

FRIENDS [friends]

THIS WEEK

Friends are the lifeblood of adolescence. And yet what teenager hasn't had problems with friends? Kids learn valuable lifelong lessons from friendships, grow in Christ through friends, get into trouble because of friends, and fall in love with friends. Obviously friends are important, so it is vital that you and your teens discuss their questions and concerns.

OPENER

The media teaches teenagers a lot about friendships. Ask your group to think of all the TV shows or movies where they've seen friendships—there will be a ton of these, since almost every TV show and movie revolves around friendships and relationships. Make a list of these shows and how friendship is portrayed. What have your kids learned about friendship from these shows? What makes these shows successful? What is the difference between opposite and same sex friendships? Why do the characters value each other as friends? How have these friendships been abused or damaged?

It might be helpful to brainstorm and write down all the words that would apply to friendship—love, respect, sense of humor, honesty, trust, and so on. Encourage the group to think about what is most important in their friendships and what they look for in their friends. Then share these with the group—what were the most important attributes of friends? What do your kids look for in friendships? Why are some qualities more valuable than others? What characteristics are important for different sexes?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Make a list of everyone's contributions. Survey the list and ask the group how much commonality there is among the group's responses. What are different among the guys and girls?
2. Teenagers change friends frequently for a variety of reasons—some reasons are good, some aren't. Discuss how kids can know when they are making changes for the worse. Why do they think kids change friends?
3. Answers will vary greatly on this one, but stay away from lecturing kids about the importance of Christian influence. Rather, share your own positive experiences regarding support and direction from Christian friends.
4. Some parents are more understanding and approachable than others. But some kids don't have good relationships with their parents. Encourage them to have friends, but still keep in mind that their parents have good things to say, too.

5. Ask volunteers to read the passages and share the friendship characteristic taught. You may want to make a list of these.

THE CLOSE

Close by reviewing some of the "one another" passages found in God's Word.

- Love one another
John 15:12, 13
Romans 12:10
Ephesians 5:1, 2
Hebrews 13:1
1 Peter 4:8
- Pray for one another
Ephesians 6:18, 19
James 5:16
- Discipline one another
Matthew 18:15
Galatians 6:12
Thessalonians 3:14, 15
Hebrews 12:15
- Be patient with one another
Ephesians 4:2
- Don't hold grudges toward one another
Matthew 5:22
Galatians 6:2
- Carry one another's burdens
Romans 15:1
James 5:16
- Don't hold grudges toward one another
Matthew 5:22
Galatians 6:2
- Serve one another
Ephesians 5:21
1 Peter 4:9, 10
- Forgive one another
Matthew 18:21, 22
Ephesians 4:31, 32
- Worship with one another
Psalm 95:6

MORE

- You may want to have your group take a look at biblical friendships. A few examples include David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18 and 19), Jesus and Lazarus (John 11), Moses and God (Exodus 33), and Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14). What makes these friendships good? What qualities of friendship were shown? Are these still important today? Why or why not?
- You may want to talk about the important aspects of friendships. Point out that to have friends, you've got to be a friend. And emphasize healthy friendships vs. unhealthy friendships. Do their friends pressure them into doing drugs? Alcohol? Being sexually active? Challenge your kids to choose friends who build them up and encourage them to be their best—friendship is about supporting and caring for each other for who they are, not what they are. Jesus is an example of a loyal, loving friend. What can your kids do to be better friends to others and to be a better friend with God?