



GRACE

We Welcome Our Online Listeners

IDENTITY MATTERS

Fruit: True Indwelt Friendships



Scripture Reading (Please Stand)

He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" (Mat 13:54-56)

Part 1

WEDDING
SOCIAL AREA OF LIFE

Fruit: True Indwelt Friendship

True Friendship

To have true friends (an exchange of identity) is a great personal blessing. Let's face it, when you add up all your relationships on earth, most people can count on one hand true friends that are thicker than blood. Some of the most painful experiences of life come to us through broken friendships or having those we love turn on us at the first signs of disillusionment. But friendships are often strained because God's principles regarding true friendship are ignored or simply violated.

Speaking To A Friend

Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent. (Exo 33:11)

God spoke to Moses not only face to face but as a man speaks to a dear friend. Now he is faced with the ultimate evidence of friendship – who will help the leader carry on the Lord's plan unto the next generation. Moses knew that this friend would need to be someone who not only was loyal to him but was blessed with the same vision and purpose - someone who he trusted in an exchange of identity. With that, Moses questions the Lord with this matter.
Then Moses said to the LORD,

"See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.' (Exo 33:12)



Finding God's Favor

You would think that Moses would be able to look in front of him and see the answer – Joshua being in the tent and refusing to leave Moses's side as he wrestled with this question. Many times, we are blinded by our own struggles, which blocks us from the obvious solutions. Right there in the midst of Moses was his closest friend – his servant Joshua. But Moses's struggle was much deeper, he wanted to make sure he had the favor of his greatest friend, the Lord Himself. He becomes so bold that he asks the Lord to show Himself.

The LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name." Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen." (Exo 33:17-23)



Action Birthed In True Friendship

Moses learned quickly that no man can see the face of God before Christ Himself was delivered to the earth and returned to God. So what does God do, he hears the voice of his servant, friend, and grants Moses the privilege of letting Moses see His back side. Why is all this so important, because God desires to put action where his friendship is. Since in the Hebrew friendship means an exchange of identity, Moses wanted to see with his own eyes what he was gaining in the exchange.

Another case in point is Abraham, who is called the friend of God. The simple fact of God choosing him due to his full commitment to God in faith.

"But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend... (Isa 41:8)



Friendship Evidenced Through Commitment

- ✝ Friendship is evidenced through commitment and commitment is proven through the fiery furnace of life. Such was the case with Abraham when God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, we see God considering whether or not to tell Abraham His plans. God does decide to do so on the basis of Abraham's steadfast commitment to God and His ways.
- ✝ The LORD said, *"Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."* (Gen 18:17-19)
- ✝ Since it would be wise of us to base friendship on the terms and conditions of those of God, we can embrace this – a friend first, is one who is committed to you and expresses that commitment in steadfast loyalty, under all conditions. Just as God needs the assurance that His friends will not bail on Him when the fiery trials come, we must have the same level of assurance when it comes to those we call friends. My counsel, for whatever that is worth, never invest your life and mission of God in a man or woman who has not been proven with such commitment.
- ✝ The simple facts are a friend loves at all times and especially in times of adversity – who show their loyalty the most during such times.
- ✝ *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* (Pro 17:17)

Action Birthed In True Friendship

- ✝ A true friend birthed through God really does stick closer than a brother. Family members are rarely the chosen friends from God. Not to say this can't happen but truth being said, siblings and/or family members are known to bail on God's vision bearers due to the sin of competition and comparison, plus they tend to look at the messenger through the weaknesses of their childhood.
- ✝ *He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" (Mat 13:54-56)*
- ✝ Jesus said it quite clearly when He said this: *And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." (Mat 13:57)*
- ✝ Jesus choose not to conduct ministry in his hometown or household due to their unbelief. Keep in mind that James (book of James), an unbeliever prior to Jesus' resurrection, is the only brother that fully embraced Jesus's teachings and faithfully followed his brother (Jesus) and this wasn't until his brother proved His teachings after He went to the Cross (John 7:3-5; 1 Cor. 15:7; Acts 15:13; 21:17, 18 & James 1:1). Mary seemed to be the only family member that believed and faithfully stayed with Him throughout His earthly ministry. The conclusive facts are Jesus did not have the support of His own family.

Prophet Abandoned By Locals

- ✝ The question the locals asked where then did this man get all these things is actually the best question to ask. If they could have gotten beyond looking upon Jesus as a local brother to James, Joseph, Simon and Judas, they could have discovered they were staring at the face of God. But needless to say, they could not and thus Jesus stopped ministering because of their unbelief.
- ✝ True friends do not compare nor look upon the prophet as human but rather how God is using the prophet to proclaim the message of the Living God. This kind of disbelief blocks God from using the prophet to reveal His miracles and Truths.
- ✝ *And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.* (Mat 13:58)
- ✝ So where did Jesus find His faithful friend that He was able to entrust his ministry, as well as the care of His mother? None other than His beloved friend John, son of Zebedee – a former fisherman who became the beloved of Jesus and author of the Gospel of John, First, Second & Third John, and the book of Revelation. Many count it strange that Jesus would skip over His own blood brothers and pass the care of His mother down to a member/friend outside of the family, in fact, not one of Jesus' brothers were a part of the 12 disciples. And even in the end, when Jesus was arrested all the disciples deserted Him and fled, except for one – Jesus' beloved friend and disciple John, son of Zebedee.



IDENTITY MATTERS

Jesus said that whoever wants to follow Him, that person must deny himself (identity of the flesh) and take up his cross (identity in Christ) and then follow Him. He said that if one wants to save (preserve his own identity) his life he will lose it, but if he loses his life (identity) for Jesus and for the mission of the gospel, he will save (exchange) it. Even though the remaining eleven disciples who claimed they were friends of Jesus and made repetitive claims of loyalty, their commitment level was tested and they failed in their proclamations of friendship. Not to worry though, Jesus knew in due time that 10 of the 11 (Judas exempt) would return once they discovered the true meaning of friendship.

When you understand the true meaning of friend, the believer is then able to observe the mission and purpose of true friendship, which is an exchange of identity in order to pass down your most valued relationship(s) and ministry. Ministry and mission cannot be carried on until friendship is tried and tested by the fire of adversity.

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