



Welcome to MessageWeek, I'm John Klassek. Wherever you are watching or listening from, you are with friends of Jesus Christ.

The people of God – who form what we know as “the body of Christ” [that is, the Churches of God] – carries within its diversity a level of fellowship that perfectly frames its unity.

The late Richard Wiedenheft, when referring to the Churches of God, in an ecumenical spirit, wrote:

“Today, we have those who are vegetarians and those who eat meat, those who drink wine and those who abstain, those who wear makeup and jewellery and those who don't, those who observe annual feasts and those who don't...” (Bible Advocate, April-May 2009) and so on.

The variety we experience within the Christian community is honourable and enriching and reflects integrity and holiness while it exists within the commandments and testimony of God. After all, God, it seems, has set the terms of our fellowship with Him; it was Jesus who said that: *“you are my friends if you do what I command”*. And, I suppose, believers everywhere want to be known as “friends of God”.

A friend is someone you can trust, who shares your hopes and dreams and concerns. A friend loves at all times. A true friend weathers the storms of life and shares the good times.

What then, exactly, are the terms for friendship on a “heavenly” level? In other words, what does it take to become “a friend of God”?

Is it not based essentially on what God has done for us, and then in turn what we do – how we respond? Perhaps we need to re-evaluate what the term “friend” really means, for (as we read from the scriptures) Abraham was known as God's friend.

If we examine Abraham's relationship with God, we discover something quite remarkable, by God's own testimony when He said to Isaac: *“...because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”* (Genesis 26:5)

You can't really miss what's being said here. What is particularly interesting in this passage is that the commandments of God were in effect a long time before the Sinai experience when they were given to ancient Israel! Abraham's life was characterised by living by every word that came from God, which naturally included the commandments. So did apparently those who preceded him such as Enoch and Noah. Even one of his great grandsons, Joseph, is specifically recorded as living by God's word.

Friendship with God isn't just a casual relationship, easy come, easy grace. It's based on covenant – a binding agreement with expectations and obligations!

Jesus said that, *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21 NIV)

Friendship and fellowship with God firstly must be based on covenant. This covenant, has some “do” clauses... which in many respects, is much like the rights and obligations we might expect to find within a marriage agreement. Marriage participants are bound by those words when they say, “I do.”

What we are, in this life, must be matched by what we do.

James, the Lord’s brother, reiterated this when he said, *“I will show you my faith by what I do”*. (James 2:18 NIV)

And Jesus, in some of the last recorded words we have of Him, said, *“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”* (Revelation 22:12 NIV)

Our doing response to God’s Grace is part of this LIFE equation. This follows on with what Jesus said earlier:

“You are my friends if you do what I command. ... I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:14-15 NIV)

The underlying theme of our life’s journey, as reflected in the commandments, is simply this: to “love God and to love each other”. That’s what is at the heart and core of covenant relationship. To be a friend of God is then to understand the heart of God – in genuine fellowship and covenant.

The heart that genuinely seeks God, and obeys Him and loves Him, in faith no matter what, is truly a friend of God.

And, a friend of God then understands the essence of Jesus’ words when He said: *“This is my command: Love each other.”* (John 15:17) □



By John Klassek