

Abide in Love

FRIENDSHIP • EASTER 6 • YEAR B

JOHN 15:9-17

PreK-
K



6

What is happening in this story?

John's version of the greatest commandment goes beyond Matthew and Mark in expounding on what it means to love God and others as God loves us. Jesus simplifies and intensifies the law: all of God's laws are meant to be motivated by love, not by a sense of obligation. Jesus shows this love on the cross. His use of friendship is also important. In the ancient world, friendship was taken seriously. Putting another's needs equal to one's own implies Jesus is looking for companions in his mission, not servants.

Why does this story matter for kids?

This text makes a high demand on friendship, telling us the greatest thing to do is to lay down our lives for our friends! As kids learn to make and maintain friendships, they can see how this boils down to everyday life. A friendship shouldn't be based solely on what we get out of it. Instead, being a good friend means showing concern for other people and taking their feelings into account every day. We can "lay down our lives for our friends" by simply caring about them every day.

What is the lectionary connection?

During the Easter season, the readings interpret the message of the Resurrection and what it means for us. This message of love and the idea of a "new model" of faith (i.e., the friendship of God) help us to understand the message of Easter for today. Easter is a time in which we learn about developing a relationship with a resurrected Christ.

AGE LEVEL TIP

Young kids might understand Jesus' command to love one another as a rule to follow, like staying in line or doing chores. Throughout the lesson, remind kids that we love others because Jesus loves us. We are friends with Jesus, and we pass his friendship and love on to others.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Crayons
- Scissors
- Clear tape
- Markers

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Play clay
- Plastic Easter egg
- Mural paper
- Heart stickers (several per kid)
- Rubber bands (4 per kid)

WHIRL SUPPLIES • WHIRL STORY BIBLES • DVD • FLOOR MAT • LEAFLETS

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Let's make some grapes with the clay.

Have kids roll clay into balls, creating bunches of grapes and even a vine if there's enough time and kids. As more kids arrive, prompt kids who are making grapes to invite their friends to make grapes with them.

Invite kids to stand around the Floor Mat.

Point out the season (Easter), color (yellow), and icon (butterfly). **Today our lesson is about Jesus being the greatest friend the disciples ever had. Jesus is our friend today too. And we are all friends with each other. Because Jesus shares his love with us, we can share it with each other. One sign of friendship is holding hands.** Invite kids to hold hands around the circle.

Pass around an empty Easter egg. **The empty egg reminds us of the empty tomb. Jesus is alive! When it's your turn to open the egg, say, "We are friends with Jesus."**

Pass out leaflets and crayons.

What do you see in these pictures? Allow time for responses. **They are all pictures of friends doing things together—sharing, helping, playing, hugging. How do you know they are friends? Which of these**

things have you done with friends? Invite kids to circle the photos that show something they have done with friends. **What other things do you do with your friends?** Allow time for responses. Collect their leaflets until Respond.

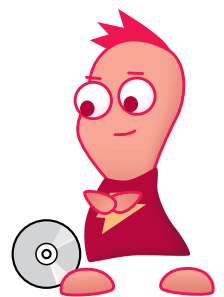
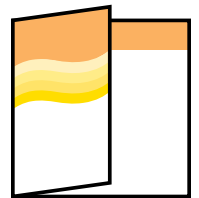
Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

In the video, Otto works hard to impress someone. I wonder who he's trying to impress.

View Episode 12, "Jesus Inc.," on the Whirl Year B Spring PreK–Grade 2 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **What things did Otto do when he thought he needed to impress Jesus?**
- **How did all of that work affect Otto?**
- **What did Otto learn when he tried to mail himself?**
- **Would you rather be bossed around or loved? Why?**
- **What's something you've seen someone do to share God's message of love?**



Pass out Whirl Story Bibles to kids.

Let's find our story today! Help kids find "Jesus the Vine" on page 386. Start by pointing out the graphic that shows the butterfly in the yellow circle for the Easter season. Before you read, invite kids to look for the living branches and the cut branches.



Read the story and Ada and Otto's questions and comments on each page.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- What kind of plant did Jesus say God's family is like?
- Jesus told his disciples that he was their friend and that he loved them very much. What did Jesus say he would do for them?
- Who do you love?
- What command did Jesus give his disciples?
- How can we pass on God's love to others?

Play together!

Jesus said to "go and love others so they know God's love." God's love is like a game of tag—when you catch it, you want to pass it on. Have kids play a special game of tag in an open space. Pass out several heart stickers to each kid for tagging their friends. Everyone tags others at the same time until everyone is tagged. **Tag your friends with the heart stickers. The hearts represent God's love being passed on to our friends. When you put a sticker on someone, say, "[Name] is my friend!"** Be sure all kids are included as a friend.

BIBLE BIT

- The fruit in this passage is an outward symbol of an inward faith. Branches connected to the vine will grow good fruit, but disconnected branches won't bear any good fruit.

WATCH IT AGAIN

- If you watch the video again, note how Clara tries to tell Otto that Jesus is our friend, not our boss. Whose words did she use?

OUR CHURCH

- How does your church follow Jesus' command to love others? Share with the kids about a global ministry or program your church supports that shows Jesus' love to others.

RESPOND 10

Pass out leaflets and crayons.

Unfold and tear off leaflet square.

1. Draw a large vine on mural paper and tape it horizontally to a wall.
2. **Jesus said God's family is like a healthy vine full of big grapes. He told his friends to pass on his love to those around them.**
3. Review ways God's love can be passed on to others that were discussed in response to the video and Bible story questions. If kids struggle, suggest things like sharing, helping, or giving a hug.
4. Invite kids to draw or write in the space provided in the grape cluster a way they can pass on God's love to others.
5. **Jesus told his friends to stay connected to him and his love. We are also Jesus' friends! When we stay connected to Jesus, it's easier to share his love with others.**
6. **Jesus said he is like a vine and we are like branches. That's how we stay close to him. Let's attach our branches to the Jesus vine!**
7. Help kids attach their branches to the large vine with tape. Tape carefully so that the squares can be removed and Family Squares can go home intact.
8. Invite kids to share the "fruit" they drew on their branches. Find matches (several kids might have drawn "helping," for example). Find ones that are different.

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Today we learned that Jesus loves us and is our greatest friend. Jesus wants us to share his love with our friends too. How can you share Jesus' love this week? Take time to hear kids' responses.

Pass out leaflet panels, scissors, and rubber bands.

Jesus wants us to stay connected to him. Invite kids to cut the panel into two squares along the dark blue line. Fold each square in half. Use two rubber bands to "connect" Jesus to each kid on their arms and/or legs. Then have kids tap their Jesus pictures against other kids' pictures.

Send kids out.

Pass the empty Easter egg around the circle, saying, **"We are friends with Jesus and we love others!"**

Pray together: **Dear Jesus, thank you for being our friend. Help us share your love with others. Amen.**

Thank kids for showing how to be good friends by sharing, listening, and helping each other in class today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.