

My Friend God



by Christine M. Greenland

Illustrations by Rosalie V. Grafe

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Tract Association of Friends

1515 Cherry Street
Philadelphia PA 19102
215-357-3977
www.tractassociation.org

When I was about three years old, my mother and I sat under our favorite tree – a very tall cottonwood by a stream in Colorado. She read some of my favorite stories, some of them from the Bible. She said that God was invisible, and stretched to the ends of the universe, but could also become very small, too, like the ant crawling over my toes. She told me God was her best Friend. I wanted to talk to her invis-



ble Friend, too! She said that she hoped that God would be my Friend. But there were rules. Sometimes God might seem to play hide and seek. That meant that I was talking too much, looking in the wrong place, or maybe just wanting things my way. I should know that God was there all along, just waiting. If I stopped to listen, then I could laugh and play with our Friend. It took me a long time to learn how to be quiet enough, still

enough to really listen.

My mother said that many people have special names for God, based upon how they met God in their lives. That was all right. It was very important to look at what they

did, since even if they didn't know the names we used, the same, real Spirit guided everyone, IF they were willing to



follow. Some were not, she said. If people were very angry, or busy pretending to be important, or even pretending to be nice, they might not really know God. Pretending wasn't the real thing. If people really did look out for each other and encourage each other to do good things, that was a start at learning about what God wanted me to do.

People might not always agree with each other, but if they were truly kind to each other, helped each other and really cared about what happened

both at home or in the whole world,
that's how they could work together
to find out what God wanted. In sort-
ing this out together we could learn
about God's work. But there were
some people who pretended to know
God – and really didn't. When we
picked cherries or apples, she told me
that people were
a bit like fruits,
too. Some fruits
that had odd
shapes or differ-



ent colors were still good. If they looked good, one had to look closely. Just like apples, it was sometimes really hard to tell. An apple that looked all right from the outside might have a tiny soft spot at the blossom end, and would be rotten inside.

Sometimes I felt like I had tiny soft spots, too. Sometimes I didn't feel like playing with God or anyone else. I wanted things MY way. I did NOT want to listen. I wanted to do all the talking, and to be the center of atten-

tion. I pretended a lot. But this didn't make me happy at all! I forgot what friendship was. When things went wrong, I missed the goodness. I was very lonely. I cried a lot. I talked to



people. I read lots of books. But God wasn't in big ideas or make-believe, or all the things I did

to feel less alone and more important.

One day, when I was reading the Bible, there was this insisting pull. Suddenly, there I was with my Friend, right in the Bible story. It wasn't time for play. I learned that I was hiding behind words and ideas and things and even people. If I wanted to be happy, I had to quit hiding. I had to quit playing make-believe. I had to give up all the things that kept me from listening to my Friend. I did not want to hear this! But I knew inside that I couldn't hide any more. My Friend really wanted me to learn to BE a friend, not a pretender. I was pulled into that

particular story because I had something important to learn.

My Friend seems to be both a time-traveler and a shape shifter. God has been around forever: long ago, in the future, but always NOW, and always new. Sometimes I see God peeking out of a very kind person's eyes,



sometimes in the eyes of someone who really needs help. Sometimes I see my Friend in eyes of a mouse or



mole hiding in a hole
in my garden, some-
times beyond the
shooting stars in the
dark night sky, or between the whirl of
snowflakes or drizzly drops of a foggy
morning. Sometimes I hear God roar-
ing above the noise and stormy whirl
of my own thinking. My Friend is
awesome. How can I choose what
might go against such a Friend? There
isn't any place to hide. No place at all.
I need to wait and listen and learn
from my Friend. My Friend will show

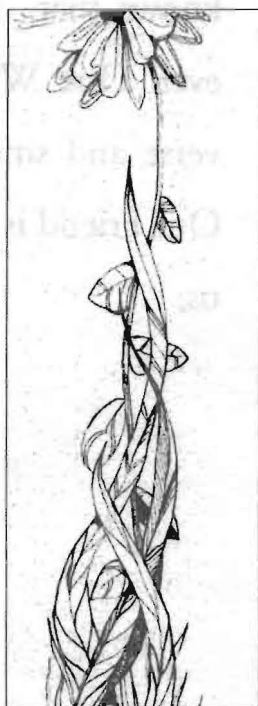


me what to do next, but may not give me everything I want. God knows better than that.

If we learn to be very still and look around, and listen for the hints that show where God is, we can all be friends. My



Friend God can be your Friend, too. But there is a big secret that sometimes grown-ups forget: God always waits until you are ready. There is homework. We may not know it. Maybe we don't want to do it at all. Sometimes we think it's too hard. God has this trick of waiting until we really listen. Only then does this friendship grow to light up our lives.



Your experience with our Friend will be slightly different because you are wonderfully different from me. God knows that. That's the way friends are, even One Who is larger than the universe and smaller than a speck of dust. Our Friend is here, now, waiting to teach us.



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