

OBSTACLES TO GOD'S FRIENDSHIP

Introductory information for the team member:

This talk is given by an adult team member. Before the talk begins, a team member is assigned at the morning team meeting, he should make sure that the Holy Spirit pins (one for each member of the group) are on a table near the podium so that they are readily available when the time comes to distribute them during the talk.

The purpose of this talk is to show that although God offers us His friendship---and we have already seen some of the results of this friendship in our lives---we can allow obstacles to get in the way of that friendship.

The goal is to get across the fact that while we are basically good, we still have the freedom to block friendship in our lives. The talk points out that we can allow obstacles to come between us and friendship with ourselves, other and God. We have the freedom and the power to limit the depth of a friendship and the freedom to refuse the offer of a friendship.

Since this talk can take on amore negative tone than the other talks given during the retreat, it is important that the speaker point out that we are still lovable beings even though we can allow obstacles to block the growth of friendship.

The talk should end on a positive note. The spirit pins are distributed toward the end of the talk to remind the retreatants that God's offer of friendship is a constant offer; all we have to do is accept the offer.

Outline for the talk:

Introduction:

I have been told that this is probably the most difficult of all the talks to give. I believe it is also one of , if not the, most important talk given on this retreat---because, unless you believe what I say today, the other things make no sense. This talk is about being lovable and how vital it is for you to see yourself as lovable. It doesn't make sense to tell you God loves you; there's no sense in telling you to know yourself if you don't love yourself. We can give all those talks on ideals and goals and piety. They may sound great, but if you don't leave this room without even beginning to think something about you is unique, special and lovable---then those talks are a waste of time. Unless, you have a good self-image and realize that deep down inside of you there is something unique and special, you will not be able to relate to any of those talks. I know it sounds strange to say this could be more important than a talk on God's friendship, but if you don't believe you are lovable, how can we tell you about a God who loves you?

This talk also focuses on the negative things that we do to block friendship, to limit its growth or to refuse it all together. It is necessary that we look at some ways we can hinder friendship if we want to enter more fully into a relationship.

Body of the talk:

- I. How can we be lovable?
 - A. In “little things” (refer back to “Results of God’s Friendship talk---give examples). Don’t envy the person you see as extraordinary compared to you--- know the “little things” you do make you lovable.
 - B. By using our ingenuity. Something you think of as a “silly” idea could be the answer to a serious problem for someone else. (Give concrete examples.)Don’t be afraid to share ideas. Look around your tales---no one there has the same life experience you’ve had. If you don’t share your feelings and experiences, people are missing out. You are lovable when you share ideas.
 - C. In silence---sometimes a friend needs only our presence, no conversation---an ear to listen, a nod of the head., (Give personal examples from your life of being lovable in silence.)
- II. We don’t ever fully understand friendship.
 - A. Review a point or two from the “God’s Friendship” talk---mystery, gift, freedom, or anything of your choosing.
 - B. Mention some positive results of God’s friendship in your life---a letter, a gift, etc.
- III. Things happen that block the growth of God’s friendship. There are forces in our lives which work against the power of friendship. We all are familiar with them.
 - A. The world---It’s philosophy can be “get them before they get you”.
Materialism, a warped sense of values, the need to own more than we’ll ever need or the need to acquire things just to own them.
 - B. The flesh---We can hurt our bodies with the abuse of alcohol, sex, drugs. We can become addicted to pleasure and, by doing so, we give up our freedom because we are no longer in control. “Everybody does it” or “I’m not hurting anybody” philosophies are deceptive and misleading.

- C. The devil---There is within every human being an inclination toward evil. And, as much as we may not want to admit it, there is evil at work in the world around us. We are tempted, we find things attractive that we know are harmful. We can joke that “the devil made us do it” or that “I didn’t know what I was doing---just lost my head, I guess.” But we are responsible for our actions, and we cannot shift that responsibility on to any thing or anyone else.
- IV. Myself---I can be an obstacle to friendship.
- A. Sometime I don’t like myself.
- B. Sometimes I am afraid or scared to let others know exactly who I really am. At times like this I respond by using “put downs” or making fun of other people or retreating into myself and not talking to anyone. Fear, especially when it has to do with our own self-esteem, is a powerful force in our lives.
- V. I am going to talk about some of the masks that we wear (Choose 8-10 of the masks listed below.), and I want you to write them down in your notebooks. (Just have them write the name of the mask and their own brief notes.) Give a graphic description of each mask (the defenses) people use. The following are only suggestions. Use your own creativity and discretion---feel free to add to the suggestions.)

The Clown	The Mirror	The Ice Cube
The Clam	The Sex Symbol	The Mouth
The Brain	The Body	The Gang
The Vacationer	The Pillow	The Jock
The Demolition Expert	The Drone Bee (does nothing)	The Convenience Man
The Sponge	The Complainer	Mr. “G.Q.”
The Tape Recorder	The Philosopher	Gossip Central
Mr. Cloud	The Party-er	The Scorer
Mr. Alcohol	The Macho Man	The Wisher

After discussing a number of different masks, tell the retreatants that you know they may be thinking, “Who does this person think he/she is---telling us that we wear masks; that we are afraid to reveal our true selves to others?”

1) Share with the retreatants that you too are an obstacle to God’s friendship.. Share the fact that you have worn masks in your life. Give examples that are personal and specific.

2) All of us are obstacles to God's friendship at times., Point out that we all use defense mechanisms and that's okay, but when people see more of these masks than they see of who we really are---that's not good.

VI. God still befriends us. Regardless of the masks we wear---of the defenses we use to hide our true selves---the boundless love of God surrounds us and patiently waits for us to respond; waits for us to reveal our true lovable selves.

Conclusion:

- I. God's love for me is an inexhaustible mystery. Even when I cannot feel God's presence, He is still there and loves me. Despite the fact that I get down on myself at times; despite the fact that I am an obstacle to the friendship of others and even God, God still accepts me for what and who I am. This may be difficult to accept, but it is true nonetheless.
- II. Now, I would like the student team leaders to come forward and get pins for their groups. When you get your pin, please just hold it in your hand. "Begin soft instrumental music and continue having it played as you read the next two paragraphs.)

You now have the opportunity to learn how an object becomes a symbol and how a symbol comes to be full of meaning. I want you to hold the pin and look at it silently.

What you hold in your hand is a piece of metal. It is gold colored. It is in the shape of a bird. It is that. And it would have always been just that, a piece of gold-colored metal shaped like a bird if it had not been for KAIROS. Now that piece of metal is more than a decoration for an article of clothing. It is a symbol. It has come to represent a whole experience. It represents four days you spent here. It will always stand as a reminder of meeting with a group of people in a small room where honesty was shared and friendship deepened. It will always remind me of (mention by name each fellow leader) and each of you.

Please put your pins on now. When you wear this pin, others may think it is an interesting decoration, a piece of metal shaped like a bird, gold in color. You will always know better. It is more.

In the Christian tradition, when we speak of the persistent presence of God's love, we often use the symbol of the dove as a carrier of God's love---the Holy Spirit. These Spirit pins are visible reminders of our fundamental belief in our deepest identity---that we are carriers of God's love. They are to remind us that God is always with us and loves us. He has said, "I know you by name, you are mine always." In this God says, "You are important to me. I accept you as you are, though I want the best in you to come out better and better. When it is painful, I'll be there. I love you unconditionally."

Please remember: we are all---every single one of us---lovable in the eyes of God. We are indeed fountains of God's love.

Start your closing song, leave, change to informal clothes and join the group at the "silent lunch".

Note: You might want to use the poem on the next page of this manual as a handout.

The Rector now takes over:

When the closing song ends, tell the retreatants that everyone is to go immediately to lunch in silence and that they are to remain silent throughout the entire lunch. Make it clear that that they are very serious about this. (The Assistant Rector should make sure that the music 'box' is set up in the dining room and that instrumental music is playing during lunch.) After the rector designates someone to say an original grace, restate the importance of silence during lunch and tell the group that after lunch they will be dismissed by groups to go out and have their group picture taken and that they are then free until 1:15 p.m., when they are to be in the main room. (Immediately after the pictures are done, the meeting room with eh director to go over the Shared Prayer Experience that will take place this evening.)

MASKS

In the closet of my mind I have a hundred masks
To wear appropriately as the case demands.
Carefully I let each person I know
See the mask upon my features
That fits what they would like to see me be.
So I have one mask for my parents,
Another for my teachers,
Still another for my friends.
I have masks to impress those of whom I am jealous
And those of whom I am afraid.
I let those who dislike me seeing something different from what I share
With those who find me likeable.
And do you know---
What should be a slick trick
To interchange my masks at will
Has brought me only confusion and additional worries?
Suppose I wore the wrong mask
At the wrong time with the wrong person?
Suppose I forgot where I was
And startled whoever I was with by showing them a stranger
They had never met before?
What then?
Sometimes when I am alone with God,
I try on many masks to fool HIM,
But I always fail.
I feel so naked and exposed
Without protection in his sight.
He knows me as I am and as I can become.
When I accept this, then I can relax with Him.
Help me, Lord, to put away my many masks in the closet of my mind to gather dust.
Let me be myself as You can see me
Before all people.
I'm really tired of playing games.

(Copies of this can be distributed after the talk if the speaker wishes.)