

True Friends of God

John 15:12–17

John 15:12–17 (NKJV)

¹² This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, that you love one another.

Introduction

One of the most amazing terms in all of the Bible used of the relationship the Abraham had with God, was “Friend of God”

James 2:23 (NKJV)

²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*” And he was called the friend of God.

2 Chronicles 20:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Are You not our God, *who* drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?

Isaiah 41:8 (NKJV)

⁸ “But you, Israel, *are* My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend.”

Historically, among the Arabs and other Muslims, the name of Abraham is not often mentioned, but they speak of him as Khalil Allah, or the “Friend of God,” or more briefly as El Khalil, “the Friend.”

This I idea of being a friend of God is in many circles today assumed of God's relationship with man and expected by most.

Ive heard some refer to God as the "man upstairs"

I even heard one lost man refer to God as His Buddy.

This is a very benign, blasphemous and unbiblical view of God

It represents a lot of what the evangelical church and lost America thinks of God.

Josh Turner sings a song entitled "Me and God"

There ain't nothing that can't be done

By me and God

Ain't nobody come in between me and God

One day we'll live together

Where the angels trod

Me and God

Early in the morning talking it over

Me and God

Late at night talking it over

Me and God

You could say we're like two peas in a pod

Me and God

He's my father
He's my friend
The beginning
And the end
He rules the world
With a staff and rod
We're a team
Me and God

The song sadly communicates more about God than most pulpits do in America... the song does have some truth in it.

Im a little uncomfortable with the phrase

“There ain't nothing that can't be done
By me and God”

“ we are a team, me and God”

and especially

“ we're like two peas in a pod”

But most importantly it dumbs down if not completely eliminates the severity of the work of Christ to make it possible for a man to be a Friend of God. I sure Josh Turner did not intend it to be deep theological work on the relationship of God with the sinner.

But like most songs of this kind and frankly many so called christian songs. They do more damage the good. It would be better if they were never written or sung.

This along with many other ways that man and the devil have eliminated deep thinking and preaching about God in the church has caused a famine of gospel, “ the pure Gospel”

There are very few who really understand and appreciate the condition we find ourselves without God. Frankly very few who care.

Today we live in a world that does not believe the concept of man’s sinful antagonism against God. This is not a new problem. Here is what A. W. Tozer had to say: “Until we believe that we are as bad as God says we are, we can never believe that He will do for us what He says He will do. Right here is where popular religion breaks down.” (A. W. Tozer - Quoted in The Berean Call, September 1993, New Man, July/August 1994, p. 10.)

The Bible presents a different picture than what the modern church is painting today.

- Psalm 5:5, “You hate all workers of iniquity.”
- Psalm 7:11, “God is angry with the wicked every day.”
- Psalm 26:5, “I have hated the assembly of evil doers.”

Romans 9 and Malachi 1. “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”

Jonathan Edwards once preached a sermon titled, “Man, Naturally God’s Enemies.” In this sermon Edwards declared: “Men, in general, will own that they are sinners. There are few, if any, whose consciences are so blinded as not to be sensible they have been guilty of sin ... And yet few of them are sensible that they are God’s enemies. They do not see how they can be truly so called; for they are not sensible that they wish God any hurt, or endeavor to do Him any.” Yet despite human protestations to the contrary,

Scripture clearly describes natural fallen men as enemies of God.

Romans 5:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Colossians 1:21 (NKJV)

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

Romans 8:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

ἐχθρός, ἔχθρα. → μισέω.

Of the related word groups μῖσος, ἔχθρα, πόλεμος, μῖσος, denotes the inner disposition from which hostility arises, i.e., “hatred,” ἔχθρα means “hostility” as such, irrespective of the underlying disposition or of its manifestation or otherwise in visible form, and πόλεμος means “war” as the expression of hostility between states and governments. In secular Gk. Hom. has only the pass. “hated.” The act. first occurs in Hes. and Pind.:¹ “the hater,” “the enemy,” “the opponent.”

ἐχθρός is finally used for the devil in the parable of the wheat and the tares in Mt. 13:24ff. and in Lk. 10:19: δέδωκα ὑμῖν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ... ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ

ἐχθροῦ. There are parallels for this usage in the Pseudepigrapha, → 813. The devil is the enemy in the absolute sense. He is the enemy both of men and also of God and His kingdom.

Foerster, W. (1964-). ἐχθρός, ἐχθρα. G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 2, p. 814). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

So when the Bible says that Abraham was a friend of God or as our text says, that we are called by Christ Friends, this is no small issue. This is a massive shift from hatred to love, from hostility to affection, from enemy to Friend.

It took a perfect and Holy Son of God to come and take on human flesh, live a perfect life and be placed on the cross by evil men to endure the full fury of the wrath and justice of God and then impute His righteousness to us, forgiving us of all of our sin. so God could justly call us friends
This is what it means to be a friend of God.
Much much more than just 2 peas in a pod.

Lesson

- I. The Friends of God are Loving
- II. The Friends of God are Obedient
- III. The Friends of God are Informed

IV. The Friends of God are Chosen

V. The Friends of God Fruitful

I. The Friends of God are Loving

¹² This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

¹⁷ These things I command you, that you love one another.

12 This is My commandment,
that you love one another as I
have loved you

αυτη εστιν η εντολη η εμη ινα
αγαπατε αλληλους καθως
ηγαπησα υμας

η εντολη η εμη There is clearly an emphasis here with the 2 definite articles .

“the commandment, the my”

Jesus is emphasizing the priority and importance of this commandment.

Matthew 22:36–40 (NKJV)

³⁶ “Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?”

³⁷ Jesus said to him, “ ‘*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*’ ³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment. ³⁹ *And the second is* like it: ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

² This is My commandment,
that you love one another as I
have loved you
 αυτη εστιν η εντολη η εμη ινα
αγαπατε αλληλους καθως
ηγαπησα υμας

That ye love one another (ἵνα ἀγαπατε ἀλλήλους [*hina agapāte allēlous*]). Non-final use of ἵνα [*hina*], introducing a subject clause in apposition with ἐντολή [*entolē*] (commandment) and the present active subjunctive of ἀγαπαῶ [*agapaō*],
“that ye keep on loving one another.”

Robertson, A. T. (1933). [Word Pictures in the New Testament](#) (Jn 15:12). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

[25 \[e\]](#)
[agapate](#)

ἀγαπᾶτε Y'all keep on loving Plural , Active
Subjunctive

y'all keep on loving

[V-PSA-2P](#)

John 13:34–35 (NKJV)

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Romans 12:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

1 Thessalonians 3:12 (NKJV)

¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you,

1 Thessalonians 4:9–10 (NKJV)

⁹ But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; ¹⁰ and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more;

2 Thessalonians 1:3 (NKJV)

³ We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,

1 Peter 1:22 (NKJV)

²² Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

1 Peter 3:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ Finally, all *of you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, *be* tenderhearted, *be* courteous; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary

blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

1 Peter 4:8 (NKJV)

⁸ And above all things have fervent love for one another, for *“love will cover a multitude of sins.”*

1 John 2:9–10 (NKJV)

⁹ He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. ¹⁰ He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

1 John 3:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death.

1 John 3:23 (NKJV)

²³ And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

1 John 4:20–5:1 (NKJV)

²⁰ If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God

whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

5 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

² **This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you**

αυτη εστιν η εντολη η εμη ινα αγαπατε αλληλους **καθως ηγαπησα υμας**

as I have loved you

ηγαπησα υμας

ἠγάπησα

I have loved Aorist, summarizing the whole event of His Love

[V-A1A-1S](#)

as I have loved you

kathōs (an adverb derived from [2596](#) /katá, "according to" and [5613](#) /hōs, "as compared to, to

the extent of") – properly, "in proportion, to the degree that" (J. Thayer); just as (in direct proportion), corresponding to fully (exactly

This “**as**” is defined by the next verse.

13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.

μειζονα ταυτης αγαπην ουδεις
εχει ινα τις την ψυχην αυτου θη
υπερ των φιλων αυτου

This is perhaps one of the greatest statements and realities that was made by Jesus.

There is no greater display of love for anyone, than to give your life for someone.

Greater love

μειζονα ταυτης αγαπην

megas: great

Original Word: μέγας, μεγάλη, μέγα

Part of Speech: Adjective; Adverb, Comparative

Transliteration: megas

Phonetic Spelling: (meg'-as)

Definition: great

Usage: large, great, in the widest sense.

John 13:1 (NKJV)

13 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

has no one

ουδεις

oudeís ("no one, nothing at all") is a powerful negating conjunction. It rules out by definition, i.e. "shuts the door" objectively and leaves no exceptions. [3762](#)

(oudeís) is deductive in force so it excludes every (any) example that is included within the premise (supposition).

13 than to lay down one's life for his friends.

life

5590 psyxé (from psychō, "to breathe, blow" which is the root of the English words "psyche,"

"psychology") – soul (psyche); a person's distinct identity (unique personhood), i.e. individual personality.

5590 (psyxē) corresponds exactly to the OT 5315 / phágō ("soul"). The soul is the direct aftermath of God breathing (blowing) His gift of life into a person, making them an ensouled being.

more than bios, more than flesh. but ones soul, your life.

13 than to lay down one's life **for** his friends.

[hyper](#)

ὑπὲρ

for

[Prep](#)

/hypér ("beyond") is usually best translated "for the betterment (advantage) of," i.e. focusing on benefit. M. Vincent, "5228 (hypér) signifies something like 'in the interests of the truth . . . concerning.' J. B. Lightfoot (on Gal 1:4) . . . remarks that hypér has 'a sense of interest in,' which is wanting to peri" (WS).

John 10:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

John 10:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Romans 5:6–10 (NKJV)

⁶ For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

1 Peter 3:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

The Love He is calling for is the supreme love. The greatest Love. God wrought love. Agape love.

Ephesians 5:2 (NKJV)

² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

1 John 4:9–11 (NKJV)

⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

II. The Friends of God are Obedient

14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.
 υμεις φιλοι μου εστε εαν ποιητε
 οσα εγω εντελλομαι υμιν

This is a unique friendship. It almost seems that Jesus is saying that you will be my friends if you do what I tell you. A conditional friend. A friendship based on performance or works.

But that is not what He is saying. He says you “are” my friends if you obey.

Its not conditional

Its consequential

In other words. We are not friends because of our obedience but rather we obey because we are friends

The qualifier of those who are friends is that they are obedient.

John 14:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ “If you love Me, keep My commandments.

John 14:21 (NKJV)

²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be

loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

Matthew 12:50 (NKJV)

⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”

James 2:23 (NKJV)

²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*” And he was called the friend of God.

The essence of sin is rebellion against God’s law. Samuel rebuked Saul for his failure to do what God had commanded him: “Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22). Samuel then equated rebellion with sin: “For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry” (v. 23). The New Testament also defines sin as rebellion. John wrote, “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4; cf. Matt. 7:23; 13:41; 23:28; 2 Cor. 6:14).

Because all sin is rebellion against God, turning from sin necessarily implies obedience to God. A person cannot submit to God while at the same time openly rebelling against Him; the same life cannot be characterized both by lawlessness and obedience (1 John 3:6; 5:18). Thus, obedience and faith are closely linked throughout Scripture. Conversion takes place when those who “were slaves of sin” become “obedient from the heart” (Rom. 6:17). Acts 6:7 describes the salvation of “a great many of the priests” as their “becoming obedient to the faith.” Those who “will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:9) are “those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (v. 8). Peter also defined unbelievers as “those who do not obey the gospel of God” (1 Peter 4:17). Paul declared that the goal of his apostolic ministry was “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles” (Rom. 1:5; cf. 15:18; 16:26). The heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11 demonstrated the reality of their faith by their obedience. So closely is obedience related to saving faith that Hebrews 5:9 uses it as a synonym for faith: “Having been made perfect, [Jesus] became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.” Peter wrote that believers were

“chosen ... to obey Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:1–2). John 3:36 also equates believing with obeying, noting that “he who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” When informed that His mother and brothers were looking for Him, Jesus replied, “ ‘Who are My mother and My brothers?’ Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, ‘Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother’ ” (Mark 3:33–35).

W. E. Vine points out another link between faith and obedience:

Peithō [to obey] and *pisteuō*, “to trust,” are closely related etymologically; the difference in meaning is that the former implies the obedience that is produced by the latter, cp. Heb. 3:18, 19, where the disobedience of the Israelites is said to be the evidence of their unbelief.... When a man obeys God he gives the only possible evidence that in his heart he believes God.... *Peithō* in N.T. suggests an actual and outward result of the inward persuasion and consequent faith. (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* [Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1981], 3:124)

Obedience, of course, does not earn salvation. Salvation is solely “by grace ... through faith ... not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8–9). God “saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). Paul, who so strongly emphasized the connection between saving faith and obedience, also wrote, “By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight ... For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law” (Rom. 3:20, 28; cf. Gal. 2:16). He based his hope of salvation solely on being “found in Him, not having a righteousness of [his] own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Phil. 3:9).

Obedience is not the means of salvation, but it is the inevitable result; it is the proof that a person has a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. The branches that abide in Christ, the true vine, will inevitably bear fruit (see the exposition of 15:1–11 in the previous chapter of this volume); His sheep hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:27); true disciples obey His Word (John 8:31). Good works save no

one, but a faith devoid of them is dead and cannot save (James 2:14–26; cf. Eph. 2:10).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2008). *John 12-21* (pp. 158–160). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

I. The Friends of God are Loving

II. The Friends of God are Obedient

III. The Friends of God are Informed

15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

ουκετι υμας λεγω δουλους
 οτι ο δουλος ουκ οιδεν τι ποιει αυτου ο κυριος
 υμας δε ειρηκα φιλους οτι παντα α ηκουσα παρα
 του πατρος μου εγνωρισα υμιν

15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing;

The term **slaves** did not have many of the negative connotations in Jewish culture that it does

today. In fact, some of the most noble figures in the Old Testament were described as slaves (Heb. *`ebed*) of God, including Moses (Num. 12:7), Caleb (Num. 14:24), Joshua (Josh. 24:29), Job (Job 1:8), David (2 Sam. 7:5), Isaiah (Isa. 20:3), and even the Messiah (Isa. 42:1). In the New Testament Paul (Rom. 1:1), James (James 1:1), Peter (2 Peter 1:1), Jude (Jude 1), and John (Rev. 1:1) similarly called themselves slaves (*doulos*) of Jesus Christ. The term reflected their utter submission to and dependence on their heavenly Master. This word, *doulos*, and the related verb *douleuō*, always and only refer to slavery. *Doulos* is the corresponding word to *kurios* (lord). Jesus is Lord, believers are His slaves. *Doulos* is, however, usually translated “servant,” or “bond-servant.” But their nearly 150 uses in the New Testament are to be understood as references to slavery. A slave was bought, owned, subjected to, provided for, and protected by his master (*kurios*). He lived in total submission to the will of his master.

Slaves did not usually have an intimate relationship with their earthly masters; **the slave** would normally **not know what his master was doing**; that is, he was not privy to his plans. Masters did not disclose their goals and purposes to their

slaves; they merely instructed them as to what they wanted them to do.

While it is true that the followers of Jesus are also designated as slaves, that is not sufficient to fully convey our relationship to the Lord. Incredibly, we are also called His **friends**—a more exalted title even than “disciple.” In the Old Testament only Abraham had the privilege of being named the friend of God (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23). A custom from biblical times sheds light on the great honor believers have in being the friends of Jesus Christ.

William Barclay writes,

This phrase is lit up by a custom practiced at the courts both of the Roman emperors and of kings in the middle east. At these courts, there was a very select group called *the friends of the king*, or *the friends of the emperor*. At all times, they had access to the king; they even had the right to come to his bedchamber at the beginning of the day. He talked to them before he talked to his generals, his rulers and his statesmen. The friends of the king were those who had the closest and the most intimate connection with him. (*The Gospel of John*, vol.

2, *The New Daily Study Bible* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001], 207–8. Italics in original.)

15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

It is that kind of intimate access that Jesus graciously grants to His friends.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2008). [John 12-21](#) (pp. 160–161). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

v. 15b for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

οτι παντα α ηκουσα παρα του πατρος μου εγνωρισα υμιν

This is without doubt one of the most amazing statements in all of scripture. In fact, it is the reason that we have the scripture. The only reason we know anything specific about God is because of this reality stated in this verse. The Father would desire to make known to us His Will and and His Word.

All of humanity has General revelation. It is general in the sense that there are no details, no specifics and it is not salvific.

Romans 1:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Psalms 19:1–3 (NKJV)

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
- 2 Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
- 3 *There is* no speech nor language
Where their voice is not heard.

But not everyone has special revelation, this is granted by God's Will. It is Sovereignly dispensed at His pleasure. This is not earned, or deserved.

If you know the will and word of God it is because God has granted you access and understanding.

You do not get this because you are smarter, or well educated, or because you attend a christian school or seminary. It is not because you have Christian parents. It has nothing to do with you and everything to do with the pleasure of God.

This is what Jesus is talking about.

John 8:31–32 (NKJV)

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

John 17:6–8 (NKJV)

⁶ “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. ⁷ Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. ⁸ For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

Matthew 13:10–11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

¹¹ He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given (Prf.Pass) to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

Luke 10:21–24 (NKJV)

²¹ In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. ²² All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.”

²³ Then He turned to *His* disciples and said privately, “Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things you see; ²⁴ for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen *it*, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard *it*.”

The friends of Jesus have insight into “the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:25–26). The term “mystery” in the New Testament refers to things hidden in the past, but now revealed by Jesus to the apostles, and through them to all believers. The New Testament reveals the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:11), the mystery

of Israel's hardening (Rom. 11:25), the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:19), the mystery of the rapture (1 Cor. 15:51), the mystery of God's will (Eph. 1:9), the mystery that Jews and Gentiles would be one body in Christ (Eph. 3:4–6), the mystery of the union of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32), the mystery of Christ's indwelling of believers (Col. 1:26–27), the mystery that the Messiah would be God incarnate (Col. 2:2), the mystery of lawlessness, which will be fully revealed in the person of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:7), the mystery of the faith (1 Tim. 3:9), and the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16).

Their ability to understand the spiritual truths Jesus reveals to them sets His friends apart from the unredeemed, who have no such privileges:

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2008). [John 12-21](#) (pp. 161–162). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

1 Corinthians 2:12–16 (NKJV)

¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

¹⁵ But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one. ¹⁶ For “*who has known the mind of the Lord* that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

IV. The Friends of God are Chosen

¹⁶ You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you...

V. The Friends of God Fruitful

¹⁶ You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

The thought echoes ideals of friendship in the ancient world. Aristotle could say, ‘To a noble man there applies the true saying that he does all things for the sake of his friends ... and, if need be, he gives his life for them’ (*Eth. nic.* 1169a; cf. also e.g. Plato, *Symp.* 179b; Diodorus Siculus 10.4.4–6; Seneca, *Ep.* 1.9.10; Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.7.3
Lincoln, A. T. (2005). [*The Gospel according to Saint John*](#) (p. 406). London: Continuum.

Dying for others was considered heroic in Greco-Roman stories, and friendship to the death was considered a high moral value (see comment on vv. 14–15). But Judaism did not share this general Greek perspective, although it emphasized dying for the law if need be. Rabbi Akiba (within a few decades of John) argued that one’s own life took precedence over another’s. Although it is unlikely that Jesus is directly influenced by the Greek view of friendship, John’s Diaspora readers would have been familiar with it and so grasped his point quickly.

Keener, C. S. (1993). [*The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament*](#) (Jn 15:12–13). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

There were different kinds and levels of friendship in antiquity, and Greco-Roman writers often commented on the topic. Friendship could involve political or military alliances and was often pursued in self-interest; kings or lesser patrons who supported dependents called clients were (especially in Roman circles) said to be engaging in “friendship”; Pharisees also met in circles of “friends.” The traditional Greek concept of friendship emphasized equality among companions, and some philosophical schools like the Epicureans especially emphasized such friendship.

The main ideals of friendship in ancient literature included loyalty (sometimes to the death), equality and mutual sharing of all possessions, and an intimacy in which a friend could share everything in confidence. Jesus especially emphasizes the last point in verse 15, where he distinguishes a friend from a servant, who might also be loyal but would not share intimate secrets. Jewish writers like Philo sometimes contrasted being friends of God with being servants of God.

The Old Testament called two people friends of God: Abraham and Moses. Jewish tradition amplified on the friendship and intimacy of both of them with God. If an Old Testament allusion is in view here, it may be to Moses (cf. comment on 14:8). If this text emphasizes Jesus’ sharing his heart with his followers, the context communicates the character of his heart: love

Keener, C. S. (1993). [*The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament*](#) (Jn 15:14–15). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.