

Audio Transcript of Sermon
November 5, 2022
Friendship

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. Friendship is a term we tend to loosely apply to our relationships with people around us. In some people's minds anyone they know is their friend. With some people, the only people who routinely interact with them aside from family are store clerks, delivery drivers, and professionals, and sometimes people consider these people to be friends. Others look to social media as the source of their friends, and many of the friendships on social media are between people who have never met, or who haven't met in a very long time. In these instances people are remembering the friendship of years ago when through the lens of time what made them friends all those years ago may no longer exist.

Those who read the Bible also look to the Bible to see what it tells us about friendship. Jesus defined his friends as those who did what He commanded them to do, specifically the requirement to love one another, showing that the ultimate expression of love was for a person to lay down his or her life for their friends. The disciples wouldn't have understood it at the time, but Jesus was foreshadowing His death and that through an act of love, He was willing to lay down his life for us. Jesus considered the disciples to be His friends, and would consider those who today do what Jesus commands to also be His friends. Let's read John fifteen verse twelve.

John 15:12-17

12. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

15. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

17. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

In the mind of Jesus, love was to be extended not only to our friends but also to our enemies, as a personal act of mercy, being willing to do good to them hoping for nothing in return. We can't treat our enemies from a quid-pro-quo basis, nor can we use that as the starting point for friendship. Jesus identified His friends as those who would do what He commanded, and similarly our friends today are likely to be those who are in step with what we believe and do. The belief that binds friends together can go beyond faith. Obviously within our family of faith we should find friends, and what we believe and do is also secularly linked to many parts of our life. Some people may think of political affiliations or social sector initiatives that are of personal importance. We tend to connect with people who are similar to us or who complete us. To our friends we know to show love, and Jesus taught we must also do so to our enemies. Luke six verse twenty-seven.

Luke 6:27-36

27. But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

28. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

29. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.

30. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Hebrews tells us to let brotherly love continue, and brotherly love describes the basis of the relationship of what friendship should be, remembering that we could have chance encounters with angels. Of comfort to us is the realization that God

and Jesus Christ will help us and we have no need to fear what people can do to us. Hebrews thirteen verse one.

Hebrews 13:1-6

- 1. Let brotherly love continue.**
- 2. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.**
- 3. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.**
- 4. Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.**
- 5. Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.**
- 6. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.**

Brotherly love is not only a concept for Christians, but an active part of many people who have very close friends. David developed a close friendship with Jonathan who was the son of King Saul, and it looks like it was Jonathan who immediately found a connection in David. We don't know why David clicked in Jonathan's mind, just that this happened. David became closer than a brother to Jonathan, to the point where David became part of the family. Most people have had a very close friend that they tend to spend a lot of time with during various stages of life, and so it was with Jonathan and David, with David becoming like part of the family. First Samuel eighteen verse one.

1 Samuel 18:1-4

- 1. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.**
- 2. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.**
- 3. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.**
- 4. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.**

That close friendship between David and Jonathan transcended the life of Jonathan. After Jonathan was killed in battle by the Philistines, David did not forget about Jonathan. By this time, David had to evade Saul's evil attempts against him multiple times, and if David had forgotten about Jonathan most would link it to the treatment given David by King Saul. Yet, because of the friendship between Jonathan and David, David wanted to show kindness to any remaining family. David connected with Ziba who was a servant of Saul's household, who told him about Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, who had a disability, described as being lame on his feet, using terminology from that era of time. That could indicate some ability to walk, much like some people with cerebral palsy are able to walk.

Because of that friendship with Jonathan, which Jonathan first directed at David, and the continuance of that friendship throughout the remainder of Jonathan's life as evidenced by Jonathan helping David evade King Saul from time to time, to Mephibosheth, David gave the lands owned by Saul, letting Mephibosheth know that he would always have a space with David's household, much like Jonathan worked it out so David would have a space within Saul's household. When David connected with Mephibosheth, he was already a father having a son, Micha. Second Samuel nine verse one.

2 Samuel 9:1-13

- 1. And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?**
- 2. And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he.**
- 3. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.**
- 4. And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.**
- 5. Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.**
- 6. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!**

- 7. And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.**
- 8. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?**
- 9. Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house.**
- 10. Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.**
- 11. Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.**
- 12. And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth.**
- 13. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.**

Even though we may have friends who do not share the faith we have, that does not mean we abandon the faith we have. It is through our continuance in our faith which includes loving one another among many, many things, that we show our love and friendship to God and Jesus Christ. We never use our friendship with other people as a means to abandon the friendship we have with God and Jesus Christ to establish a friendship with this world. To do so would be like abandoning God and Jesus Christ as our best friends, and instead becoming best friends with this world, a world filled with knowledge of good and evil instead of the life.

James tells us that when we encounter conflict within our social circles and congregations, attitudes inconsistent with what is taught in the Bible drive these disagreements. God will resist the proud and show grace to the humble. James four verse one.

James 4:1-6

1. From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

2. Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

3. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

4. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

5. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

6. But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Jesus taught that when we look at social interactions, we need to look beyond quid-pro-quo relationships. We need to consider that if we are socializing with others for a reason that they will have every expectation of being repaid in due time. Instead of how we typically look at our social circle, Jesus taught of the need to include others including the poor and people who were born or acquired disabilities, looking at friendship not through the lens of what we can get from our friends, but what we can give to others. Luke fourteen verse twelve.

Luke 14:12-14

12. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.

13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

14. And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

How we interact and with whom we interact needs to be different than what we see in society. Society often belittles people based on their appearance and with whom they associate, and we cannot allow the judgments of society to change what Jesus taught. Matthew eleven verse sixteen.

Matthew 11:16-19

16. But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

17. And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

18. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

19. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Jesus used the example of a close friend to teach the disciples about prayer and receiving from God. In the example from Luke, Jesus explained that if a person is really a close friend, even if something is inconvenient, a close friend will typically be inconvenienced for the sake of the friendship. Jesus used that example to show that even though our requests of God might seem inconvenient to God, we are still to make those requests of God, knowing that God will give us good gifts. As God gives us good gifts we are to focus our friendships with others through that lens of doing good with our friends, understanding that the Holy Spirit is the best gift that God can give us at this time. Luke eleven verse one.

Luke 11:1-13

1. And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

3. Give us day by day our daily bread.

4. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

5. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

9. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

10. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

11. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12. Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote of the need for the brethren to comfort each other and edify each other. Imagine a circle of friends where when one member has difficulty, all seek to comfort the friend with difficulty and where all work so that all are sustained. Within the Church of God, we are to be doing this with our brethren even though we know the world around us is devolving until we come to the final period of the end time when Jesus returns where right before every imaginable evil we can think of comes to pass. First Thessalonians five verse one.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

1. But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

4. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

7. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10. Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Paul found comfort with the brethren through their mutually shared faith. Typically, we find comfort through those people who understand our situation. In whatever field we work or activities we find ourselves, it is normal to be comforted by people who best understand what we are going through. Paul understood that brethren of the faith would be in the best position to comfort him. Romans one verse eight.

Romans 1:8-14

8. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

9. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

10. Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

11. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

13. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

14. I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

Later in the letter to the Romans, Paul wrote that we should be treating each other with brotherly love, never forgetting that we are part of the family of faith seeking salvation. To all people, people of faith, people not in the faith, as much as is possible, we are to live peaceably with all people. When it comes to people who we consider enemies, we are still to treat them with kindness, so that their conscience can be pricked as we overcome evil with good. Romans twelve verse nine.

Romans 12:9-21

- 9. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.**
- 10. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;**
- 11. Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;**
- 12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;**
- 13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.**
- 14. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.**
- 15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.**
- 16. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.**
- 17. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.**
- 18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.**
- 19. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.**
- 20. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.**
- 21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.**

When we consider with whom we align ourselves, it's important to know if these people will help us or hurt us, and that applies to the friends in our life as well as other situations. If we trust fools to give us business advice, we will probably have a foolish result. If we get business advice from somebody seen as a leader within their field, they will probably give us solid business advice. Similarly if we have friends who through their life experiences can build us up, we will be better as a result for having this person as a friend, and if we choose to associate with people where maybe we are the wisest or most mature, we will probably lose some of what we have. In all that we do we focus our efforts through the lens of righteousness and never evil. Proverbs thirteen verse twenty.

Proverbs 13:20-21

- 20. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.**
- 21. Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed.**

If we want to have friends we have to be willing to be a friend, and there are many who have friends that are closer than family. Proverbs eighteen verse twenty-four.

Proverbs 18:24

24. A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

As we navigate the sea of people in our life and find our friends, very few people will share with others that they are a bad person. Some may share details that show that they have been disappointed in life or that they have self-doubt or low-self-esteem, but very few people when first meeting them will tell you that they are a bad person. Most people like to put a personal spin on the details in their life even if that personal spin distorts the truth. Finding a friend who is faithful is not easy, and sometimes to find that faithful person, it takes a lot of work with deep conversations among many people. Proverbs twenty verse five.

Proverbs 20:5-6

5. Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.

6. Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

Friends are people who may not always agree with us, but when there is disagreement, that disagreement is not founded in deceit or attempts to hurt but through genuine care and concern. Friends will know when their friends are in need and stay close to their friends, and are a pleasant distraction in the life of their friends. Whoever we consider family and friends should always be our family and friends. It's important to keep them close and to be even friendly with our neighbors because we may need to rely on the people living next door at the worst possible time. Proverbs twenty-seven verse six.

Proverbs 27:6-10

6. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

7. The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

8. As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.

9. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

10. Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.

Friends make friends better. Friends never destroy each other. Proverbs twenty-seven verse seventeen.

Proverbs 27:17

17. Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

Abraham was called a friend of God in multiple places in the Bible. Notice what Isaiah wrote in Isaiah forty-one beginning with verse eight.

Isaiah 41:8-10

8. But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

9. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

10. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Jehoshaphat said the same about Abraham. Notice second Chronicles twenty verse five.

2 Chronicles 20:5-7

5. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court,

6. And said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

7. Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?

James explains a little more deeply why Abraham was a friend of God. He was willing to do what God told him and God knew Abraham was a righteous person. If we want to be a friend of God, we too must be looked at by God similarly. James two verse twenty-one.

James 2:21-24

21. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

The full account is given to us in Genesis twenty-two verse one.

Genesis 22:1-19

1. And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

2. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

- 8. And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.**
- 9. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.**
- 10. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.**
- 11. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.**
- 12. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.**
- 13. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.**
- 14. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.**
- 15. And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,**
- 16. And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:**
- 17. That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;**
- 18. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.**
- 19. So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.**

Abraham was a friend of God because he was righteous in the eyes of God being willing to do what God told him. Through the teachings of Jesus we know friendship includes elements of love for other people. Friendship is never a one-sided relationship and even though we have friends, we look to those who are in need and find ways to include them in what we are doing. We are told that some have entertained strangers not knowing they were entertaining angels of God. We should have friends within our circle of faith and it's very likely within our professional circle we will also have friends.

Having friends who are part of this world does not mean we have friendship with this world. This world which is based on the knowledge of good and evil is at odds with the Kingdom of God which is based on the tree of life. As Christians we know the society in which we live in flawed, greatly flawed, and will at the return of Jesus Christ find itself opposed to all that is righteousness and love as this world will oppose Jesus Christ. Let us rejoice in the friendship we can have with God the Father and Jesus Christ as we submit ourselves to them and our future place in the Kingdom of God.

Thank you for joining us today. God-willing we'll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.