

Does Jesus call you, “Friend”?

John 15:12-17

John 15 is all about relationships. Verses 1-11 describes the relationship between the vine and the branches, Christ and believers. Verses 12-17 discusses the relationship of branch to branch, believer to believer. Verses 18-27 goes further by describing the relationship of the vine and the branches to the world.

The middle section (12-17) moves from the believing disciples' relationship with God to his or her relationship with other believers. Jesus explains that *friendship with God is demonstrated through love for other believers, obedience to Christ's commands, and fruitful service.*

We are to love one another as Christ loved us (12-13).

Jesus repeats this command (13:34-35) because the disciples argued over who was greater and were unwilling to wash each other's feet.

The standard for our love is Christ's example of sacrificial service.

Love for one another reaches its zenith when one willingly sacrifices his or her life for that friend.

Christ not only died for his friends, he also died for his enemies (Romans 5:8-10).

Obedience to the commands of Scripture defines whether or not we are truly Jesus' friend (14).

All believers are God's friends in one sense, but abiding believers are God's special friends on a deeper level, because they seek to obey him consistently.

Our relationship with God has changed because he shared his plans with us (15).

Jesus moves from a master/slave relationship to a friend/friend relationship by sharing his plans with us.

Jesus chose us for a task and a purpose (16).

Jesus wants us to produce fruit that lasts.

Jesus linked prayer and fruit bearing in a cause-and-effect relationship.

Jesus reiterates the command to love one another (17).

By repeating the command, Jesus emphasizes the absolute importance of loving one another. The repeated command also sets the stage for his discussion of the opposition that the world throws at believers (18-27).

Abraham was called God's friend (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23) because he obeyed God. Abraham was also the servant of God (Genesis 26:24). God revealed his plans to Abraham about Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:17). Moses likewise was God's friend, for "the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend (Exodus 33:11; cf. Deuteronomy 34:10). This type of intimacy with God is open to all in Christ.

How would you characterize your relationship with God?