



FRANCIS  
— AND —  
FRIENDS

PARENTS'  
GUIDE

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## The Great Commandment

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your Heart, and all your Soul, and all your Mind, and with all your Strength."

*The Gospel of Mark 12:30*

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## Dear Parents

As a father of two, I've always wanted resources that would help our family to better explore our spirituality through time in nature. As a pastor, I've always wanted a fun way to teach kids about the essentials of living a fulfilled and faithful life. Francis and Friends is the expression of both of these longings of my soul.

Much has been written in recent years about "nature deficit disorder" among our children, a phrase coined by Richard Louv and explained in his book *The Last Child in the Woods*. Time spent in nature is a primary way for kids to grow physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. We are in danger of losing this connection as we become more and more insulated from the world around us. Francis and Friends is a resource to help families and communities get kids back outdoors: to be filled with awe and wonder and to strengthen family bonds. It is built upon the loving, inclusive teachings of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare and it centers each child's life in the Great Commandment to love God with all our Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength.

Francis and Friends is part of the larger Following the Way<sup>®</sup> family of resources. I am creating these offerings to help people realize the amazing potential of a life full of love for God, self and others. To learn more, visit [www.followingtheway.me](http://www.followingtheway.me)

May you laugh, learn and love as your family goes Following the Way with Francis and Friends.

Christ's peace,  
Rich



*Rev. Rich Nelson is a disciple of Jesus, father of two boys, and an Episcopal priest. He has served as a pastor of both Episcopal and Lutheran churches, as a school chaplain, and as co-founder of a community non-profit outreach ministry. His current work centers around creating resources for deeper discipleship based around the Shema/Great Commandment. For more information about Rich and his work visit [www.revrichnelson.com](http://www.revrichnelson.com)*





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## About Francis and Clare

St. Francis of Assisi is perhaps the best-known and most-beloved saint who ever lived. Though he died over eight hundred years ago, he still has a huge following today. Francis was born into a well-to-do family in Italy in 1181. He spent the first few years of his adult life without much of a spiritual focus. However, following a vision in which God urged Francis to “re-build my church,” Francis changed his life completely and dedicated himself to serving God and the poor. He soon had a group of other men who wanted to join him. It was not too long before a young noble woman named Clare met Francis and started a similar group for women. Clare became well known in her own right for her similar commitment to simplicity, poverty, and compassion. She too became recognized as a saint and “the Poor Clares” is a movement that also continues to this day.

Francis appeals to a wide range of people because of his profound love for all living creatures, his love of the marginalized, his embrace of Sister Poverty, and his joyful love of God and all of creation. Francis continues to offer wisdom to us today as we seek to live out the Gospel. Francis and Clare’s simple messages of charity, joy and caring for creation naturally connects with children. This program seeks to make these values easily available to children and parents.



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## Our Cast of Friends

In this program you and your children will be introduced to Pastor Rich Nelson and his puppet animal friends:

### **Danny the Donkey, Sally the Squirrel and Olivia the Owl**

Danny, Sally and Olivia face the same kinds of challenges that children face:

***learning to share with others,  
feeling afraid of people or situations,  
learning to put our trust God,  
learning to be happy with what we have***

They will hear stories about **Francis and Clare** and watch cartoons to learn how they dealt with these challenges, empowering our animal friends (and your children!) to do the same.

**Following the Way<sup>®</sup> with Francis and Friends is a  
program with five units:**

	<b>Introduction</b> God loves everything God has made
	<b>Heart</b> We are called to help others
	<b>Soul</b> We are all brothers and sisters in God's family
	<b>Mind</b> We all live in God's kingdom
	<b>Strength</b> We are called to live simply and joyfully

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## **How This All Works**

Francis and Friends is a series of five videos that introduce the program and the four elements of the "Great Commandment" that we should love God with all our Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength. Each video features an animal puppet, a cartoon of Francis and Clare, and Rich Nelson, creator of the Following the Way<sup>®</sup> faith formation programs.

**1. Log in at [www.francisandfriends.org](http://www.francisandfriends.org)**

Use the password you receive at registration.

## **2. Choose one of the five units: Introduction, Heart, Soul, Mind or Strength**

We suggest you do the Introduction first. After that, the order of the units is up to you.

## **3. Watch the video for that unit with your child**

## **4. Choose your activities**

After watching one of the videos with your child, you will find 10+ downloadable activity sheets for each unit to help you take the lesson you just learned out into the world to experience and explore God's wonderful creation.

## **5. Chart your progress**

Chart your progress on the Passport you create in the Introduction Unit. Once your family completes at least 5 of the 10 activities for each unit, you can tell Francis and Clare you have completed the Heart, Soul, Mind or Strength unit and download a completion certificate.

## **6. Receive your completion medal**

Send a message to Francis and Clare when you get a completion certificate for all four units and within 2-3 weeks and your child will receive a high quality, completion medal and a congratulations note from Francis and Clare in the mail. One medal is included in the purchase price of the program (includes shipping). Medals for additional children can also be purchased for \$10 each.

## **7. Share the fun**

Read more on the next page about how you can enjoy the Francis and Friends program with other people. And let others know that such a thing exists on your social media. [Like Francis and Friends on Facebook](#) and [Pinterest](#). We are a small, independent publisher and word of mouth really helps!

Any other questions? Just ask! [francisandfriendsclub@gmail.com](mailto:francisandfriendsclub@gmail.com)

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## **Can We Do This With Other Families?**

Yes! Francis and Friends is even more fun when experienced with others. Consider starting up a Family Nature Club in your community using Francis and Friends as your curriculum. Or use the program as a Vacation Bible School or Sunday School program at church or at a preschool or religious school.

The Group Curriculum will give you everything you need to get started:

- Downloadable, reproducible Leaders' Guide
- Downloadable, reproducible workbooks for kids
- Links to a Vimeo page with all 5 videos (downloadable)
- Suggestions for finding local faith and nature resources
- Suggestions for songs and worship
- Suggestions for decorations and links to supplies
- Private Facebook Group to share ideas with other leaders
- Promotional Video
- Printable Promotional Posters and Fliers
- Five Medals (additional medals available for \$10 each)

Already purchase a Family Membership? Look on the last page of the Guidebook to get a discount code for \$50 off the purchase of a Group Membership.

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## **Do You Need to Be a Christian to Use Francis and Friends?**

The teachings of Francis and Clare are almost universally admired by people of all faiths. They speak to common human themes of care for others, the kinship of all creation, and the value of a life lived with simplicity and genuine love. This program is created by Christians and Jesus is talked about. However, this is not done in a proselytizing way. We honor the value and inherent worth of every major world religion. We genuinely hope that people of all faiths will enjoy Francis and Friends.



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## **God's Creation is discussed a lot. Is this program Creationist?**

No. We speak of God's creation as a way to recognize that God is the source of all life. We do not see a conflict between science and religion and this program does not espouse any particular theory about *how* the world came into being. We focus instead on the relationship between God, humanity, and the rest of nature and our important role as protector of our planet. By seeing all things as "brothers and sisters" as Francis taught, we grow into a deeper appreciation of our mutual source and destiny.

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## **Is There a Meaning to the Logo?**

Yes! Glad you asked! Each of the four color quadrants represents one of the four aspects of the Great Commandment to love God with all our Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength. The counter-clockwise rotation indicates that the journey described by Francis (and Clare, Jesus, and others) is counter-cultural to the values of the individualistic, consumerist society many people live by today. The figures in each of the four quadrants indicate children at play and, when viewed altogether, they form a flower - pointing towards the family faith and nature theme of the program.

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## **What is this other "Following the Way" program about?**

Following the Way<sup>®</sup> is the parent program of Francis and Friends. It is designed to enable adults (either in small groups or individually) to further explore the meaning of the Great Commandment in our daily lives. Learn more and discover your spiritual type at

**[www.followingtheway.me](http://www.followingtheway.me)**

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## Suggested Books about Francis and Clare

We encourage you to learn more about Francis and Clare! Below is a list of suggested works:

### **Children's Books**

Brother Sun, Sister Moon  
by Katherine Paterson et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/0811877345>

Adventures in Assisi: On the Path with St. Francis

by Amy Welborn et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/1616366508>

The Song of Francis

by Tomie dePaola

Link: <http://amzn.com/039925210X>

Francis: The Poor Man of Assisi

by Tomie DePaola

Link: <http://amzn.com/0823408124>

Saint Francis of Assisi: A Life of Joy

by Robert F. Kennedy et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/0786818751>

The Prayer of St. Francis

by Francis of Assisi

Link: <http://amzn.com/0809167670>

Saint Francis of Assisi

by Joyce Denham et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/1557255717>

### **Adult's Books**

Francis: The Journey and the Dream  
by Murray Bodo O.F.M. et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/1616364106>

Francis and Clare: The Complete Works  
(The Classics of Western Spirituality)

by Francis of Assisi et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/0809124467>

Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of  
Francis of Assisi

by Richard Rohr O.F.M.

Link: <http://amzn.com/1616367016>

The Little Flowers of Saint Francis (Dover  
Thrift Editions)

by Francis of Assisi et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/048643186X>

Tales of St. Francis: Ancient Stories for  
Contemporary Living

by Murray Bodo

Link: <http://amzn.com/0307885844>

St. Clare: A Short Biography

by Joan Mueller O.S.C. et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/1616365994>

Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love  
by Ilia Delio O.S.F.

Link: <http://amzn.com/0867167890>

Saint Clare: Beyond the Legend  
by Marco Bartoli

Link: <http://amzn.com/0867169508>