

# GOD HIMSELF VISITED ABRAHAM: HOW TO BE A FRIEND OF GOD GENESIS 18:01–15

## *Introduction*

The greatest problem facing man today is this: how to be a friend of God. A friend is a person who holds affection and respect for another person. The affection and respect attach them together. If they have feelings and respect for one another, they become attached; they become friends. But the converse is also true: if they do not have affection and respect for one another, they are not friends; they are enemies.

This is the problem man has with God. Man does not hold affection and respect for God, not enough to become attached to God, not enough to become a close, intimate friend with God. Man just does not care and respect God enough to subject himself to God, to elevate God to the position He rightly holds: the Creator and Sustainer of life, the Sovereign LORD and Master of the universe. As Christ said: “You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14). But man is not willing to do what Christ commanded, not willing to love and serve God nor to keep His commandments. Man breaks God’s commandments and rebels against God. Man stands up against God and refuses to obey Him. Thus man stands as an opponent of God, as an enemy of God.

However, this is not true of every single person upon earth. Some persons want to be friends with God. They have the deepest affection and respect for God, and they are forever seeking a deeper friendship. In fact, some are seeking the deepest and most intimate friendship possible with God. Such a passion should burn within the heart of every person. It did within Abraham. This is what this passage is all about: *God Himself Visited Abraham: How to Be a Friend of God* Genesis 18:1-15.

- I. The LORD appeared and sought Abraham’s friendship (v. 1).
- II. Abraham sat, bowed his head, and meditated (vv. 1-2).
- III. Abraham served and met the needs of people (vv. 2-8).
- IV. Abraham was to believe the great promise of God: the promised seed (vv. 9-10).
- V. Abraham and Sarah had to conquer unbelief (vv. 11-15).

## **I. *Genesis 18:01 The Lord Sought Abraham’s Friendship***

How can we become a friend of God? Know that the LORD seeks friendship. It was the LORD Himself who appeared and sought the friendship of Abraham. Scripture actually uses the word friend in describing the relationship of man to God.

1. Abraham is called “the friend of God” three times, two times in the Old Testament and one time in the New Testament.

=> Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, said this in one of his prayers to God:

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*2 Chr 20:7* Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?

=> God Himself said this to Israel:

*Isa 41:8* “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend.”

=> James the writer of the New Testament book said this:

*James 2:23* And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend.

2. Jesus Christ Himself deliberately said that His followers were His friends.

*John 15:14-15* “You are my friends, if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

*John 11:11* After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”

The LORD appeared to Abraham in order to strengthen their friendship. God wanted a closer friendship with Abraham; He wanted to draw closer to Abraham and to have Abraham draw closer to Him. The LORD wished the most intimate friendship possible with Abraham.

**Thought 1.** The experience of Abraham and the experience of Christ with His disciples tells us that God wants a closer friendship with us. God wants us to open our hearts and lives so that He can draw closer to us and us to Him. God wants us to develop a deep affection and respect for Him, to develop the most intimate friendship possible with Him.

*1 John 1:3* We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

*Psa 16:8* I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

*Psa 34:18* The LORD is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

*Psa 145:18* The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

*Psa 119:15* I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

*Rev 3:20* Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

## II. *Genesis 18:01–02 Abraham Sat in Meditation and Prayer*

How can we become a friend of God? Meditate and pray. Verse one tells us that Abraham took a break from the noon day heat and that he sat down at the door to his tent. But note

verse two: he looked up. That is, Abraham's head had been bowed, probably resting; but he would also have been doing what any true believer would have been doing, meditating and praying. Remember: just a few days or weeks before, God had shocked Abraham with the news that Ishmael, Abraham's only son, was not the promised son. Abraham was to bear a son through Sarah, a son who was to give rise to nations and kings of people (Gen 17:6-8). Abraham was shaken to the core, for all his dreams and plans had been placed in Ishmael, and he loved Ishmael dearly. This news from God was bound to occupy, even possess, Abraham's mind. He must have been in constant, unbroken meditation and prayer, discussing and sharing the matter with God, seeking to draw ever so close to God; to know, believe, and understand Him and His ways more and more (Isa 43:10). Any of us would have been doing the same.

**Thought 1.** The point is this: meditation and prayer are the way to draw closer to God, the way to become a close, intimate friend with God.

(1) Meditation draws us closer to God.

**Psa 4:3** *Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him. In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.*

**Psa 19:14** *May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

**1 Tim 4:15** *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.*

(2) Prayer draws us closer to God.

**John. 15:7** *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*

**1 Chr 16:11** *Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always*

**Psa 91:15** *He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.*

**Isa 58:9** *Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk.*

**Jer 29:13** *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

### **III. Genesis 18:02–8 Abraham Served and Met the Needs of People**

How can we become a friend of God? Serve and meet the needs of people. Abraham is a strong example in serving others, and remember he was one of the most powerful sheiks in Canaan, if not the most powerful (Gen 14:1-24).

1. Abraham, sitting there in the doorway of his tent, looked up; and immediately he saw three men standing nearby (v. 2). Who were the three men? The LORD and two angels. Several verses tell us this (v. 1, 10, 13, 14). When did Abraham know that it was the LORD? We cannot tell from the story, but he certainly knew by verse ten when the LORD reconfirmed the promise of the promised seed or son. It is, of course, possible — perhaps probable — that the LORD revealed Himself from the first. We certainly do not have the whole conversation here, and it would seem reasonable to expect the LORD to reveal His identity.
2. Abraham ran to meet the men (v. 2). He did not have to do this: he could have ignored them, just let them pass by, or sent one of his servants out to them. After all, he was resting and praying and thinking through the enormous life-changing plans God had thrust upon him. But Abraham cared about people: he knew the travellers were walking out in the noon day heat and had most likely been traveling all morning. He knew they would be tired, thirsty, hungry, and dirty. He could not fail to offer them help and refreshment.
3. Abraham bowed, was humble and courteous (v. 2). Again, remember his status was that of a powerful sheik, yet he went out to them himself, demonstrating a most courteous, humble posture: he bowed to the ground. Bowing to the ground may indicate that Abraham knew that it was the LORD and angels from the first.
4. Abraham sought to help and spend time with the three men (vv. 3-5). He showed the most gracious hospitality, inviting them to come to his home so that he could minister to their needs. He offered them water to drink and to wash their dusty feet. He also offered them food and the opportunity to rest. Note that they accepted the invitation.
5. Abraham involved his wife in serving (v. 6). He did not act alone. Serving others is both a privilege and a duty. He wanted the person most dear to him by his side, serving right along with him as he ministered. He wanted Sarah to fulfil her duty as the wife and to experience the joy of the occasion herself.
6. Abraham gave the best he had (v. 7). He ran to his herd, selected, and prepared a young calf to serve — a choice, tender calf.
7. Abraham served the men himself: he became personally involved (v. 8). He could have sat down with them and had Sarah or servants serve them all together. But Abraham took the posture of a servant and served the three men himself. He became personally involved in the service and ministry: he sought to personally meet their needs.
8. Abraham demonstrated humility: he stood off to the side just as a servant would. He did not sit down with them. (This would indicate that Abraham knew that he was serving the LORD Himself. Being a powerful sheik, he most likely would have sat and had conversation with other men.)

**Thought 1.** Abraham is a dynamic example in serving others. He was a humble, ministry-minded person. Remember how he offered Lot the first choice of land (Gen 13:8-9); how he rescued the people of Canaan, including Lot, from the invading army; how he accepted Hagar back after she had run away with their son, Ishmael (Gen 16:1-16).

Abraham was always serving and helping others. And he was, no doubt, very busy managing his large holdings. Again, he is a strong example for us in serving others. We should always be looking to help people in need. When we spot people in need, we should run to meet them, be courteous, and seek to help meet their needs. We should follow the very steps that Abraham took in meeting the needs of these three men.

**Mat 25:34-40** *“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”*

**Mat 25:41-46** *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’” They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’”*

**Luke 22:26-27** *“For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”*

**Gal 6:2** *Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.*

**Gal 6:10** *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

**1 Tim 6:17-18** *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

## GENESIS 18:02 THEOPHANY

*Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. **Genesis 18:02***

Before Christ came, God spoke to men “in many ways” (Heb 1:1). As an example, He sometimes appeared:

=> in human form (Gen 3:8; 5:24; 6:9; 18:1-33).

=> in some form of majestic glory (Ezk 1:1-28, esp. 26-28; Isa 6:1-13; see note — Gen 16:7; see Exo 3:2; Jos 5:13-15; Jud 2:1-5).

Such appearances are called theophanies. In simple terms, a theophany is a visible appearance of God to man, usually in a human form. □

### IV. *Genesis 18:09–10 Believing the Great Promise of God*

How can we become a friend of God? Believe the great promise of God, the promise of the promised seed. Note that the men asked about Sarah, where she was; and Abraham answered, saying she was in the tent. Then the LORD repeated what He had told Abraham several days or weeks before: Sarah was going to have a son. The promised seed was going to come through her, not Ishmael, and the birth was to take place in about a year from then. Note also that Sarah heard the LORD make the promise to Abraham. (See next note, Gen 18:11-15.)

### V. *Genesis 18:11–15 Conquering Unbelief*

How can we become a friend of God? Conquer unbelief. Note three significant things.

1. The causes of unbelief are clearly seen in this experience of Sarah.
  - a. Sarah and Abraham were looking at an impossible situation, humanly speaking. They were both beyond childbearing years. Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety years old.
  - b. Sarah allowed negative thoughts to enter her mind. As stated above, she had heard the LORD’s promise to Abraham, but she knew the impossible circumstances. The whole situation just seemed laughable to Sarah, and she actually laughed to herself, somewhat mockingly and sceptically. She murmured silently to herself, “How can I who am so old have the pleasure of sex and bear a child, and Abraham also being so old — impossible! A laugh!” Sarah was responding to God’s promise in unbelief: she just did not believe God’s promise, did not believe it was possible. It was physically impossible to her. Note that she was thinking of the circumstances, not thinking of God and His promise and power.

2. The answer to unbelief is twofold (vv. 13-14).
  - a. God's omniscience, His knowing all things. God asked Abraham why Sarah had laughed, revealing that He knew all about Sarah's unbelief.
  - b. God's omnipotence, His power to do all things (v. 14). "Is anything too hard for the Lord" (v. 14). God can do anything, no matter how impossible it seems. He clearly said that He would give Sarah a child despite her dead womb (see Rom 4:19).

**Job 42:2** "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted."

**Mat 19:26** Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

**Luke 1:37** "For nothing is impossible with God."

3. The conquest of unbelief (v. 15). Sarah lied: she denied that she had laughed, for she feared a severe rebuke from the LORD and perhaps from Abraham. But the LORD made it clear: she did laugh — laughed in unbelief — and He knew all about her failure to believe the promise of the promised seed. Moreover, she was now lying about the matter.

What the LORD was doing was telling Sarah that she needed to confess, repent, stop the deceit and lying, and believe the promise. God could perform the miracle, overcome the circumstances of life, no matter how impossible they might appear. God could fulfil His promise. Sarah could conquer unbelief only if she confessed, repented, and believed the promise of the promised seed.

**Thought 1.** Unbelief will always keep us from being a friend of God. The friend of God believes God; he never disbelieves. We must, therefore, conquer unbelief:

- ⇒ We must not look at circumstances as though they are impossible for God.
- ⇒ We must not allow negative thoughts to surround the promises of God, questioning His promises.
- ⇒ We must believe that God knows all and can do all.
- ⇒ We must confess and repent of our sin of unbelief, of distrusting the promises of God.

This is the only way to conquer unbelief. This is the only way to become a friend — a true friend — of God.

**Mat 14:31** Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

**Mark 4:40** He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

**Luke 24:25** He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"

**Heb 3:12** See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

**Heb 4:11** *Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.*

**Heb 11:6** *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

**1 John 5:4-5** *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

**2 Chr 20:20** *Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful." ■*