

Youth Teaching Resources

May 6, 2018



Easter: Keeping Close (April 1-May 20)

John 15:9-17 – “Real Love”

John 17:6-19 – “Questions of Belonging”

John 15:26-16:15 (RCL 15:26-27, 16:4b-15) – “Goodbye,
and Hello”

Season After Pentecost: The Perils of Pauline ... Thinking (May 27-July 8)

Romans 8:12-17 – “In the Flesh, of the Spirit”

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YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

How many times have you said, “If you would just follow my rules!”? If it makes you feel any better, Jesus said the same thing. It really would be easier if our students followed all of our rules that we put out there; our students would be safe and be kept out of trouble. But what would happen if our students only followed what we told them and never took the lead. Maybe our rules should loosen overtime to allow our students to do more leading instead of following. How many of our rules are restrictive instead of providing boundaries for our students to lead. Jesus did ask us to follow his rules, but he provided a caveat that allowed for boundaries to lead through: “love one another as I have loved you.”

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your time together by creating equal numbered teams and challenge them to list as many songs that have “friend” in the title. If the students have trouble coming up with the titles of songs, expand the list to include any song that has “friend” in the lyrics. Allow the groups five minutes to come up with their lists and call time. After time is called, have the first group begin to read off their list of songs, if another group has the same song, both teams cross the song off the list. Continue until each team has read their list and crown a winner with the group that has the most original songs. When you have crowned the winner, facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Was this activity easier or more difficult than you thought it would be? Explain.
- 2) Why is friendship such a popular topic in song lyrics?
- 3) What other topic might rival the topic of friendship in song lyrics?
- 4) How does your faith impact the way you view friendship?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading John 15:9-17. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) How does love part of and a result of abiding in God's love?
- 2) What is the commandment that Jesus wants us to follow? What does this look like today?
- 3) Do we really have to "lay down our life" for Christ? Explain your answer.
- 4) Why does Jesus want to be friends with us instead of his servants? What added responsibilities does this give you?
- 5) How does being friends with Christ draw others to Christ?

If you group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) What hymns speak of the friendship we have with Jesus?
- 2) Is being friends with God a new idea that Jesus introduced to the disciples?
- 3) How would this text have been heard when it was originally written versus reading it now?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": Did Jesus really tell the disciples everything he knew?

Transformation

Conclude your time together by showing the clip "My First Friend" from *Wonder*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why would this have been Auggie's first friend? How does the mom react?
- 2) Why would it be difficult for Auggie to find friends? Why can it be difficult to have friends?
- 3) What makes friendship difficult?
- 4) How is friendship about loving one another?
- 5) How can you be friends with Jesus as he wants us to be?

Close with a prayer asking God to forgive us when we turn our backs on the friendship that we have between us.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

What a friend—Most readers are no doubt familiar with the hymn “What a Friend We Have In Jesus,” so popular that it has appeared in 1,458 hymnals, according to Hymnary.org. Surprisingly, Joseph Scriven, the author of the lyrics, never intended it for publication. Scriven was an Irishman who moved to Canada at age 25, according to Ira D. Sankey in his memoir, *My Life and Sacred Songs*. Sankey reports that Scriven (1820-1886) was a devoted Christian of humble demeanor who was not known to have a poetic bent until he fell ill shortly before his death. A neighbor who had come to sit with him ran across the handwritten poem and found it delightful. When asked about it, Scriven said he had written it for his mother, “to comfort her in a time of special sorrow,” and had not planned for anyone else to see it. (*My Life and Sacred Songs* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906], 279-80).

Surely Scriven must have been familiar with John’s depiction of a farewell discourse in which Jesus gathered his disciples around him a few hours before his arrest, and talked to them about friendship. “I do not call you servants any longer,” Jesus said, “... but I have called you friends” (v. 15).

Friends with God?—Have you ever noticed how the Hebrew scriptures talk about God’s willingness to be a friend? Exodus 33:11 says “*The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.*” And in Isaiah 41:8, God speaks of “*Abraham, my friend.*” Can you imagine being friends with God?

Frederick Buechener describes it this way in his classic devotional book, *Whistling in the Dark*:

It is not something God does. It is something Abraham and God, or Moses and God, do together. Not even God can be a friend all by himself apparently. You see Abraham, say, not standing at all but sitting down, loosening his prayer shawl, trimming the end off his cigar. He is not being Creature for the moment, and God is not being Creator. There is no agenda. They are simply being together, the two of them, and being themselves.

Is it a privilege only for patriarchs? Not as far as Jesus is concerned at least. “You are my friends,” he says, if you do what I command you.” The command, of course, is “to love one another,” as he puts it. To be his friends, that is to say, we have to be each other’s friends, conceivably even lay down our lives for each other. You never know (John 15:12-15). It is a high price to pay, and Jesus does not pretend otherwise, but the implication is that it’s worth every cent.

(*Whistling in the Dark: An ABC Theologized* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988], pp. 49-50).

Digging Deeper *continued*

Love as a virtue—In commenting on this text, David S. Cunningham posits that “Love in this sense is a *theological virtue*: an excellence of character that God has by nature and in which we participate by grace. Such love is primarily interested in the good of the other person, rather than one’s own. It does not attempt to possess or dominate the other. Nor is it limited by the scarcities that are imposed by time and place: one can have a few good friends and fewer lovers, but one can have *agapē* for all.” (*In Feasting on the Word, Year B*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, vol. 2 of Accordance electronic ed. [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008], paragraph 11016.)

Reading in three tenses—As we read this text, it is helpful to consider multiple perspectives. First, we try to put ourselves in the place of the disciples. How would they have heard Jesus’ call to friendship and his call to sacrificial love? When we read from that perspective, we probably think immediately of Christ’s coming crucifixion.

Second, imagine how you would hear these words if you were among the first to read John’s gospel. Most scholars believe it was written late in the first century and directed to a Christian community that was facing trial and potential persecutions. In that context, a reader would be more likely to think of the possibility that he or she might literally be faced with the possibility of dying for their faith – or for a friend.

Finally, we ask how these words speak to us in our own context. While the threat of martyrdom may seem far away, we live in such a self-directed culture that even the thought of loving generosity may seem radical. In our setting, the text reminds us that the gift of being friends with Christ calls us to self-giving love for others, too.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Did Jesus really tell the disciples everything he knew?

In v. 15 of today's text, the Fourth Gospel asserts that Jesus said a remarkable thing: "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."

Could that be true, that Jesus revealed to the disciples *everything* he had heard from the Father? Obviously, we can't really answer that question with confidence. We have no way of knowing just what Jesus knew, or when. Jesus' life as God-made-flesh will always be a mystery to us. Though it seems clear that Jesus surrendered some heavenly prerogatives and was self-limited in some ways, we can't say to what extent he maintained a heavenly consciousness.

The gospels portray Jesus as spending much time in prayer, taking his burdens to the Father, but we have no way of knowing how and when the Father spoke to Jesus. Luke's story of Jesus bewildering the rabbis on a temple visit at age 12 suggests that he was very perceptive from a very young age (Luke 2:41-52). Could he, or would he have revealed to the disciples every detail of his knowledge?

I suspect the point of the story is that Jesus didn't keep secrets: the verse probably does not suggest that Jesus spelled out every possible thing he knew – how could the disciples have comprehended or held it all? But Jesus did not conceal what was about to happen, even to keep from causing them pain. He did not keep the divine plan secret, but openly shared with his friends what he knew: he was about to die, but would rise again. It was going to be a hard and lonely road, but in traveling it he would become the savior of the world.