

BAND of BROTHERS

SUMMER SERIES 2023 – WEEK 4

Abraham: The Friend of God

No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”

– Romans 4:20-22 ESV

- **How do you want to be remembered?**

- As a good husband and father?
- As a savvy and successful businessman?
- As a godly man?
- Or as a friend of God?

*You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.” **He was even called the friend of God.** – James 2:22-23 NLT*

*O our God, did you not drive out those who lived in this land when your people Israel arrived? And did you not give this land forever to the descendants of **your friend Abraham?** – 2 Chronicles 20:7 NLT*

*“But as for you, Israel my servant,
Jacob my chosen one,
descended from **Abraham my friend...**” – Isaiah 41:8 NLT*

- **The friend of God**

- What was it that led God to refer to Abraham as His friend?
 - There is nothing about Abraham to make him worthy of distinction
 - His choice by God was all based on grace, not merit
 - He was an unbeliever from Ur
 - He was sinful
 - He was prone to failure
 - He failed to obey God fully in leaving his country and relatives (12:5)

- He failed to trust God in the face of a famine (12:10)
- He failed to trust in God's protection in Egypt (12:12)
- He failed to believe God could provide him with an heir (16:1-3)
- He failed to take God seriously regarding his wife's ability to conceive (17:16)
- He failed to trust in God's protection again (20:1-7)

AND YET, HE IS REFERRED TO AS "THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL" AND "THE FRIEND OF GOD"

- **Faithfulness** is the key to true friendship

*Many will say they are loyal friends,
but who can find one who is truly reliable [faithful]? – Proverbs 20:6 NLT*

- What is faithfulness?
 - אֱמוּנָה ('*ěmûnâ*)
 - That which is firm and can be counted upon
 - Firmness, fidelity, steadfastness
- God is faithful
 - We are dependent upon His faithfulness...
 - ...for salvation (1 Corinthians 1:8-9)
 - ...for deliverance from temptation (1 Corinthians 1:13)
 - ...for sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
 - ...for the forgiveness of sins (1 John 1:9)
 - ...for deliverance through suffering (1 Peter 4:19)
 - ...for the fulfillment of eternal life (Hebrews 10:23)

He who calls you is faithful... – 1 Thessalonians 5:24 ESV

- We should emulate His faithfulness

"You are my friends if you do what I command." – John 15:14 NLT

*Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world,
you do not have the love of [for] the Father in you. – 1 John 2:15 NLT*

A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need. – Proverbs 17:17 NLT

- Faith is the mother of hope
 - Friendship begins with trust in the integrity of another individual
 - Which leads to belief in their words
 - Which produces trust in their promises
 - And results in the confident hope in the fulfillment of that promise

“If men lived by faith, would they use sinful means for a livelihood? If there were faith, would there be so much fraud? If theirs was a living faith, would men, like dead fish, swim downstream?

“If this be the sign of a godly man, how few will be found in the number! Where is the man whose heart is dilated in love to God? Many court him, but few love him. People are for the most part eaten up with self-love; they love their ease, their worldly profit, their lusts, but they do not have a drop of love to God.” – Thomas Watson, *A Godly Man’s Picture*

- Faithfulness is **steadfastness**
faith – (*’ēmûn*) steadfastness, stability, to stand firm
 - to stand firm in one’s convictions
 - to trust someone and believe their testimony or promise
- There is no Hebrew noun for “faith” in the Old Testament. It is always a verb
 - It is synonymous with the “fear of God”

*Abraham said, “I did it because I thought, ‘**There is no fear of God [faith] at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.**’” – Genesis 20:11 ESV*

***The fear of the LORD [faith in God] is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding.** – Psalm 111:10 ESV*

*The end of the matter; all has been heard. **Fear God [have faith in God] and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.** – Ecclesiastes 12:13 ESV*

- In the Old Testament, faith is synonymous with **trust**

*Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! **Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed.**” – 2 Chronicles 20:20 ESV*

*Offer right sacrifices, and **put your trust in the LORD.** – Psalm 4:5 ESV*

***Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.** – Isaiah 26:4 ESV*

- In the Old Testament, faith is synonymous with **obedience**

*“Now therefore, if you will indeed **obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine...**” – Exodus 19:5 ESV*

*“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in **obeying the voice of the LORD**? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.” – 1 Samuel 15:22 ESV*

*“But this command I gave them: ‘**Obey my voice**, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And **walk in all the way that I command you**, that it may be well with you.’” – Jeremiah 7:23 ESV*

- Faith is a New Testament concept that encompasses and enriches these Old Testament passages

...the righteous shall live by his faith. – Habakkuk 2:4 ESV

For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.” – Romans 1:16-17 NLT

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. – Hebrews 11:1 NLT

- **Abraham’s faith was in the Promise Maker, not the promise itself**

- God had made a promise to Abraham

*“Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for **all the land that you see I will give to you** and to your offspring forever.” – Genesis 13:14-15 ESV*

*“I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to **give you this land to possess**.” – Genesis 15:7 ESV*

*“...**I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.**” – Genesis 17:8 ESV*

- But Abraham never saw that promise fulfilled

*“God brought him here to the land where you now live. But **God gave him no inheritance here, not even one square foot of land.**” – Acts 7:4-5 NLT*

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. – Hebrews 11:8-10, 13 NLT

- **Abraham's faith grew stronger over time**

*Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, **his faith grew stronger**, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous. – Romans 4:20-22 NLT*

- The daily tests of life should **strengthen** our faith
 - Famine
 - Pharaoh
 - Family
 - Infertility
- Our own weakness should **increase** our faith
 - Physical
 - Spiritual
 - Moral
- The faithfulness of God should **encourage** our faith
 - His election
 - His direction
 - His protection
 - His correction
 - His affection

- **Friendship with God**

- What are its characteristics:
 - It begins with faith
 - It is marked by trust
 - It requires perseverance
 - It fosters commitment
 - It makes room for doubt
 - It makes devotion to God its highest priority
 - It fosters no substitutes
- What did Jesus have to say about it?

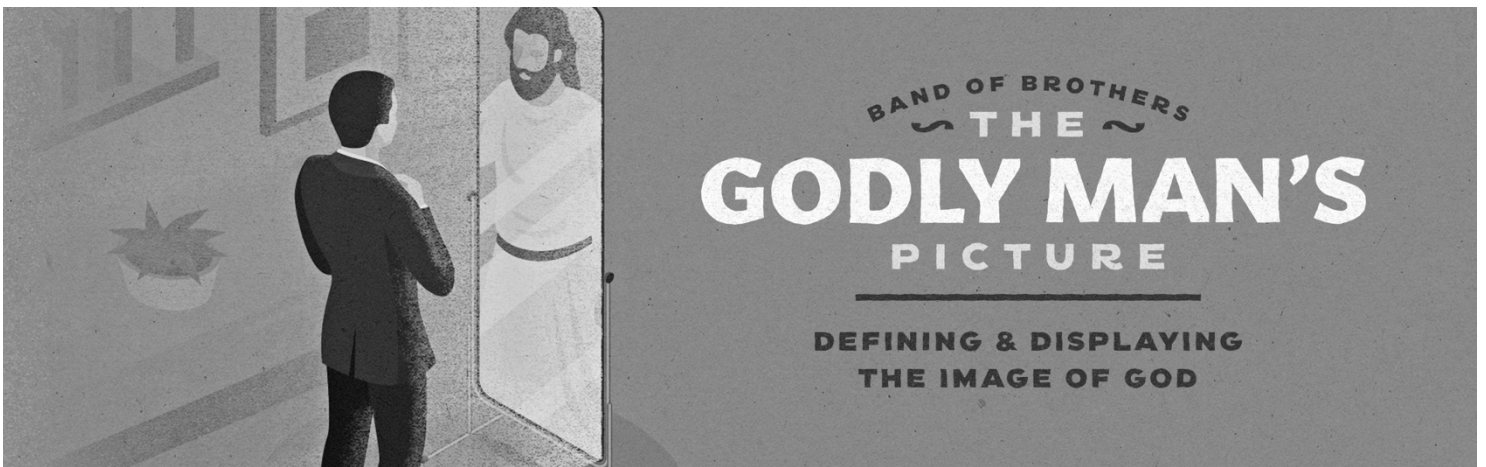
"You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other." – John 15:14-17 NLT

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

What are some things we place our faith in other than God, and why is this dangerous for us to do?

Why is impossible to be a true friend of God without faith? What is it about our faith that reveals the depth or deficiency of our friendship with God?

Abraham's friendship with God grew deeper over time. How have you experienced that same thing in your own life?



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SUMMER SERIES 2023 – WEEK 5 HOMEWORK

WEEK 5 – Nebuchadnezzar: Pride goes before the fall

Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. As he looked out across the city, he said, 'Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.'

– Daniel 4:29-30 NLT

In this lesson, we are going to study someone you don't expect to find in a study about how to be a man after God's own heart. But we can learn a lot from this ancient pagan monarch. It was he who captured Jerusalem, destroying the city and the temple of God, and taking its inhabitants captive back to Babylon. He was the most powerful man in the world at that time and was used to getting whatever he wanted. He had influence, was highly revered, enjoyed inestimable wealth, and had even been used as an instrument of the God of Israel. But his life is a living lesson about one of the most dangerous temptations every man faces in his life, including the man after God's own heart.

- Read Daniel 1:1-7. What do you learn about Nebuchadnezzar from reading these few introductory verses?
- Read Daniel 2:1-13. What about the king's reaction would seem to indicate that he was used to getting his way?

What kind of personality problems does he appear to wrestle with?

- Read Daniel 2:36-45. After successfully interpreting the king's dream, what does Daniel reveal to the king regarding his power and authority?

What kind of terminology does Daniel use in his interpretation that would appeal to a king who seems to enjoy power and the thrills of getting his own way?

- Read Daniel 3:1-18. Inspired by his dream, King Nebuchadnezzar erects a huge statue. In verses 1, 2, 5, 12, and 14, we are repeatedly told that it was the king who set up this statue. Why is this significant?

In verse 15, the king says, “What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?” What does this statement reveal about Nebuchadnezzar’s view of his own self worth?

- Read Daniel 4. Nebuchadnezzar had another dream. In verses 24-27, Daniel once again acts as the king’s interpreter. What does he tell Nebuchadnezzar?

Nebuchadnezzar appears to ignore Daniel’s warning. According to his speech, recorded in verses 29-30, what does the king reveal about himself? What seems to be his real problem?

- Read the following passages and put them in your own words.
1 John 2:16

James 4:6

1 Peter 5:5-6

Proverbs 16:5

Proverbs 16:18

Proverbs 18:12

Proverbs 29:23