

LESSON 5: FAITH-FILLED FRIENDS

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1. LEADER PREPARATION**LESSON OVERVIEW**

Friendships are important to young people, and having friends who follow Jesus can greatly enrich teenagers' faith journey. The Bible offers priceless wisdom about maintaining true, lasting friendships. Jesus—the best friend we can ever have—knows what we really need to feel known, cared about, and loved. This lesson will help students understand the qualities of true Christian friendship, and how to live them out.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. **WHAT:** Teenagers can greatly benefit from the Bible's guidance about friendship.
2. **WHY:** Because friendships with other Jesus-followers help young people in their faith walk, it's good for them to discover what Christian friendships look like.
3. **HOW:** Students can grow in their relationship skills when they practice Bible truths in their lives.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:3-4

SECONDARY SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:19-22

TEACHING PREP

Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.

LEADER TIP Read Philippians 2:1-11.

While in prison in Rome, Paul writes this letter to Christians in Philippi, where he'd established a church with some ministry friends. Paul had grown close to the Philippians because they had encouraged him and were displaying a growing, joy-filled faith.

The second chapter of Philippians begins by focusing on attitude. Paul reminds readers that the way Christians treat one another really matters. He encourages us to put other people and their needs first, rather than being self-focused. And he challenges us to have a Christ-like attitude of serving. Paul wraps up this section by reminding the church that Jesus is Lord of all, and our greatest satisfaction in life is glorifying him. Amazingly, Paul is filled with joy even though he's imprisoned!

Verses 3-4 are a focal point of Paul's message. If we have the same attitude as Jesus and put other people above ourselves, our relationships will be honoring to everyone—even to those who don't yet know Jesus. Living this way draws people to Jesus while helping to create deep, meaningful friendships.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

TEXTS OR TWEETS

Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- *How can friends help you grow closer to Jesus? Come find out—and bring a friend!*
- *Want to learn how to be a great friend? Don't miss a great discussion this week!*

PARENT EMAIL

Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear Parents,

This week in our series “My New Life With Jesus,” we explored what the Bible says about friends. We discussed Philippians 2:3-4, which warns against selfishness and encourages us to have the same selfless, servant-oriented attitude that Jesus did. We discovered how to be a good friend by being authentic, being selfless, and speaking positively about people.

As you talk with your teenager about the lesson, you can ask one or more of these questions:

- *What characteristics do you most appreciate about your current friends? What would you change about them, if you could?*
- *How would you describe the kind of friend you are?*
- *What friendship characteristics would you like to improve?*
- *How can following Jesus' example help us be better friends—with people inside and outside our family?*

We're grateful for your prayers and support. Thanks for allowing us to partner with you!

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2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED

LEADER
TIP

Preview the following video clip for your group: www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/rudy/dress-in-my-place (or find another video about friendship). You'll need an Internet connection and a computer or tablet to display the video for your participants.

For each teenager, you'll also need paper or a notecard, as well as a pen or pencil.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then lead students in the opening activity.

Give each student a paper or notecard and a pen or pencil.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *If anyone has seen the movie Rudy, can you describe the plot? (If not, say that the movie is about a guy who lacks the grades, money, and skills to play football at his dream school, Notre Dame. But through a series of circumstances, Rudy finds his way onto the team. His teammates begin to consider him a true friend, even though he isn't much of an athlete.)*

We'll watch a clip that offers a glimpse into the kind of friendship Rudy has built with the other players and how it moves them to step up for Rudy. As you watch, jot down words that describe the football players' attitudes.

Play the clip.

ASK:

- *What words came to mind as you watched what the players did for Rudy?*
- *How would you feel if someone showed this kind of friendship to you?*
- *Think of a time you stood up for a friend. What was that like?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *This is just a Hollywood portrayal of one way to be a good friend. The best source of truth about friendship—and every other topic—is God's Word, the Bible. It offers valuable insight into how we can be a true friend. Today we'll look at qualities of true friendship and how to live them out.*

TEACHING POINTS

LEADER
TIP

Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. **Remember:** All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Philippians 2:3-4 together as a group. Because this passage is so brief, consider having students read the verses several times, from different translations of the Bible.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *These sound like really important instructions for life and friendship. But they also sound challenging to carry out. Let's talk about why these instructions are important and how we can put them into action.*

1. TRUE FRIENDS ARE AUTHENTIC

ASK:

- *Think about who you were friends with as a little kid. Why were those people your friends, and what did you like about them?*
- *Are you still good friends with any of those people? Why or why not?*
- *What are some qualities you really value in a friend?*
- *Verse 3 talks about being humble and not trying to impress others. Why is humility important in friendships—and in any type of relationship?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *It's not bad to want other people to be our friends. Sometimes, though, we think they won't like us for who we are, so we try to put on an act. But the Bible says friends are truly authentic with one another. In other words, there's no need to try to act cool or smart or to be anything you aren't.*

2. TRUE FRIENDS AREN'T SELFISH

ASK:

- *Think of something that really interests you, but doesn't interest many of your friends. What does it feel like to talk about that topic with friends who don't care about it as deeply as you do? When have you felt like a friend really, really listened to something you're passionate about, and how did that impact your friendship?*
- *What are some ways we can take a genuine interest in someone—and in his or her thoughts and feelings?*
- *Verse 3 says a friend isn't selfish. Because we're all sinful, we act selfishly at times. What are some practical ways you've learned to be less selfish, especially in your friendships?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *A good friend makes you feel known and valued. In fact, we're attracted to people who treat us this way. The Bible reminds us that we can be that kind of friend to others, but it doesn't just happen. We need to be open and committed to grow in our friendship skills, being more authentic and more interested in other people. Another way to be a good friend is to pay attention to our words.*

Read Philippians 2:19-22 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so several people have a chance to read.

3. TRUE FRIENDS SPEAK POSITIVELY ABOUT OTHERS

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *In these verses, Paul is talking about his good friend Timothy. From this description, I would have enjoyed meeting Timothy! Jesus wants you to have these types of friendships, where you build up other people. Please form groups of two or three to discuss these next questions.*

ASK:



- What words might a friend of yours use to describe your friendship qualities?
- If you were to describe a good friend to us, what words would you use?
- Think of a time when you spoke negatively about a friend. How did that affect your relationship?
- How have words helped heal any of your friendships that have been strained or broken?

Bring everyone back together, and ask a few people to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

LIVING IT OUT

ASK:

- Do you think Christians and non-Christians view friendships differently? Explain.
- Which of these friendship skills do you most need to grow: being authentic, being selfless, or speaking positively about others? Explain.
- What practical step(s) can you take this week to be a better friend?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Using the Bible's wisdom and inviting Jesus to live more freely in you, you can build some deep, lasting friendships. Let's take a moment to pray that Jesus will help us grow our friendship skills and bring genuine Christian friends into our lives.*

Close in prayer.

SUMMARY



Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too" (Philippians 2:3-4).