

3. BLESSING in the era of Jesus & The New Testament

a) Jesus—Luke 12:4; John 15:13-15; 16:27; 17:23-26

From your knowledge of the New Testament discuss the following:

- ♦ “God so befriended the world that he gave his only Son...”
- ♦ The meaning of “Immanuel” speaks of God’s friendship with us.
- ♦ Jesus was accused of being a “friend of sinners” - good or bad news?

b) Era of the Church/Apostles—Matt. 26:31-46; John 13-17; Acts 9:4; Rom. 8:15-16, 23; Gal. 2:20; Philippians 2:13; 3:10; Col. 3:4; 1 John 1:3

Just as God was with His people down the ages, Jesus’ takes friendship to a new level in his time with his disciples in the upper room. After his ascension to the Father in heaven, by the power of the Spirit, we have his promise of intimate presence and company by the Holy Trinity:

Jesus answered him, ‘Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. (John 14:23)

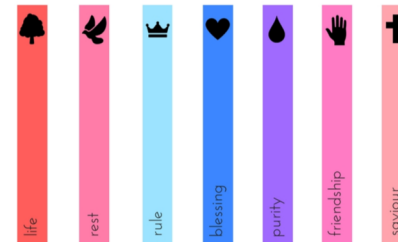
- ♦ **Read 1 John 1:1-3** aloud as an affirmation of God’s friendship initiated and established in Jesus, and acknowledge the call to fellowship with God and one another in prayer.

4. Going further

- ♦ How might the stream of grace that is Friendship be helpful in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus today?
- ♦ The Scriptures often picture the end of all things as a great banquet table for all who are God’s children. What’s good about this image and promise?
- ♦ In a world where un-friending someone is as far away as the push of a button, what does real “face-to-face” community in the Church offer to your community?

The members of St. Michael’s Anglican Church acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation as the traditional custodians of this land, and pay our respects to their elders past, present and future.

7 STREAMS of GRACE



Do you remember the board game, Battleships? Opponents would each place toy ships on their own plastic grid running from A-J and 1-10 hidden behind a screen? One player calls out a coordinate like B6, and the opposing player looks at the toy ships on their hidden board to discover a “hit” or “miss”.

Our sermon series *Seven Streams of Grace* (SSoG) divides the whole Bible up into a huge rectangular grid, similar to the old board game. A large poster hangs in the church space or can be found on-line. The rows represent the “streams” or themes of God’s saving grace that run through the valley and rivers of the whole Bible, and the columns represent the “eras” (milestones in Biblical history) in which each book of the Bible is set. This Bible study is part of the journey and can be used as a devotional study, but is best suited to group discussion. Join us on this journey along the rivers of grace down the ages for life, for love and for our salvation.

• Steve Webster

Bible Study Notes for session #6 Friendship

1. Warm Up

Discuss:

- ♦ What would you say constitutes a “good friend”?
- ♦ Look up as many translations of Proverbs 18:24 as you can find (e.g. NRSV, The Message, Living Bible, etc.). What does each half of the verse have to say about friends? Does it ring true? What other divine layer of suggestion might be present in the second half of the verse?

2. **FRIENDSHIP in the Old Testament**

α) Creation, Fall, Separation—Genesis 1-3

The creation narratives of Genesis 1-3 describe God as speaking with Adam and Eve, sharing the task of work with them, “walking” with them in the pleasurable circumstances of the wonderful garden in the cool of the day. There is a sense of **friendship with God** right from the beginning of creation. Such descriptions of God in anthropomorphic terms must have been stunning in contrast to “gods” of many other nations and traditions in the Ancient Near East and also in times when the Jews were in exile.

Yet, the friendship was thoroughly decimated when the man and woman rebelled against their benevolent maker. Their betrayal forfeited the very fabric of their friendship—in today’s terms, they “un-friended” God. The consequences were catastrophic and banished from the garden and guarded from returning, they could do nothing to un-betray their forfeited friendship.

⇒ Could God forgive such betrayal and reconcile the friendship?

b) Ancestors/Patriarchs—Genesis 18; James 2:23

The sermon for this theme (<http://www.stmichaelsnc.org.au/7-streams-of-grace/>) helpfully explains the significance of God’s friendship with Abraham as a means of restoring humanity. In this passage God submits to Abraham’s hospitality—God receives Abraham’s presence and service with pleasure. Via some divine visitors, God speaks with Abraham and Sarah, reminding us of the garden scenes with Adam and Eve.

⇒ Read Genesis 18:17-21. In human terms, how does God treat Abraham in these verses?

⇒ Read Genesis 18:26-33. How does God respond to Abraham’s persistent entreating? Who will do this again with God in future (see Exodus 32 and Numbers 14)?

⇒ How might the idea that Abraham was a “friend of God” (James 2:23) have been encouraging to God’s people down the ages in contrast to the gods of other nations, and in times of peril/exile?

c) Exodus era – Exodus 3:12-17; 6:1-8; 32-34; Numbers 14; Hosea 11

- ◆ What does the revealing of God’s *personal* name to Moses imply about friendship and salvation?
- ◆ Why is meeting with Moses “face-to-face” so significant?
- ◆ What does Israel as God’s “first-born *son*” suggest to you about the relationship God wants with humanity?

d) Era of kings – 1 Kings 8-9; 2 Chronicles 7; Psalms

For hundreds of years Yahweh ‘tabernacled’ with his people. Camping with the tent of the Lord in their midst all through their travels and in the Promised Land, especially as they fought their battles. With the times of conquest complete, peace established, God’s presence moved from nomadic to permanent—fellowship with God as a constant, though still mediated by priests and temple.

Zoom in on this era by looking at the intimacy between David and Yahweh:

⇒ Scan the following psalms with a highlighter in hand and mark moments of trust, personal knowledge, interest in aspects of life—Psalms: 3; 7; 18; 34; 51; 52; 54; 56; 57; 60; 142

e) Era of Remnant – Nehemiah 8

Ezra was the last high priest to serve in the first temple (2 Ki 25:18) and a close relative of Joshua. He had come to Jerusalem 12 or 13 years previous to Nehemiah after the exile was ended and had retired into private life. He worked on a complete edition of the canonical Scriptures, for the reading of same was required by the law every seventh year, but during the long period of the captivity this, and many other practices, had fallen into neglect.

- ◆ Upon hearing the Scriptures after so long, why did the remnant community grieve? Why the joy?