

# How to Become the Friend of God

Our relationship with God is not unchanging or *should* not be unchanging – it should grow and develop!

When we are first called by God and come to know Him, he is indeed an awesome and distant figure. We have then, as we come to repentance, a healthy FEAR of God and of breaking His commandments. This FEAR or AWE inspires us to change our lives around and come to the first stage of our relationship with God. We can make no progress without it.

1. God is our master and we are the servants. eg Job 1:8 *'And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth [ shuns or stays away from] evil?'* Acts 9:31, *'Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.'* This is the basis of our relationship with God. It brings us to a realisation that God is high above us and His ways are sometimes hard for us to understand, because our minds, in comparison, are so feeble. In humility we learn simply to follow His instructions, as does a servant the instructions of his master. Matthew 10:24-25, *'The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.'*
2. Over time, we come to repentance and baptism, as God draws us closer to Him. After baptism, He begets us through the laying on of hands, into His family, as we receive the first little amount of God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). It is not that we lose the foundational FEAR of God, but rather that an added dimension now exists, that of the child to his father, Romans 8:9, 14-16, *'But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' .....* *'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are **the sons of God**. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the **children of God**.'* Now, as children we can expect the love and mercy that an ideal father would show. Think of your own relationship with your children. Nothing can destroy that relationship. Children, at various ages can be expected to make serious, sometimes wilful mistakes, but we teach, we encourage, we forgive, we help them in any way we can, because they are our children, they have that special relationship – they are our creation. That is exactly how God feels about you and me, once He has begotten you into His family. Luke 17:3-4, *'Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.'*
3. However, once again the relationship should progress. Our children, as little ones, are dependent upon us. We do everything for them. But as time goes by, they grow, they develop, they come to maturity and with maturity can come a new relationship. And so it is with God's children. John 15:13-15, *'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, **if ye do whatsoever I command you**. 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.*’ The ideal we should have is to progress to become the Friend of God.

It is not that we have lost the FEAR of God. It is not that we are no longer sons or daughters, these things remain. It is that with spiritual maturity we are enabled to come to a deeper relationship with God. We understand His character, we begin to see the way He thinks, we share His interests and His goals. We can enter into this relationship because we have, over time, PROVED God is trustworthy, we have seen the evidence of His love and care in our lives, we have learned to rely on Him – we have developed FAITH and trust, - we know Him, and have become friends. James 2:23, *‘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.’*

Not all reach this deep relationship with their Creator, but it should be our goal. Moses made many mistakes in his life, as did Abraham, but he reached that goal – Exodus 33:11, *‘And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.....’*

Some of us have not been able to have that closeness with our own physical father, and maybe we never will, because friendship, true friendship, has certain requirements. So - what makes a friend?

- Conversation
- Common interests
- Shared experiences

Remember that we were once God’s enemies. Colossians 1:21, *‘And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.’* James 4:4, *‘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.’*

Conversation is the first stage – but conversation with God is not all that easy. It is harder to talk to Him than it is to a person because –

1. We cannot see Him
2. Your often position on your knees
3. The conversation seems one way

*Matthew 6:6, ‘But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.’*

*Matthew 26:39, ‘And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.’*

*1 Kings 8:22, ‘And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven.’*

Prayer takes effort and willpower.

We all tend to shy away from hard things, so God reminds us:-

1 Thessalonians 5:17, *‘Pray without ceasing.’* (Aim to do it every day!)

Colossians 4:2, *'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.'*

Jesus showed us the way – Matthew 6: 7, 9-13,

*'But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.'*

*'After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.'*

It helps to divide your prayer into three sections – PRAISE (to God), GOD'S WORK and PLAN, and YOUR and your BRETHREN's needs. David, a man after God's own heart, often prayed three times daily; morning, noon and night.

Psalm 55:17, *'Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.'*

If you don't know what to say to God, concentrate on PRAISE, until you have begun to build the relationship. Read psalm 147 as an example of the many things you can praise God about – try reading it aloud to God as a prayer, on your knees, and many of the other psalms too. But prayer can take place any time, any place, anyhow.

Don't forget to pray to God just because things are going well, either, Deuteronomy 6:10-14, *'And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you.'*

God loves you as you do your own children. Are we not sometimes hurt and disappointed when they fail to talk to us? God loves to hear you talk. He wants to hear about your life, even though he knows it all already, because He is concerned to see that we desire closeness with Him.

- There is no excuse for ungratefulness. Think of all the blessings God provides the senses – eyes, nose, ears, taste, and touch.
- God's beautiful creation, your calling and knowledge.
- The gift of His Holy Spirit.
- Your family, home, clothes, food, etc
- Your general health and sound mind
- A peaceful land to live in where you can openly worship God
- A calling to serve God to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom to others.
- Don't ever take things for granted
- Remember Christ's sacrifice, and the blessings from that – forgiveness, healing, mercy and the peace of mind that comes through God's Spirit. Philippians 4:6-7, *'Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be*

*made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'*

Everyone can praise God, but it should be the start of our regular prayers, each day.

Next comes the Work for God. **“Thy Kingdom come.** Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

We need to SHARE God’s interests to become His FRIEND: this is God’s priority interest. If we are to be friends of God then it must be ours also.

Our task, as it says at the very end of Matthew, is to take the gospel into all nations and baptise those God calls into His family. Only when this is finally completed, can God’s Kingdom come, Matthew 24:14, *‘And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’*

To this end our prayers for the Work must ask for God’s power and inspiration for His Church. The ministers need inspiration. But mainly we need to pray for God’s Kingdom and then will come the end of Satan’s evil reign on this earth!

Also, to become a friend of God we need to share experiences together. How do we do that? - by inviting Him into our lives on a daily basis, praying for His presence with ourselves and our brethren. Christ tells us to pray for our daily bread; - that we can be forgiven, even as we forgive those who sin against us; that we can be protected from Satan’s spiritual broadcast.

These requests show God that we look to Him as our only hope. We are learning to trust His strength and power rather than our own. 1 Peter 5:7, *‘Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.’* God shares our trials and joys. He shares our experiences from day to day.

Aspects we can mention in our prayers for the brethren could include –

- God’s Holy Spirit to help us do God’s will
- Adequate food and drink
- Homes and comfort
- Peace of mind and prosperity
- Protection as we travel
- Protection from accidents and danger
- Healing, health and strength
- Relief from pain, worry and stress
- Repentance of sins
- Wisdom to please God and to do our work
- Our individual brethren
- Our personal needs
- Forgiveness for others

If we ask for evidence of God’s presence by His Divine intervention in these areas, then we gain FAITH as a gift into the bargain, with peace, Isaiah 26:3-4, *‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.*

It is only by our contact with our Father in Heaven, through study of His word and prayer, that we strengthen and increase the conduit through which the Holy Spirit flows, enabling us to act more

powerfully for Him in our lives, as we ask these things in the name, and by the authority of Jesus Christ.

So, brethren, again, what makes a friend?

Conversation, common interests, and shared experiences.

All these are achievable through prayer – and Christ has given us the pattern :- praise, God's Work, and brethren.

If you follow His advice, you can obtain that deeper relationship with your creator which was enjoyed by the patriarchs. You too can become the friend of God!

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