

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

LOOK

Share your personal definition of friendship. What is most important to you in a friend? What do you value most in being a friend?

What has been your experience of Facebook social networking? Do you think virtual relationships decrease loneliness? Or contribute to it?

BOOK

John 15:9-17

9(Jesus said), "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. 12"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15I 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. 16You 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.

17I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

- 1) In the time of Jesus, to call someone a friend had business, political, and hospitality implications. Friend implied equality. Friend implied trust. What are the implications of Jesus calling us friends? How does honesty and 'plain talk' function in this friendship?
- 2) Discuss this statement of Jesus: "you did not choose me, but I chose you." Do we have a choice whether or not to be friends with Jesus? Are all of us chosen?
- 3) Jesus commands us to love one another as he loves us. Did Jesus really expect the disciples to die for him? Does he expect that of us?
- 4) Discuss verse 16: So that whatever you ask in my name, the Father will give you. How does that square with our experiences each day?

TOOK

- 1) What has been your experience of friendships in general? (positive? disappointing?) Would you say you have a friendship with Jesus? If so, how does your friendship with Jesus compare and contrast with your other friendships?
- 2) Jesus tells us to lay down our lives for our friends. What might you need to 'lay down' each day that is keeping you from loving others the

way Jesus asks? Attitudes, priorities, the past, attachments?

3) Dr. Peter Storey is quoted as saying “When we invite Christ into our lives, he insists that we let him bring his friends with him.” Which friends of Jesus do you find difficult to welcome? How can we be more inclusive in who we love?

4) How do you develop a friendship? (spend time together, talk together, help each other, learn about each other). How would you go about building a friendship with Jesus?

“Love is work made visible.” Kahlil Gibran

“True love loves the other into greater growth.”