sundays that we have together until that date, I want to offer a brief TWO-SESSION SERIES based on the life of a beloved Bible character: ABRAHAM.

**NOTE** – There is NO way that I can exaggerate the SIGNIFICANCE of the man we are about to briefly consider. I have noted many times throughout my tenure at New Life that—outside of Jesus Christ—Abraham may be the most IMPORTANT character in the whole Word regarding God’s plan to save humanity (REPEAT).

-Of ALL the characters who play pivotal roles in God’s plan to redeem sinful humanity (e.g., Moses, David, the OT prophets, the NT apostles, etc.), NO character is more vital than Abraham. WHY? Because God’s plan to save the world traces back to/starts with His work in and through this one man. Think of Abraham as the first OT step on the path that leads to Christ!

**KEY** – Thus, there are MANY ways that I could teach and preach through this figure. I am NOT lying when I say we could spend the rest of 2019 on just this one man and all that the Bible says about him. However, I have felt led to consider ONE FACET of Abraham’s life that should inform and impact how we live before God...

-i.e., Abraham was known as the FRIEND of God.

## TO THE WORD

**NOTE** – There are THREE places where Abraham is identified as the FRIEND of God

**2 Chronicles 20:6–7** (NIV Segment of Jehoshaphat’s Prayer When Opposed by Moab & Ammon)  
 6 . . . “Lord, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you.  
 7 Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham *your friend*?

### **Isaiah 41:8–10**

8 “But you, Israel, my servant,  
 Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
 you descendants of Abraham *my friend*,  
 9 I took you from the ends of the earth,  
 from its farthest corners I called you.  
 I said, ‘You are my servant’;  
 I have chosen you and have not rejected you.  
 10 So do not fear, for I am with you;  
 do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
 I will strengthen you and help you;  
 I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

### **James 2:20–23**

20 You foolish person [those who believed that Christian living was not an important component of the Christian faith], do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless [i.e., dead]? 21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called *God’s friend*.

**NOTE** – I want to take some time to consider Abraham’s friendship with God...

-NEXT WEEK I want to consider the IMPLICATIONS of his friendship w/ God (Divine Expectation)  
 -THIS MORNING I want to consider the BENEFITS Abraham experienced in being “God’s friend”

LET’S DELVE IN...

## **BENEFIT #1**

### **Q. What is the FIRST benefit Abraham experienced in being the friend of God?**

**A.** God uniquely revealed Himself to Abraham. As God’s friend, the Lord confided in Abraham. Due to their unique intimacy, the Lord made this man privy to information inaccessible to others. Due to their unique connection, the Lord willingly opened His heart and mind to this man.

**NOTE** – This is NOT surprising per se—friends DO confide in one another/share deeply. We tell our friends things that we would NOT tell a perfect stranger, loose acquaintance, etc. Therefore, it makes SENSE that this characteristic of human friendship should be found in friendship with God.

**ILL** – I would like to ILLUSTRATE this from a biblical EXAMPLE in the life of Abraham...

#### **Genesis 18:1–22 (NIV, emphasis mine)**

1 The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby [FYI – the Lord and two angels]. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

3 He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. 4 Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. 5 Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.” “Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

7 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. 8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

9 “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There, in the tent,” he said.

10 Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. 11 Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

13 Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.” But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

16 When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. **17 Then the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”** 18 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. 19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

**NOTE** – In this text we are brought into the SECRET COUNSEL of the Lord. We do NOT know fully who He is addressing here. Is He speaking with His angelic servant or is this the Trinity/Godhead in counsel? That’s a question we may NOT be able to fully answer.

**KEY** – But we do see the Lord PONDERING (v. 17): “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?” The Lord is contemplating the degree to which He is going to CONFIDE in Abraham (i.e., To what degree will He OPEN UP His heart and SHARE information privy to no other man)!

-And we SHALL see in subsequent points the UNVEILING of the Lord.

**KEY** – CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS

**Q. I wonder the degree to which the Lord considers such things in the course of our lives?**

i.e., “SHOULD I reveal \_\_\_\_\_” what I am proposing to do in this individual; community; family; church; nation; etc.

**Q. Is the Lord looking to reveal Himself to people—if only He could find a worthy audience?**

**Psalm 25:14**

14 The Lord confides in those who fear him;  
he makes his covenant known to them.

**Proverbs 3:32**

32 . . . the Lord detests the perverse  
but takes the upright into his confidence.

**That God would open up/share His heart with you: what a +benefit of friendship with Him!**

## BENEFIT #2

### Q. What is the **SECOND** benefit Abraham experienced in being the friend of God?

**A.** The Lord was given to hear the prayers of Abraham. As God’s friend, Abraham had a voice with heaven’s court; i.e., he had influence and sway. I am NOT saying that the Lord was subject to Abraham in any way—but that God was particularly moved by the appeals of His friend.

**NOTE** – This is NOT surprising per se—friends do give particular consideration to the appeals and needs of their friends v. total strangers/enemies. How quickly will you pick up a call from your friend v. a telemarketer? Does your friend have your ear? Therefore, it makes SENSE that this characteristic of human friendship should be found in friendship with God.

**ILL** — Let’s continue w/ the account we’re reading (Gen. 18)—in the way of ILLUSTRATION...

#### **Genesis 18:20–32**

20 Then the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous 21 that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.”

22 The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord. 23 Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” 26 The Lord said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”

27 Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, 28 what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?” “If I find forty-five there,” he said, “I will not destroy it.”

29 Once again he spoke to him, “What if only forty are found there?” He said, “For the sake of forty, I will not do it.”

30 Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?” He answered, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

31 Abraham said, “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?” He said, “For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.” 32 Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?” He answered, “For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.”

**NOTE 1** – Notice the ACCESS granted to Abraham by the Lord. Notice the VOICE he was given: a) God lingered after the angels left (giving Abraham opportunity to petition); b) God allowed Abraham to approach Him (v. 23); c) God allowed these audacious appeals of his friend (50, 45, 40, 30, 20, 10 – six requests in total).

**NOTE 2** – And God was WILLING to heed the appeal of His friend. His voice held INFLUENCE and SWAY! Of course, we know from the rest of the story that TEN could NOT be found (leading to the destruction of the cities). Yet, because of God’s concern for Abraham, He graciously took it upon Himself to rescue Lot and his family (though they were train-wrecks in their own right)!

**KEY – CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS**

**Q. I wonder to what degree the Lord is moved by the sound of our prayers (influence/sway)?**

**James 5:16b**

16 . . . The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

**Q. Is the Lord looking to do great and mighty things—if only He would find people of prayer!**

**Matthew 7:7–8**

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

**James 4:1–3**

1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

**That God would hear our prayers/give us such access: what a +benefit of friendship with Him!**

## **BENEFIT #3**

### **Q. What is the THIRD benefit Abraham experienced in being the friend of God?**

**A.** The Lord was given to the protection of Abraham. As God’s friend, the Lord worked to secure his friend in the course of life and living (even when Abraham made some serious errors). I am NOT saying that the life of Abraham was always easy/without difficulty (quite the contrary). I AM saying that the Lord operated on his behalf!

#### **Genesis 15:1**

“Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield, your very great reward.”

**NOTE** – This is NOT surprising per se—friends do give particular consideration to safety and well-being of their friends. How quickly would you work to protect your ally? Therefore, it makes SENSE that this characteristic of human friendship should be found in friendship with God.

**ILL** — I would like to ILLUSTRATE this from a biblical EXAMPLE in the life of Abraham...

#### **Genesis 12:10–20**

10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. 11 As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are. 12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”

14 When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. 15 And when Pharaoh’s officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. 16 He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

17 But the Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram’s wife Sarai. 18 So Pharaoh summoned Abram. “What have you done to me?” he said. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!” 20 Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

**Genesis 20:1–17**

1 Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, 2 and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her. 3 But God came to Abimelek in a dream one night and said to him, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”

4 Now Abimelek had not gone near her, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? 5 Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister,’ and didn’t she also say, ‘He is my brother’? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.” 6 Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. 7 Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die.”

8 Early the next morning Abimelek summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid. 9 Then Abimelek called Abraham in and said, “What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done.” 10 And Abimelek asked Abraham, “What was your reason for doing this?”

11 Abraham replied, “I said to myself, ‘There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’ 12 Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife. 13 And when God had me wander from my father’s household, I said to her, ‘This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, ‘He is my brother.’”

14 Then Abimelek brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah his wife to him. 15 And Abimelek said, “My land is before you; live wherever you like.” 16 To Sarah he said, “I am giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.”

17 Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again, 18 for the Lord had kept all the women in Abimelek’s household from conceiving because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.

**NOTE** – What do we see in both of these accounts? We see the Lord working to protect his friend from harm and danger (even if it was self-inflicted to a degree/deception). These are two of many times where the Lord worked to safeguard the friend that He loved!

**KEY – CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS**

**Q. I wonder to what degree is God continually operating (unknown) on our behalf (security)**

**2 Thessalonians 3:3**

3 . . . the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.

**Psalm 34:7**

7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him,  
and he delivers them.

**That God would hear our prayers/give us such access: what a +benefit of friendship with Him!**

**BENEFIT #4**

**Q. What is the FOURTH/FINAL benefit Abraham experienced in being the friend of God?**

**A.** The Lord blessed Abraham. God blessed Abraham in every conceivable way—he was a truly favored man (ultimately in a spiritual sense). Again, I am NOT saying that Abraham always had it perfectly easy, etc. (quite the contrary). But I am saying that there was an evident FAVOR upon the man.

**NOTE** – This is NOT surprising per se—friends do seek to bless their comrades. How much do you enjoy SHOWERING your friends with gifts, elements of kindness, affection, etc. How inclined are you to bless your friends? Thus, it makes SENSE that this characteristic of human friendship should be found in friendship with God.

**Genesis 12:2–3**

2 “I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.  
3 I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you.”

**Genesis 13:14–17**

14 The Lord said to Abram . . . , “Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. 15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. 16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. 17 Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.”

**Genesis 15:1–6**

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram.  
I am your shield,  
your very great reward.”

2 But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” 5 He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

**NOTE** – I could touch upon numerous other verses and examples of divine favor/blessing from the life of Abraham. Yet, I think I have provided you with enough evidence that God favored His friend/showered Him with blessing beyond words!

**KEY – CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS****Q. Do we understand how much the Lord has blessed us in Christ—His friends?****2 Peter 1:3**

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

**Q. What do you need that He has not perfectly supplied? What (truly) do you lack?**

**NOTE** – I cannot help but think of the words of Christ (as we talk on the theme of such friendship). Consider the following words—spoken to His own (indirectly to us). Hear the word of the Lord:

**John 15:15–16**

15 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. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

**That God would so richly bless us: what a +benefit of friendship with Him!**

## CONCLUSION

**Q. What are the benefits of friendship with God (evidenced in Abraham's life & beyond)?**

- 1) Revelation – God uniquely reveals Himself to those who are His friends
- 2) Influence – God grants access and a 'voice of influence; to His friends
- 3) Security – God does protect and care for those who are His friends
- 4) Blessing – The favor of God resides upon those called friends

**KEY** – Why not pursue such intimacy/friendship with God! It is FAR better than the alternative!