

Friends

John 15.9-17

Jesus talks about the love which comes from the Father to Jesus, then on to his followers, and from them to others. Jesus gives one vital command: to love each another in the same way that he loves us. Obeying this command is not a sign that we are his servants but that we are his chosen friends.

Now read John 15.9-17 see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

The focus is on the power of love as seen through friendship with Jesus. It is particularly significant because it comes shortly before the Passion, where Jesus lays down his life for his friends. And this friendship is not casual, it is a covenant relationship; a gracious gift to us from God. Although the disciples are now described as friends, the call to obedience is still vital: it is the loving response of a friend who has been chosen.



Ask yourself: Do earthly friendships differ from a friendship with Jesus? If so, how?




If restrictions permit, go to the park with at least one other person and take a ball. If online, share a word game or play trivia with at least one other person. If you are alone, play a game of Patience. Afterwards, think about what enjoying the company of friends – and/or simply playing – teaches you about your relationship with God.



Consider how you might show friendship to those most at risk in our world by raising money. For example, you could: host an online quiz asking for participants to donate. Or, make and sell a poster template for member of your church community to display, with a slogan such as: 'Share the Love'. Or, go without your favourite food(s) this week and donate the money saved. Or write to your MP asking for the foreign aid budget to be increased.

Other ideas can be found on the Christian Aid website: www.christianaid.org.uk



Prayer Den

'Make yourselves at home in my love' (John 15.9, MSG).
Build a 'prayer den' – a place where you can feel comfortable and 'at home' with God. For example, find a quiet corner of your house or garden and make it cosy using cushions or blankets, perhaps with a poster or two inside. Use it as a space where you can be quiet and share with God your joys, hopes, fears and sorrows...and listen for God's response.





You will need: a square of paper, crayons, and some good ideas.

Make a 'chooser' to help you bear fruit each day – follow the instructions here: www.origamiway.com/how-to-make-a-paper-fortune-teller.shtml but instead of writing 'fortunes' on the inside flaps, write ideas for loving others – e.g. tell someone you love them; send a favourite recipe to a friend; draw a picture for grandma.

To use the chooser: first, spell out someone's name, moving the outside flaps. Then, once 'inside', invite someone else to choose an exposed colour. Open the chosen flap and see what loving idea you have 'chosen' to do today.



Daily Prayer

You will need: a long strip of paper (e.g. cut an A4 sheet lengthways down the middle), scissors, pens.

Fold your strip of paper into a concertina shape (approx. 7.5cm wide). Draw a person shape on the top face, making sure that the arms touch the edges/ folds. Cut round the shape, ensuring that the people remain joined at the folds. Open out your chain of people. Write the name of a friend on each figure and decorate. Use this as a reminder to pray for those friends each day this week.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Jesus was talking with his friends. He said to them, 'I have loved you the way my Father has loved me. Stay close; abide in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love. I have kept my Father's commands and I remain in his love.'



Jesus continued: 'I've told you these things so that you may be full of joy; that my joy may be yours. This is my command: love one another in the way I have loved you. Make sacrifices for your friends; no one can love their friends more than by doing this.'

Jesus said to his disciples, 'You are my friends when you do the things I command. I don't call you servants. Servants don't understand what their master is planning. No, I call you friends because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.'

He added, 'Remember, you didn't choose me. I chose you. And I put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that will last. Whatever you ask the Father for in my name, he will give you. Remember: love one another.'

John 15.9-17

Did you know?

- 'Abide' means to stay or remain.
- Sacrifice means something given up for someone else.

John 15.9-17 (NRSV)

Jesus said, 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do

what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.