

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH: A STUDY OF BIBLICAL FRIENDSHIPS

LESSON 1

BIBLICAL FRIENDSHIPS

**Genesis 22:1-19; Judges 4:4-7; 1 Samuel 18:1-4;
Ruth 1:16-17; Daniel 3:16-18; Acts 9:26-27;
16:1-3; John 15:12-15**

The Bible is full of friendships and the positive attributes found among those friends. True character is shown in the trust, devotion, support, cooperation, loyalty, service, and reliance of men and women in these biblical friendships. From the first mention of friends in the Genesis to Paul's benediction in 2 Timothy, these attributes are clearly seen in the relationships among many individuals of the Bible.

Abraham's faithful obedience to God caused him to receive the ultimate compliment, being called "the friend of God" (James 2:23 NKJV). Obedience is an attribute shared by friends. Jesus said in John 15:14, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." Jesus also taught in John 15:13 that no greater love can be shown than to sacrifice one's life for friends. Of course, He later proved that at the cross, giving us the ultimate example of love.

King David was one who found himself with many friends. One of the most familiar friendships depicted in all of Scripture is his and Jonathan's friendship. First Samuel 18:1 summarizes that close relationship. The Bible describes David's popularity and says he went "out and came in before" the people, strengthening relationships with all Israel (v. 16). David displayed loyalty when he shared the spoils of victory with his men (chap. 30). He also showed gratitude and loyalty in his relationships with Barzillai and Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 19). David was a relationship builder, as evidenced by the many who paid tribute to him during and after his reign as king.

Other friendships in the Old Testament reveal character, devotion, and cooperation. The unified

character of Daniel and his friends was shown through their trials and triumphs. Rarely has any friendship shown the devotion of Ruth to her mother-in-law, Naomi. God's power to deliver was seen by the Israelites through the cooperative partnership of a prophetess and judge, Deborah, and a leader of men in battle, Barak.

Paul was one who had many friends throughout his ministry. His relationship with Barnabas helped take the gospel to the ends of the world (Acts 1:8). He worked in cooperation with other evangelists such as Titus, Apollos, Silas, and others, yet his most notable and closest relationship was with Timothy, his "son in the faith."

Jesus gave us the ultimate example of friends serving friends by the washing of His disciples' feet in John 13. The mere thought of the Son of God lowering Himself to that level made His friend Peter uncomfortable. Peter's love for Jesus is shown many times in Scripture, no doubt a brotherly love and later a sacrificial love that grew as a result of their close friendship.

Many more examples of friends and their characteristics are scattered throughout the Bible. This study will focus on some of the more prominent biblical friendships. It is not an exhaustive study; however, many traits shown in these relationships should be emulated today. For one to be a friend, she must show herself to be friendly (Proverbs 18:24). This study will examine biblical friendships and traits that can be gleaned from them.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was known as a friend of God?
2. What statement in Genesis 22 leads one to believe Abraham did not know God's plan to spare Isaac?

3. What did Jesus do as an act of service prior to making the statements to His disciples in John 15?

10. What do you feel is the most valuable trait a friend can possess? What trait do you need to display that could improve your friendships?

4. Name three friends of David.

5. David's relationship with God was special ("a man after [God's] own heart," Acts 13:22). Do you think David's friends could see his heart as well?

6. How does the Bible describe the relationship between Jonathan and David?

7. Why did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego not fear the furnace?

8. Did Naomi expect Ruth to go with her back to the Israelites?

9. Name three friends of Paul.