

Invitation to Friendship with God

In John 15, Jesus tells his disciples
(including you and me):

“I no longer call you servants,
because a servant does not
know his master’s business.
Instead, I have called you friends...”

We should consider it a privilege
to be a servant of Jesus. And yet,
he invites us to so much more:
to be friends.



CONNECT (BUILD RELATIONSHIPS)

1. Describe some of your closest or most treasured human friendships. What characteristics and factors make a friendship strong?
2. Do you think or relate differently to the members of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit? Who do you instinctively address in prayer? Why?

THRIVE (EXPLORE BIBLICAL TRUTH)

3. Read John 3:16-17. It's so easy to take this truth: God loves the whole world, and mistakenly assume that Jesus loves us from a distance, or out of obligation. We can also assume that we are merely covered by the blanket of love he drapes over all of humankind. When pressed, we might admit that we're not so confident in an intimate kind of love. But that is the kind of love that Jesus has for you. He has called you "friend". If you truly accept this truth how might it change your perception of yourself and your approach to life and faith?
4. Read Romans 5:1-11. Describe what we were once like in the eyes of God and what we have now become through faith. How does the death of Jesus make this possible? What tone of voice do you imagine Paul using in verses 9-11?
5. Read Luke 15:1-2. We don't have to be perfect to be friends with Jesus. In fact, he's glad to be friends with sinners (which is what we all are). Jesus is omniscient—he knows everything about us. Jesus also loves us unconditionally. How is it possible for Jesus to love us and offer us friendship even when we are broken and sinful?
6. Read John 15:15-17. The Greek word 'philos', means someone who is dearly loved, but even more specifically, a close confidante, a friend to whom we would be willing to share our deepest secrets. This is the word Jesus uses to describe his preferred relationship with us. Is thinking of Jesus as a "friend" difficult or helpful for you? Explain.

7. Read Revelation 3:19-20. Sometimes, true friends tell us hard truth—they rebuke us, try to redirect us away from the path of sin back into relationship with God. Jesus is no different. But his goal in truth-telling is intimacy. Have you had the experience of a friend confronting you in a helpful and lifegiving way?

COMMIT (BE ON MISSION)

8. To eat with someone in Jesus' time was not only to accept them, but to covenant with them to protect them. It was an act of intimate friendship and allegiance. What might be hindering or standing in the way of you opening the door to a deepening friendship with Jesus?
9. One of the ways to experience deeper friendship with Jesus is to talk to him throughout your day. Set aside time to be alone with him, to listen to him. As you go through your day, doing all your daily tasks, practice simply thinking about Jesus. Thank him for small things, ask his advice, reflect on his love. If you find yourself getting busy and forgetting about him, don't feel guilty! Just gently pull your thoughts back to him.
10. The friendship we enjoy with Jesus is meant to be shared by loving others. What specific ways will you reach out to others in friendship this week?

Pause, Ponder & Pray

"What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer! Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer! Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer!" Joseph M. Scriven (1855)

Further reading: If you enjoyed Trevor Hudson's message you could order his book, "Divine Friendship - Reflections for Lent" from Upper Room Books.