

ministry to
» youth

Friends



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Lesson 01



Lesson 1: Following Jesus' Example



Bible Verses: John 17:15-21; John 15:12-13; Matthew 28:20b; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; John 5:24; Ephesians 4:15



Bottom Line: Being a good friend means following Jesus' example

SUPPLIES

01

GAME SUPPLIES

- Printed “What A Friend We Have In Jesus” sheet for each team
- Answer Guide for “What A Friend We Have In Jesus” game
- Pen for each team
- Device to play the song on
- Device for each team to look up the lyrics or hymnals for each team
- Optional: a prize – friendship bracelets for the winning team

02

NOTES:

All Scripture references are NLT unless otherwise indicated.

OPENING GAME

What A Friend We Have In Jesus

GAME SETUP:

Print a game sheet for each group.

Give each pair a pen to complete their sheet.

Cue up a device to play a rendition of the song that matches these lyrics – googling the song title will give you various arrangement options.

Optional: You can give away a prize to the winners – I'd suggest friendship bracelets as a reminder to be a friend like Jesus.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME:

Option 1: Googling It

Split the group into teams, making sure each team has a smartphone, iPad, or computer with internet access.

Option 2: Old School

Split the group into teams of as many hymnals as you have on hand, so each team has at least one hymnal. (Make sure that your hymnals have the same lyrics as the game sheets – otherwise you'll need to edit them!)

Give each pair a "What A Friend We Have In Jesus" game sheet and a pen.

Say:

- The object of this game is to be the first team with all the blanks filled in their game sheet correctly.
- When I say “go,” you’ll work together to fill in the blanks with the correct words for the hymn “What A Friend We Have In Jesus.”
- *[Google It Option:]* You will look up this hymn online and find all the right words.
- *[Google It Option:]* There are four verses, so if you find a copy of the song that only lists three verses, keep looking!
- *[Old School Option:]* You’ll use the Table of Contents to find the song then fill in the blanks.
- When the first team tells me they’ve completed their game sheet, DON’T stop!
- They might not have their blanks correctly filled in.
- The object is to be the first team to fill their game sheets in 100 percent correctly.
- We’ll grade it with the honor system.
- When everyone has complete sheets, we’ll listen to a rendition of the hymn to check our work, and you’ll mark any incorrect words you wrote down.

[Optional: Give out prizes to whichever team gets the most correct words written first.]

TEACH

You guys did a great job with that game!

Raise your hand if you've heard that song before.

The song has a pretty cool backstory.

Joseph M. Scriven was a preacher in Canada, and he wrote this as a poem to comfort his mother. She was living in Ireland.

The song was originally published anonymously, and Scriven didn't receive full credit for his work for almost 30 years.

In 1868, Charles C. Converse paired the poem with the song, "When this Bloody War is Over" from World War I.

[For more info: Richard W. Adams, "What a Friend I Have in Jesus", hymntime.com]

After looking up the lyrics for the game, what do you think this song is about?

[Allow students an opportunity to answer.]

What are the different areas of life Scriven is saying we can pray and talk about with Jesus?

[Allow the students an opportunity to answer.]

We're starting our series on being a good friend and finding good friends.

Let's get started by having you guys answer a very important question – why is Jesus the best friend we could ever have?

[Allow students an opportunity to answer.]

Those are some really good and insightful answers!

When I was preparing to talk to you guys about this, I came up with four main reasons that Jesus is the best friend we could ever have.

I'm going to list them out for you, and then we will go into each with a little more detail.

- First, Jesus' brought everything He and His friends needed to God in prayer.
- Second, Jesus did what His Father wanted Him to do no matter the consequences.
- Third, Jesus is always there for us.
- Fourth, we can always trust Jesus to tell us the truth and help us move forward.

Let's talk about that first reason for a minute.

Jesus brought everything He and His friends needed to God in prayer.

In **John 17**, we learn that Jesus prayed for His disciples – and for us – as He was preparing to be arrested and crucified.

Let's read that together. Can someone read **John 17:15-21** for us?

[I love having students read out loud! If this doesn't work for your group, don't worry about it – do what works for your students.]

15 "I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one.

16 They do not belong to this world any more than I do.

17 Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.

18 Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.

19 And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

20 I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.

21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me."

Jesus prayed for His friends to be kept safe, to be His representatives, and to become holy.

There is a really cool phrase in there that takes this from a prayer for the disciples to a prayer for us too – Jesus says, **“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.”**

Jesus prayed that we would be one – caring for one another and moving toward the same goal of bringing Him glory.

He also prayed that this would happen so that the world might believe that that Father sent the Son.

That’s incredible!

The second reason Jesus is the best friend we could ever have is that **Jesus did what His Father wanted Him to do no matter the consequences because it honored God.**

His life, death, and resurrection are all amazing examples of living life completely for God.

As He journeyed around, He was always being obedient ... and it didn’t always win Him friends!

But He did it anyway because He loved us so much!

In **John 15:12-13**, Jesus says:

12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.

13 There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

We know Jesus laid down His life for us, so we know that Jesus has the highest love for us.

Now that’s a best friend!

The third reason that **Jesus is the best friend we could ever have is that Jesus is always there for us.**

There are a lot of places in Scripture where we can read about how God is with us. Too many to list out here, in fact!

I want to share a quick verse with you where Jesus Himself explains that He will be with us.

In the last part of **Matthew 28:20**, Jesus says, **“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

There it is – no fluff, just the truth.

Jesus will be with us always.

We can also talk to Jesus about anything, anytime.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, **“Never stop praying.”**

That means He’s always listening to us.

He has no curfew, and no topics are off limits.

Jesus knows everything in your mind and everything going on in your world, so nothing you want to talk to Him about is going to surprise Him or make Him stop loving you.

The fourth and last reason we’ll talk about today that Jesus is our best friend is **we can always trust Jesus to tell us the truth and help us move forward.**

In the book of **John**, Jesus often says, **“I tell you the truth.”**

Sometimes it’s to reveal to His listeners where they have missed the mark or misunderstood the message.

Sometimes it’s to explain how a follower of Jesus should live.

But it’s always to help us!

In **John 5:24**, Jesus says this:

“I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.”

In this **“I tell you the truth”** statement, Jesus tells us the truth about how to be saved and helps us move forward in relationship with Him.

Talk about the best kind of friend – Jesus doesn’t leave out any of the important information we need to be saved and have a great life!

Now, I started this session saying that we would talk about being a good friend and finding good friends.

So let’s swich gears and talk about how we become a good friend to others like Jesus is for us.

The most important way we can be a good friend is to follow Jesus’ example!

The most important way we can find good friends is to befriend those who are also following Jesus’ example!

The first thing we can do to be a good friend like Jesus is taking everything to God in prayer.

This includes praying for our friends.

We saw in **John 17** how Jesus prayed for us.

Jesus prayed for His friends to be kept safe, to be His representatives, and to become holy ... we can pray for those things for our friends too!

Do you remember what verse 21 said? Let’s read **John 17:21** again.

“I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.”

That Scripture helps us see the importance of us following Jesus’ example of unity. He prays that we will all be one like He is one with God the Father.

And then He closes it out by saying that if we are, the world will believe in Jesus!

If the world sees the way we take care of each other and are united, they will be drawn to it. And Jesus will save their lives!

It's also a big deal if they see us NOT taking care of each other and they are repelled away from Jesus.

Praying for our friends is a way to follow Jesus' example AND bring unity ... both of those point others to Jesus!

That is definitely a way you can be a good friend.

A second thing we can do to be a good friend like Jesus is to do the right thing and try to get our friends to join us in doing right.

I don't think that one needs much explanation.

Following Jesus' example in this area is guaranteed to make us good friends to others.

Thirdly, just like Jesus is there for us, we can be there for our friends to listen to, encourage, and support them.

Jesus is committed, no matter how many times or ways we mess up. He will always be there when we want to mend our relationship with Him.

We can show the same kind of loyalty to our friends that Jesus shows to us.

This doesn't mean we have to allow anyone to abuse us or treat us terribly!

Jesus isn't in close relationship with those who have turned away from Him. But Jesus is always there for those in His family, and we can treat our friends the same way.

A fourth thing we can do to be good friends like Jesus is to speak the truth to them in love and help them move forward the way Jesus helps us.

Ephesians 4:15 says this:

Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

Just like Jesus was always saying, "I tell you the truth," we can tell our friends the truth.

Speaking the truth in love includes giving good and thoughtful advice, telling them the truth about their need for Jesus, compassionately confronting them when they're doing something wrong, and helping them do what it takes to make things right.

I'm sure you can all think of a time when you've been on the receiving end of someone speaking the truth to you. Or maybe you've been the one trying to speak the truth!

It can be really hard to do so in love, which is why we must try to follow Jesus' example if we want to be the best kind of friend.

Our friendship with Jesus helps us be good friends, but also helps us find good friends as well because we look for Jesus' example in their lives.

We need to look for friends who:

- Go to God first for guidance, wisdom, comfort, and truth.
- Do the right thing to honor God no matter the consequences.
- Are there for us to encourage, comfort, and support in doing the right thing.
- Listen to us then speak the truth to us in love, helping us to move forward in faith.

Let's thank Jesus for being our best friend, ask Him to help us be a good friend and find good friends.

[Pray and dismiss to small groups.]

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you think friendships are important? Why or why not?
- How would you describe a really good, healthy friendship?
- What consequences might there be if you have a healthy friendships versus an unhealthy friendship with someone?
- Why is it important that we can go to Jesus directly in prayer about anything, anytime, anywhere?
- Why do some people find it hard to see Jesus as their best friend?
- How does praying for our friends strengthen our friendships?
- In being a good friend, why is it so important to do the right thing no matter the consequence?
- What is an example of speaking the truth in love to a friend? (Don't share names!)
- Why do people sometimes have a hard time finding good friends?
- What is something you need prayer about today?