

Names of God from the Bible

32 – Friend

All God's Names are eternal names – so He is still Friend for us today.

Reading: Exodus 33:7-11

The word 'friend' denotes a relationship. In fact, a close, if not, intimate relationship. I think there can be a huge difference between my saying I know someone and the reality of whether they know me.

Social networks boast of 'friends'. We can see people so often in the media that we subconsciously think of them as people we know, and thus they must know us as well. When people ask me if I know someone, I always try and make the distinction between whether I know of them, I know them or they know me. Each answer reflects a different level of knowledge and relationship.

We all know of famous people, whether in the entertainment industry or sports arena, whether they are high profile business people or politicians. Then there is that circle of acquaintances we know and, finally, there are those who know us deeper than any of those levels.

However, friendship goes even deeper. I may know hundreds of people in my workplace, either as work-colleagues or customers, and yet few would be classed as friends. I may know thousands of people in my church, but again few of them may be real friends.

The writer of the Book of Proverbs suggests *"a friend loves at all times"* and *"there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."* Most of us would agree with the definition that a good or true friend is someone who knows the worst about us and yet loves us just the same. Friendship is tested, not so much through the easy times as the tough times.

I wonder how many friends Moses had. Joshua was a long-standing colleague who had been through amazing experiences with Moses and they appeared to be friends. Aaron and Miriam were probably close, being relatives, and were probably friends too, irrespective of their jealousy and Aaron's debacle over the golden calf rebellion. Jethro, his father-in-law, was sufficiently close for Moses to accept his advice, but it seems to me that Moses only had a few friends. Leadership can be very lonely at times.

Nevertheless, there was Someone who was his Friend. Indeed, God calls Himself Moses' Friend. Moses would converse with God as one who converses with their friend. How close a relationship was that? As we read the Pentateuch, we get a glimpse of the sort of relationship Moses had with God, and I would suggest it was a whole lot closer than mine. Moses moved in from the informational level right into the most intimate, of expressing his thoughts, concerns and desires.

Like Abraham, Moses got so close to God that he debated issues with God and gave God the benefit of his advice. Reading some of his comments, you could be forgiven for thinking Moses told God off.

Moses' relationship with God was outstanding and quite unique, particularly when we consider, at the time, that God was held in absolute awe, and recognised as Someone you didn't mess or trifle with, and live.

I find it fascinating that when Jesus compared the religious leaders' reaction to John the Baptist's

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ministry and their reaction to His own, He said, “*John came neither eating bread or drinking wine and you say ‘He has a demon’. The Son of Man came eating and drinking and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’*” And that is exactly what Jesus was – a friend to tax collectors, prostitutes, adulterers and the demon-possessed.

What an awesome thought. The Holy and Righteous God wants to be your Friend and mine. Have you ever considered the depth of God’s mercy and grace that makes it possible? Here we are in a hopeless mess, without help and destined to self-destruct, when God comes along and says, “*I want to be your Friend*”.

As Joseph Scriven wrote:

*What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear;
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.*

What does that name mean for us today

God is closer than a brother and He is just a prayer away. He cares for you and longs to have a close friendship with you.

Prayer

Father, thank You so much for taking the initiative to be my Friend. Please be my Friend today. Thank You for knowing the worst about me and yet loving me just the same. Thank You in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Additional Readings

- Proverbs 18:24
- Song of Songs 5:10-16
- Matthew 11:1-19
- John 15:5-17

Questions

1. Has God revealed Himself as a Friend to you? How and when?
2. Is Jesus your Friend?
3. How are you a friend to Jesus?