



Recently, and actually for a while now, I have been thinking, or you can say, reminiscing, over the times in my life. In those times, there have been many, many people who have become what I consider good friends. When I use that term, “friend” it seems so mundane and it does not express what I truly mean to express. To me they (you) are more than just friends.

Over the years through time, situations and circumstances we have drifted apart from each other. However, in my mind, I still think upon them all as my friends. I truly believe that friendship is a life long commitment, even if time, distance and circumstances have allowed us to drift apart from each other. I believe friendships are a life long relationship.

Let’s take a look in the Bible to get a better understanding of the term “friend” or “friendship.” As we look up the term “friend,” we see that in the Greek it is the word, “*philos*” (fee'-los). This means to be friendly to someone, wish him that some one well; an associate; he who associates familiarly with one, a companion. It means to be one of the bridegroom's friends, who on his behalf, asks the hand of the bride to be married to the groom. This “friend” also renders various services in giving the closing blessing to the marriage.

In the Hebrew (*‘āhab* - aw-hav') it means to like and even love something; to associate with; to be a companion. In the Old Testament, we see many times, and it is expressed many times, that there are good friends and unfortunately, there can be bad or even evil friendships.

We know that now through Jesus, we are more than just “friends of God” but rather we are now part of the family of God – We are children of the most high God. The beautiful thing is that those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior are **more than friends of God**. We are adopted into the family of God and are now children of God.

Ephesians 1:3-5 tells us, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”*

We know that we are more than servants and we are more than just friends to our God. We are now, through Jesus, a part of God's family and we will live with Him in His "house" for eternity (John 14:2,3). We know that the highest form of love, before Jesus came, that man was capable of was the aspect of "brotherly love." However, now through Jesus, we can walk in and experience even a higher aspect of love. This is called "agape" love.

The term "agape" is a Greek word. Unlike our English word for "love," the Greeks have many words that we translate to the word "love." We must note that the word "agape" is not anywhere used in the New Testament to refer to romantic or sexual love. Nor does it refer to close friendships or brotherly love, for which the Greek word "*philia or philos*" is used.

"Agape" love has been elevated to the point where it now involves being totally faithful, totally committed, and most importantly it refers to fact that it is an act of the person's will to love something or someone. That something or someone is God as well as loving all others. So much so that you are willing to give your life for the both of them. It is distinguished from the other types of love by its lofty moral nature and strong character.

"Agape" love is beautifully described in 1 Corinthians 13. This kind of love (agape) is declared as being, "*Charity (love) suffers long, and is kind; charity (love) envies not; charity (love) vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Charity (love) never fails...*"

Agape is almost always used to describe the love that is of and from God. God's very nature is love itself: "*God is love*" (1 John 4:8). God does not merely love; He is love. Everything God does flows from His character which is love.

This is now how we are to love. We are to love God and love others - unconditionally. Agape love expresses our love for our God (Luke 10:27). It expresses a servant's faithful respect to his master (Matthew 6:24) and a man's attachment to things (John 3:19). Such should be our faithful and respectful service unto our God Jesus declared that there is no greater love (agape) than to give your life for a friend. We are to give it all unto our God.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) Jesus declares what that love truly entails. It was stated in the Old Testament and then Jesus reiterated it to us in the New Testament. The two commandments that God gave the world are to love God with all your heart, soul and all that is within you; and the second commandment is just like the first – we are to love others in the same way. They go “hand in hand.”

That is how we love God; by loving others. When we truly love others it is only then that we truly love our God. This is the character of a true child of God; and it is the characteristic of a very, very good friend.

Having the right friends is key, and discernment is required: *“The righteous choose their friends carefully”* (Proverbs 12:26). In Scripture, we see what a true friend should be:

- A true friend shows love, no matter what (Proverbs 17:17).
- A true friend gives heartfelt advice, bringing joy to the heart (Proverbs 27:9).
- A true friend rebukes when necessary, but the correction is done in love (Proverbs 27:5–6).
- A true friend influences, enlivens, and sharpens (Proverbs 27:17).
- A true friend avoid gossip (Proverbs 16:28).
- A true friend forgives and does not hold grudges (Proverbs 17:9).
- A true friend is loyal (Proverbs 18:24).
- A true friend helps in time of need (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12).

A *“friend who sticks closer than a brother”* offers unwavering loyalty, commitment, and support, even surpassing the bonds of the natural family. This “friend” is a constant source of strength, providing both emotional resilience and practical assistance during challenging times.

Proverbs 18:24 tells us, *“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.”* The ESV states it this way, *“A man of many companions **may come to ruin**, but there is a **friend** who sticks closer than a brother.”* From this scripture, we can see that there are two kinds of “friends.”

There is the friend who exists because you have something to offer and give to them such as a material gift or popularity-by-association. But, if you do not meet their expectations you can, and probably will, come to ruin. However, there is that friend who exists due to genuine love and true friendship who is truly even closer than a brother.

This scripture is simply telling the reader that there are two types of friends. There are those who are “friends” as long as they can get something from you. A true friend is someone that can be counted on when you need them. This friend is steadfast. He or she will be there for you more so than even a family member. Brotherhood is one of the strongest relationships we know. However, a true friend who sticks closer than a brother, is a trustworthy friend, indeed.

As previously mentioned, there are those who are good friends **but** we must watch out for and be careful of those “friends” which are not so good for us. The Bible gives warnings about the wrong types of friends. We are not to be friends with a hot-tempered person, for example (Proverbs 22:24–25). Proverbs 1:10–19 and 4:14–19 warn against those who entice us to do wrong and evil things. Hmmm.....

We should not associate with evildoers, no matter how great the promised reward or how appealing their “friendship” seems to be. Those whose “feet rush to sin” should be avoided at all costs. The path they choose is no place for a true believer whose choice should be to follow the “path of the righteous.” Only that path leads you to a true “friendship” with God.

But as we said earlier there are those who are our friends who are “*closer than a brother.*” So what does that mean? The greatest friend anyone could possibly have is Jesus Christ. Jesus needs to be our example when it comes to being a “good friend” and knowing when we have a “good friend.” He gladly calls us “friends.” Jesus proved His commitment and affection to that “friendship” for us in a convincing way. He died on the cross for each of us.

Let’s read John 15:13-15 as it states, “*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. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*”

Jesus is our example when it comes to being a good friend and knowing when we have a good friend. He is our example of being a good “friend” to others and what a “good friend” is to us. All we are to do is to follow His ways and do what He has commanded us which is found in the Word of God.

To be called Jesus’s servant is an immeasurable privilege. Yet, Jesus confers to us even a greater honor. He brings us even closer. He calls each of those who truly believe in Him, His “friend.” Jesus is our exalted King **and** He is our truest friend.

This doesn’t minimize his glory but rather it magnifies it. Only understanding His love, grace and mercy, can we truly see how our King, Jesus, now chooses to welcome all of us who were sinners, not only into his family but we are now to be His “friends.”

A wonderful biblical example of this type of closer-than-a-brother friendship is what existed between David and Jonathan. They became close friends following the battle in which David killed Goliath. Despite the many hardships both men faced, they remained faithful to one another as friends and protected one another from harm. Jonathan even risked his life interceding for David before his father, King Saul, who sought to kill David.

After Jonathan’s death, David wrote a lament for his friend: *“How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.”* (2 Samuel 1:25–26). Their friendship was stronger than David’s relationship with anyone else.

The friendship between David and Jonathan was a “covenant” relationship. In 1Samuel 18:1-5, we read of David and Jonathan forming an agreement – a covenant. In this covenant agreement, Jonathan was to be second in command in David’s future reign, and David promised to protect Jonathan’s family (1 Samuel 20:16-17, 42; 23:16-18).

It was not about who was in command but rather it was about a true relationship of friendship. Jonathan knew what David was to become and he willfully yielded to God’s plan for his friend. Unfortunately, many unlearned people have taken this relationship to mean something perverted. That we MUST totally disagree with.

They formed an unbreakable covenant between the two of them which united them as one – in sincere and in the highest aspect of being a true “friend” to each other. (1Samuel 18:3) In their relationship we can see the quality and commitment of a true friendship.

In 1Samuel 18:4, we read that Jonathan gave David his clothes and military garb. The significance of this gift was that Jonathan, who was Saul’ son and would therefore become the next king when Saul died, recognized that it should be David who would be king of Israel. Rather than being envious or jealous, Jonathan submitted to God’s will and sacrificed his own right to the throne.

The account of David and Jonathan is an example of a true biblical relationship and friendship. True friendship, according to the Bible, involves loyalty, sacrifice, compromise, and even brotherly attachment. That is what we should learn from David and Jonathan. They were friends, but they were more, they were covenant friends.

Actually, in the Bible, that is what true friendship really meant. It was much different than today’s understanding of “friendship.” Unfortunately, therefore, we miss out on the correct understanding of what a true friend is and should be to us in this hour. “Friendship” was actually a “covenant” term. True Biblical “friendship” meant that they were as “one” and that they were bound to each other to guard, protect and help each other...even to die for each other. They would also have “all things in common.”

Jesus has promised us that He would, *“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”* (Hebrews 13:5) That is the definition of a true covenant friendship. We are always to be there for each other if and when we are called upon and needed. Even if we haven’t seen each other or been together for a while. We are still bound by a “covenant friendship.”

Why am I writing this essay on friends and friendships? It is because as I look over my life, I have been remembering the very good friendships that the Lord has allowed me to have. For whatever reason, unfortunately, for too many of them, we do not see each other nor do we even get to speak with each other. Not because of a problem or bad feelings but simply because of time, events and life scenarios that have changed and then have ultimately separated us.

I am of the belief that true friends may not see each other often or sometimes they may never see each other again in this lifetime. However, to me at least, I remember them well and they are and will always be considered “covenant friends” to me.

To all my “friends” I pray that if we do not have the opportunity to get together and see each other or talk to each other in this life time, that one day we will be able to “catch up” with each other in heaven. We will rejoice in our salvation and we will rejoice in our everlasting friendship for we are truly friends, forever!!! Oh, what a joy that will be!!!

Yes, I am looking forward to that time!!!