

Being God's Friend

Children's Chapel, St. Mark's Palo Alto | May 9, 2021
Supplemental materials for <https://youtu.be/6E3q5-CBzYU>

Lectionary Reading:

John 15:9-17 Jesus said to his disciples, "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."

Theological Background

Throughout the Bible, we are reminded of God's deep and abiding love for us. One huge symbol of this love that God has for us is Christ's death on the cross. We also see it reflected in the beauty of Creation and the Scriptural stories of God's promises fulfilled. God's desire to be in close, loving relationships with us is clear across all of the Bible's stories and in our church traditions.

Just as God craves connection with us, experiencing God's love makes us crave more connection with God. We find that connection through prayer, church, Scripture, community, nature, art, music, and many other ways. Being someone's friend requires us to get to know that person and spend time with them - being God's friend is the same way!

When God reminds us how much we are loved by God, these reminders are almost always accompanied by an exhortation to share that love with others. God wants to pour so much love into us that it overflows and blesses the world through us. One great way to be friends with God is to participate in God's favorite pastime - loving the world.

Go Deeper!

Talk with your child about what friendship means to them. How do they feel about their friends? How do they know when someone is their friend? What do they like to do with their friends?

Encourage your child to connect their understanding of friendship to God. What's different about being friends with God? What's the same? What aspects of friendship can they apply to their relationship with God?

We often associated friendship with having fun. How can you and your child have fun with God? Try doing something your child already enjoys - jumping on a trampoline, blowing bubbles, building Legos - while intentionally inviting God to join in that experience of fun.

Showing love to other people is a great way to "hang out" with God. Provide your child an opportunity to show love to someone else by sending a letter with a nice note. This could be a letter to a relative or family friend who lives far away, or a St. Mark's parishioner, or anyone else!

You can also check out these websites, which provide opportunities to show love by writing a letter:

- <http://www.moreloveletters.com/>
- <https://loveforouelders.org/letters>
- <https://staygoldsociety.org/holiday-happymail/>
- <https://www.brighten-a-day.org/>

A big part of being someone's friend is talking to them - it's the same with God! Help your child connect with God by telling God a funny joke, a story about their day, or anything else they'd say to a friend.

Do you or your child connect to worship experiences through music? Here are some songs about connecting with God as a friend:

- Friend Of God - Lakewood Church <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0JM7nRMM2o>
- The God I Know - Love & The Outcome https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Px_aCjR5ZFA
- What A Friend We Have In Jesus - LifeChurch
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9oRay5YBHg>