

*Friends of God*

12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. 13 There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 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. 16 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. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

John 15:12-17 (NLT)

The broader context of v.9-11 (even 1-11) are important, so make sure you review and incorporate them where appropriate.

**Observation** (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

**Discussion/Topic Starters** (Ice Breakers)

- What qualities do you look for in a good friend?
- Describe one fond memory of an experience with a friend (recent or past)

O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

**v.12-13**

- O: How does Jesus show His friendship to us (v.13)? How desensitized are you to the answer (does it move you, does it wreck you, or has this realization become habit/normal/no-big-deal)?
- I: How does v.12-13 take Jesus' command to love even further than 13:34-35?
- A: How can we show our love and friendship to Jesus (v.14)?  
Is this works-based salvation, or something different (v.12b,16)? How so?
- A: God's love was exemplified 2000 years ago on the cross, but that doesn't mean His active love of us has ceased being real and evident today. In the last few weeks how has Jesus demonstrated His love and friendship to you?

**v.14-15**

- O: How did Jesus show this type of friendship (v.14-15) to His disciples in the Bible?
- I: How should being a friend of God impact one's approach to spiritual growth (v.15, also key to look at v. 1-11)?
- A: What can you do (how can this home group help) increase the quantity and quality of your time with Jesus?
- A: What are some practical ways God includes us in His plans (v.15, 16)?

**v.16-17**

- O: What does it mean to be chosen and appointed for a special project (be it at work, school, team...). How does that relate to being chosen, as God's friend, to "go and produce lasting fruit" (v.16)?
- I: So, v.16 makes me wonder if God is a genie in a bottle; "will give **WHATEVER** you ask for, using my name."  
Flesh out in reality what this means. Discuss both the theological implications as well as the practical side of it.
- I: Do you think this passage leans more towards doing things **FOR** God, doing things **WITH** God, or **BEING WITH** God?  
Why, how so?
- A: If you were an apple tree, how would you describe the fruit in your life lately (v.16); Grade A, Juicy, Green, Wormy, Rotten?  
Using the vine-tender image from v.1-9, what do you think Jesus would do if He could get His hands on you right now (which He can ☺)?

**Recommended Follow-up:**

- **Pray:** V.16 speaks to the critical power and nature of prayer. Spend time boldly praying, in Jesus' name, for the items discussed in this passage (pruning v.2, connection to God v.6, connection to God's word v.7, joy v.11, love & fruit, etc.)
- **Respond:** Reflect and pray over how connected you are to the God. Do you really believe v.4, that apart from God you can do nothing? Pray how you should respond, share with someone who can help in your pursuit of connecting with God.
- **Read:** Next week's sermon (4/18/2010) will focus on our identity as God's servants. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study relevant passages (ex. Mark 10:42-45 or John 13:12-17), pray through them, meditate on them, etc.

\* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid "go through this guide word-for-word." There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. This guide relies heavily upon Hybels' discussion guide on "New Identity" (ISBN: 9780310265948).