

Bible study on John 15.9-17

Begin with an opening prayer

Creator God,
you have called us to worship you,
chosen us to be your friends
and invited us to extend that friendship
to your people in all the world.
May we live as Jesus lived,
serve as he served,
and love as he loved,
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Read the passage

Explore and respond to the text

Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.

Bible notes

This week's readings describe the impact of the crucified and risen Jesus, and the coming of the Spirit, in different ways: in Acts 10, as boundary-crossing hospitality; in 1 John 5, as the birth of family love; and here as the gift of friendship. But this is not the naturally occurring friendship that people choose for themselves or that 'just happens' among those who share similar interests; rather it is a gracious gift. Jesus' surprising friends are his 'chosen people' (v.16), and like Israel they are bound together by covenant love. The friends of Jesus are fundamentally loved, as he is loved (v.9). It is this love, with its associated joy (v.11), that holds them together – a gift to be cherished rather than a prize to be pursued.

Verse 14 might suggest otherwise. But in the tradition of Moses, which these chapters (13 to 17) of John reinterpret in the light of Jesus, keeping God's commandments is never intended as a way of procuring divine favour. Life shaped by Law is the response of love to greater Love. And so here: 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you...my joy is in you...I

chose you...I appointed you...I have made known to you'. Jesus' friends are those who realise that the centre of gravity of their life together is intended to lie outside of them. So, whatever they 'ask him in my name' will be shaped by Jesus' (new) commandments, and will issue in the response of love to greater love, 'fruit that will last' (v.16), because it is the food of eternal life.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

What kind of friendships do you have? You might be a friend of a local community group. On Facebook, people probably ask you to be friends. You might, by virtue of membership, be a 'Friend of the Earth'. You might still be in touch with a few friends from school, even if you haven't seen them for years. Perhaps you have a weekly meet with friends at the pub, or at weekends, with another set of friends, you go to watch your favourite sports team. Some friendships are deep and lasting, others come and go. There are different kinds of friendship. What kind of friend do you have with Jesus?

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



- Who shares in your daily highs and lows?
- In what ways do you consider yourself a friend of Jesus?
- How do earthly friendships differ from a friendship with Jesus?

Prayer

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

God of all,

we give you thanks for the gift of friendship:

for the giving and the receiving;

for the opportunities and the challenges;

for the laughter and the tears;

for the conversations and the silence;

for the moments and the memories.

Draw us deeper into your love,

and bless us with the confidence

to proclaim Jesus as our dearest friend, teacher and Saviour.

We ask this in his name.

Amen.

A prayer to end the Bible study

Lord Jesus, we rejoice

that you have chosen us to be your friends.

Help us to be a friend to you by obeying your commands.

As we go out into your world,

help us to live a life that reflects your love,

by being a friend to others.

Amen.