

FRIENDSHIP: A PRICELESS GIFT

KEY VERSE

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."
Proverbs 17:17

BIBLICAL BASIS

1 Samuel 20:17,42; Proverbs 17:17;
Ecclesiastes 4:8-12; John 15:12,13,15;
Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 13:4;
Galatians 6:2

THE BIG IDEA

True friendship brings out the best in people. Friendship is an incredible gift from God.

AIMS OF THIS SESSION

- During this session you will guide students to:
- Examine characteristics of a true friend;
 - Discover what characteristics of friendship will be important in their lives;

- Implement practical changes using the true qualities of friendship to improve their relationships with others.

WARM UP

COMMON BONDS—

A look at the similarities in students.

TEAM EFFORT— JUNIOR HIGH/ MIDDLE SCHOOL

A PRICELESS GIFT—

Students reflect on their friendships.

TEAM EFFORT— HIGH SCHOOL

FRIENDSHIP SURVEY SHEET—

A survey of students' friendships.

IN THE WORD

A TRUE FRIEND—

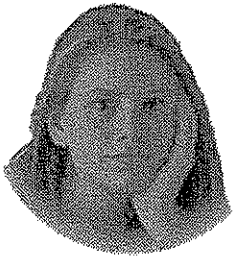
A Bible study on being a true friend.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT (OPTIONAL)

Questions to get students thinking and talking about God's purpose in friendships.

PARENT PAGE

A tool to get the session into the home and allow parents and young people to discuss their friendships.



LEADER'S DEVOTIONAL

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15).

The other day my wife, Krista, and I went to a bagel shop for breakfast, and we happened to bump into a girl who used to be involved in our youth ministry. The girl's name was Kim and in high school, she hung out with a fun gang of friends—Misty, Heather, Lori, Kristen, Brian, Danny and Ryan. Most of those students had never gone to church before, but as a group, they went on trip after trip with our outreach ministry.

Kim was now in college and we asked her if she still hung out with the old gang. With a sad look on her face, she dropped her smile and said, "No, none of us spend time together anymore. The gang's no longer a gang. We've all kind of gone our separate ways."

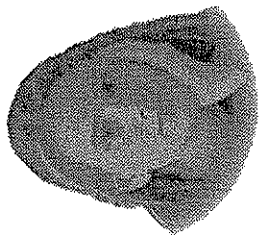
Krista and I talked to Kim a little bit more and finally said good-bye. Afterwards, Krista and I discussed how amazing it is when friendships change after high school. In our estimation, Kim didn't seem to be the fun, friendly, bubbly high school girl we used to know. It was obvious by the tone of her voice and the look on her face that Kim was lonelier than she'd ever been before.

Teaching young people friendship with God is the most priceless gift you can give them. A lot of teenagers think that their junior high and high school friends will be friends for life. Unfortunately, we know that's not always true.

But, a friendship with Jesus Christ can last for eternity. When young people discover that Jesus offers His friendship to them, they'll never have to be friendless again. By being a friend to young people, you also have the opportunity to introduce them to your Best Friend, Jesus Christ. You are a critical bridge to teenagers discovering the most wonderful Friend of all. (Written by Joey O'Connor.)

"A friend is a person with whom you dare to be yourself."—William Shakespeare





FRIENDSHIP: A PRICELESS GIFT

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BIBLICAL BASIS

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THE BIG IDEA

True friendship brings out the best in people. Friendship is an incredible gift from God.

WARM UP (5-10 MINUTES)

COMMON BONDS

- Divide students into pairs.
- Tell them they have three minutes to find as many things as possible that they have in common. The students can write the similarities on a piece of paper. Remind them they can't say things like we both have a nose, eyes, etc. Have a contest for the most things in common and the most unique thing found in common.
- Give prizes for the most things in common and the most unique thing found in common.

TEAM EFFORT—JUNIOR HIGH/ MIDDLE SCHOOL (15-20 MINUTES)

A PRICELESS GIFT

- Divide students into groups of three or four.
- Give each student a copy of "A Priceless Gift" on page 123 and a pen or pencil, or display a copy using an overhead projector.
- Students complete their pages.
There are very few things in life as important or as wonderful as true friendship. A good friend is a treasure beyond almost anything else in life. Friendship is a priceless gift from God.
Take a moment to reflect on your friendships.

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What are little everyday sacrifices that we can do to deepen a friendship?

How do you think this Scripture relates to Jesus Christ being your friend?

4. Patient
"Love is patient" (1 Corinthians 13:4).
Why do you suppose patience is included as a quality of a true friend?

Think of a friend with whom you can be more patient. Write a few goals for developing a more patient attitude with him or her.

5. A Good Listener
It has been said that listening is the language of love. Who listens to you?

How has his or her listening influenced your life in a positive way?

Is this quality a strength or a weakness in your life? If it's a weakness, how can you become a better listener? If it is already a strength, congratulations! You, no doubt, are a positive influence in somebody's life!

SO WHAT?

How that you have investigated the true qualities of a friend, what practical changes can you make in your friendships?

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT (OPTIONAL)

- Use the questions on page 131, after or as a part of "In the Word."
- 1. Why do you think God gives us friends?

2. True friendship is costly. What do you think it takes to develop a deeper friendship?

3. Read Ecclesiastes 4:8-12. How do these verses relate to friendship?

PARENT PAGE

- Distribute page to parents.

List three people you consider to be true friends. Why?

1.
 2.
 3.
- List the names of three to five people with whom you would like to become better friends.
1.
 2.
 3.
 4.
 5.

TEAM EFFORT—HIGH SCHOOL (15-20 MINUTES)

FRIENDSHIP SURVEY SHEET

- Divide students into groups of three or four.
- Give each student a copy of "Friendship Survey Sheet" on page 125 and a pen or pencil, or display a copy using an overhead projector.
- Students complete their pages.
 1. How many friends do you have?
 2. Do you have friends of both sexes?
 3. Do you have friends who are five years younger than you?
 4. Do you have friends who are five years older than you?
 5. What's the craziest thing you've done with friends?
 6. Who would consider you one of their friends?
 7. List three qualities you have that make you a good friend.
 8. What qualities does your best friend have?
 9. Are your parents your friends? Why or why not?
 10. Do you have more or fewer friends than you had one year ago?
 11. Are you a good friend? Why?

IN THE WORD (25-30 MINUTES)

A TRUE FRIEND

- Divide students into groups of three or four.
- Give each student a copy of "A True Friend" on pages 127-129 and a pen or pencil, or display a copy using an overhead projector.
- Students complete the Bible study.

A true friend is:

 1. caring and available.
 2. encouraging.

3. willing to sacrifice.
 4. patient.
 5. a good listener.
- At first glance, which of these qualities are your greatest strengths in a friendship?

In which areas do you need improvement?

1. Caring and Available

Read these Scriptures and explain in the space provided how each relates to being a friend who deeply cares and is willing to be available to a friend in need.
Proverbs 17:17

Romans 12:15

Galatians 6:7

Which of your friends could use an extra dose of caring this week? What can you do to show you care?

2. Encouraging

The special friendship of David and Jonathan is one of the most inspiring stories in the Old Testament. How does 1 Samuel 20:17 relate to the area of encouragement in their special friendship?

In 1 Samuel 20:42, how is the Lord involved in their relationship?

Would your friends call you an encouraging person?

List three specific ways in which you can be more of an encouragement to your friends:

- a.
- b.
- c.

3. Willing to Sacrifice

Read John 15:12-13.
What is your reaction to this Scripture?
a. Wow!
b. I'm glad Christ did that for me.
c. Impossible or at least improbable!
d. Now that's a heavy commitment.
e. Other

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A PRICELESS GIFT

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TEAM EFFORT

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Note

1. Adapted from Arlo Reichter, *The Group Retreat Book* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1983), p. 155. Used by permission.

IN THE WORD

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- a. Wow!
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- c. Impossible of at least improbable!
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- e. Other.....

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FRIENDSHIP: A PRICELESS GIFT

FOR THE PARENT

Who were your best friends when you were a teen?

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Who would you consider your best friend now?

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How did/do your friends influence your life?

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What's a memorable experience you had with some friends?

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For the Student

Which of your friends had a positive influence in your life?

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What kinds of peer pressure do a lot of your friends experience?

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Name a situation where you had to sacrifice to keep a struggling friendship going.

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Discuss a situation where your parent was a friend to you.

Let's take a look at a few principles about friendship and strengthening a friendship. Check the principles you think are most important and discuss why.

- Friends have a profound influence on your life.
- Choose your friends wisely.
- Be yourself. Don't try to be someone you're not.
- Shared common experiences tend to strengthen your friendship.
- Work at making your friendships a real priority in life.
- Christian friends will usually encourage you to draw closer to God.



Session 8 "Friendship: A Priceless Gift"
Date.....



Unit III

SHARING YOUR FAITH



SHARING YOUR FAITH

LEADER'S PEP TALK

A few years ago I stood watching the Rose Parade with my family and a million other spectators in Pasadena, California. An older man who looked like he was a few cases short of a full load shuffled up to me. I thought he was going to ask me for money because he appeared to be homeless. Instead, he told me that God told him to tell me this message, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." He then handed me a tract, and as he shuffled away he yelled back, "God bless you, sir!"

My first reaction was to laugh at him. After all, he needed a bath and who was he telling me about God's love. I had spoken the weekend before to several thousand kids about the same subject.

And then it happened. I read the little tract he gave me. Sure enough it was the simple, beautiful gospel. The printing wasn't as nice as this book, and there was no color; just a simple, black-and-white, clear message of God's love for humankind. I wondered, *Did God really tell him to speak to me? Am I really a brother of that nameless man? Was his style of sharing his faith very effective? Was he just a little crazy? Should I have been standing on the street corner of the Rose Parade preaching with a megaphone like some of the others?* You know, I still don't have all the answers, but for some reason that little bearded man with the oversized coat made an impression on my life.

I didn't take up his style of witnessing. In fact, I don't even think it's the most effective style of sharing our faith. However, the next time I used some of the material I have in this section, I was more aware that God uses all kinds of ways to reach His creation. Yet God still tends to work through us on a one-on-one basis as we learn the Great Commission and how to better communicate a lifestyle of love to a generation who hasn't responded to God. You have the opportunity to place lifelong witnessing skills into the hands of your students, and at the very least, remind many of them once again that God told us to tell them that He loves them—a whole bunch.