

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE Friendship with God

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE James 4

SYNOPSIS God is our friend, but what does it take for us to be his friend?

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ Friendship With God

“Friend” is a very interesting description of a relationship between a man and God. It is an intimate idea which conveys a sense of closeness, trust, and comradery. Is such a relationship possible? Can we enjoy that same kind of relationship with God? Yes! Last week we reviewed VBS...

God is a friend who’s real.

God is a friend who loves.

God is a friend we can trust.

God is a friend forever.

God is a friend for everyone.

So, we know God is our friend, but what does it take for us to be God’s friend? Everyone has the choice to either be friends with God or friends with the world.

☞ **James 4:4** NLT

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.

Now, this isn't saying that we shouldn't be friendly toward people that aren't Christians. We are supposed to reach out to them. However, there is a world system that is very anti-God, which is becoming more and more obvious. The world system is incredibly self-focused and always pursuing personal pleasure. When we are conforming to the patterns of this world system and loving the things of this life too much, we are actually pitting ourselves against God.

☞ So, an obvious characteristic of a friend of God, is to **give him priority** over everything else. Elsewhere in the scriptures we are described as the bride of Christ. Successful marriages depend on the couple being good friends with each other. You enjoy each other's company; you want to do what they want to do; you want time together. There may be other friends for each of you, but your spouse is your closest friend. That is one key ingredient which makes a marriage work. So, to be God's friend, give him priority.

Then, James gives a few more characteristics of a person who is a friend of God.

☞ **Show Humility**

Verse 5 says that **God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble**. If you really want to be God's friend, humility is required. Nobody likes a know-it-all, or a person who is full of themselves. And, in God's case, there's no fooling him anyway. He knows you better than you know yourself, so be humble: not proud; not arrogant; not self-focused; rather, open; honest; vulnerable and transparent. Admit you're not perfect! Confess your sins! Ask for help when you need it!

There's plenty of evidence to suggest that the devil used to be God's highest angel, but pride ruined him and he fell. He actually wanted to compete with God – that's the ultimate in pride and self-focus. This takes us back to the point of priority. If God is not your priority, then you are likely self-focused and in competition with God. Show humility.



☞ Practice Submission

v. 7 Therefore submit to God. A friend of God is someone who submits to Him and His authority; who ☞ reads and **obeys the Bible**... he's already given us a lot of instruction on how best to live a godly life. If you're not willing to align with what he's already said, why do you think he would want to share anything deeper? If God says to honor your parents, you honor your parents. If He says to love your enemies, you love your enemies. You submit to whatever He says!

Submission means you are someone who doesn't insist on getting your own way. You are willing, ☞ perhaps even eager to **do what he wants**. And, submission shows up in other relationships as well. So, it means you are one who respects godly authority in others.

Submission means obedience, compliance, surrender. We often filter our submission through the lens of how we feel about it. "Do I agree with the person in authority? Then I'll submit." But a wise man once explained that that attitude is not really submission; it's simply agreement. Submission comes into play when you don't fully agree or you don't fully understand. But you go ahead and allow the other person to lead. That's submission. And, a friend of God is willing to submit to his authority whether you fully understand or agree or not.

☞ Resist the devil

Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (v.7b). The devil is the enemy of God, and will try to get you to rebel against him. Resist his temptations when he tries to get you to turn against God! He does it in many subtle ways, but we know his ultimate intention is to drive a wedge between you and God.

Naomi is my best friend in this world, and I can tell you that if someone is tearing her down or trying to get me to be upset and angry toward her, then I'm not going to hang around that person anymore. And, that's exactly what the devil is doing with his temptations and twisting of God's word. So, resist that!

☞ Get Closer to God

v. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. True friends support each other. True friends sacrifice for each other. True friends are dependable – they're always there when needed. How close to God do you want to be? You can determine your friendship with Him! **Jeremiah 29:13** says, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

Psalm 63:1

O God, you are my God; early will I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water"

In any friendship, it's hard to stay close when it's one sided. When you're the only that ever reaches out, who tries to get together, and the other person makes no effort, then that friendship is going to suffer. In contrast, real friends want to get closer and spend more time together. They both work at it. God wants his friends to draw close.

☞ Purify

Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (v.8b) Psalm 24:3-4 says, "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart..."



When we play with dirt, our hands get dirty. We need to be washed clean. How many of you wives out there are oh so happy to give your husband a big old bear hug right after he's been working in a hot, dirty environment? You still love him, but you might say, "clean up first; then we can talk."

Likewise, living in this sinful world we get ourselves dirty, and need a good cleaning. How do we do that? Through prayer, **repentance** and **confession**: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9).

Friends confide in one another. Depending on the degree of our friendship with others, we tend to hold back certain information. There are very few people we share everything with. Only our closest friends get that kind of treatment. And that's what God is looking for in us.

See King David's prayer of repentance in Psalm 51. After confessing his sins and transgressions, he says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." That's repentance and a desire for purity.

Here in James v. 9 he says, "**Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.**" In other words, repent (turn from) your sin with godly sorrow! Yes, there is joy in the Kingdom of God, but there are also seasons of mourning over sin. In any friendship, when you've done something wrong, or hurt the other person, you will **make amends** in order to keep the friendship.

Show Kindness

v. 11 do not slander one another. Have you ever been around someone who is constantly running others down? The people being run down may not even be your friends, but the attitude gets wearisome. You probably wonder what they say about you to other people!

Our relationship with God is almost always tied to our relationship with other people. It started with the 10 Commandments. The first few are all about relating with God; then, the rest are all about relating with other people. When Jesus was asked about the greatest command, he sort of merged two together when he said, "love God and love people."

When you are unkind and critical of others, you are making yourself out to be greater than God. v. 12 says **there is only one Lawgiver and Judge**. This is especially true when you don't know the whole story; you don't know the motive behind someone's actions. Only God does. Now, this doesn't mean you just accept and endorse everyone's behavior. But it does mean that you **don't tear someone down** to others, **ruining their reputation**. You show kindness. After all, isn't that what you would want? So, show kindness.

Then James wraps it up with the understanding that this life is extremely short. It's just a vapor that appears for a moment and then disappears. So, make the most of it! And, that does not mean to live it up, enjoy the ride, do everything you ever wanted to do. No! making the most of this life is about being friends with God! David had his "one thing" that he desired, and it was to be close to God. Mary chose what was better than her sister Martha's choice. She chose to sit at the feet of Jesus, while Martha was worried about many things, but Mary made the best choice.



☞ In this short life, **make the best choice; do the one thing – get to know the Lord more and more and more.** Spend time with him. God is your friend and would love for you to **be his friend** as well. So...

Practice humility and submission

Resist the devil

Draw close to God

Purify your heart and mind with repentance

Be kind to others

Those are the characteristics of people whom God welcomes as friends. Remember, you can be friends with this world-system or you can be friends with God. From the Bible's perspective, it really is one or the other. So, choose God!