

# **Faith Works for Senior High**



**Scripture- and Tradition-Based Sessions  
for Faith Formation**

**by Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart**

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*I dedicate this book to my two families:*

*To my first faith community, my family of origin:  
my parents, Joe and Connie,  
my brothers, Joe, Steven, and David.*

*I am who I am because of the love I experienced while growing up.*

*To my present faith community, my family of marriage:  
my husband, Ralph,  
my sons, Michael and Ralph.*

*Writing this book was possible because of the love, support,  
encouragement, and understanding I receive from you every day.*



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## ◆ Introduction

Do the following comments sound familiar?

All the teens in my youth group come for the dances,  
the parties, and the ski weekends.  
They don't even mind the trips to the soup kitchen,  
the nursing home, or the children's hospital.  
But ask them about the Bible,  
ask them about what's going on at Mass,  
ask them about their faith,  
and they don't know what to say!

*Faith Works* can help.

*Faith Works* can connect faith to works and works to faith!

Faith works. It really does.

**Lively** *Faith Works for Senior High* offers ready-to-use, catechetical-centered session outlines based on the Scriptures, Catholic doctrine, and faith issues. Its learning activities use storytelling, faith sharing, Bible searching, role-playing, creative writing, and all sorts of different exercises to help encourage young people to learn about, talk about, and act on their faith.

**Flexible** What kind of youth ministry program do you have in your parish? Perhaps your group meets every week, and you have at least one meeting a month in each of several focus areas—catechesis, prayer, community building, and service. If so, you might be looking for session plans aimed at religious education or catechesis to use for the catechetical meetings.

Or perhaps you meet every other week, and you try to combine different components at each meeting, such as a guest speaker plus social time, prayer and worship plus planning, catechesis plus social time, prayer and worship plus social time, a service activity plus social time, or a film plus catechesis.

You might be looking for a short version of a meeting outline—something simple enough to let you “slip in” a bit of catechesis while the group is gathered, enough to make an impression, but not enough to overwhelm the group with a “catechism night.”

Or maybe you meet once a month, and you have a session that includes several components in a regular schedule, such as social time and icebreakers, catechesis, general recreation and a snack, planning or sharing in small groups, announcements and prayer in the large group.

You might be looking for pieces of a meeting—bits of catechesis you can insert in different combinations depending on how much time you have and what theme or topic you are covering.

*Faith Works for Senior High* sessions can be used as whole meetings, each complete with an opening, a closing, a snack break, and a planning session for a service project or a social event. Or the sessions can easily be divided into pieces and inserted in whatever program you currently use. No matter what model you work with, *Faith Works for Senior High* offers resources flexible enough to fit your style.

**User-Friendly** Each session of *Faith Works for Senior High*, for the most part, is laid out for you. The directions tell you what to do, why, and what outcomes to expect. They even suggest what you might eat at your break! (Hey, we all know it—food is important!)

I say the sessions are “for the most part” laid out for you because one part of each session is not as mapped out as the rest. That’s the faith works project part. Your young people will have a hand in deciding what is to be done for the faith works project. This section will challenge your young people to plan a social event, a service project, or some other kind of activity that reflects what they learned in the session. And the faith works project challenges you, their leader, to be creative and flexible, and to give the young people as much space and responsibility as they can reasonably handle. I will explain more about this later. (But trust me, it really works! So keep reading.)

**Group Size** *Faith Works for Senior High* is designed for a youth group of about fifteen teens, but groups a little smaller or larger than fifteen are fine. If you have a group that is much larger—over thirty young people—then you need to divide that large group into smaller groups and find an adult to facilitate the activities of each of the small groups. You (or whoever is leading the large group) will still do most of the directing, storytelling, and instruction giving, but the sharing and small-group activities will be facilitated by the small-group leaders. (Still sounds pretty easy, doesn’t it? Good—keep reading!)

**Music** Some youth workers love to use music with their groups; others do not. Either way is fine with *Faith Works for Senior High*. I have not built songs into any of the sessions, because if I were to suggest some popular songs, they would no longer be popular by the time this book is published! You would be stuck with a list of songs that were rocking the charts about two years ago. So if you’re into music, I suggest you find out what young people are listening to now and choose songs that are appropriate to whatever session you are using. For help in choosing songs, you might want to consult *Top Music Countdown*, published by Cornerstone Media. If you would like a copy (it is published quarterly, to keep up with the tunes), here’s the address and phone number of the publisher:

Cornerstone Media  
P.O. Box 6236  
Santa Rosa, CA 95406  
Phone: 707-542-8273

Music can be inserted before snack, after snack, at the beginning or end of the closing prayer, or as a winding-down period before prayer. Your choice. (See how easy it is? Good! Keep on reading!)

**Icebreakers** Some people love icebreakers, some hate them, and many others’ feelings are in-between. So guess what? *Faith Works for Senior High* does not include any icebreakers. It is up to you to add them if you wish.

Each youth group has its own unique personality. Thus, not all groups will have the same response to the same icebreakers. And you are the best judge of what fits whom. Groups with boundless energy need to have their energy directed so that it does not interfere with the process, the activities, and the sharing of the session. People who are nervous and do not know one another well tend to oppose doing anything too silly, or they will feel uncomfortable and will take even longer to warm up and participate openly. Groups that are fairly flexible but have a lot of sleepyheads may need some kind of energizer to jump-start their brains and hearts. If you sense any of these characteristics and are in search of the perfect icebreaker, try looking in *Creative Crowd-Breakers, Mixers, and Games*, compiled by Wayne Rice and Mike Yaconelli (Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 1991). For a group of young people who know one another fairly well and have been with you awhile, all you need to do is ask them about their past week and let them openly socialize until they have reached their own comfort level. Then they will be ready for *Faith Works*. More about this later. (See why you have to keep on reading?)

**Sessions Up Close** Each session in *Faith Works for Senior High* has the same format, so once you get that down, you are ready for action. I will briefly go through each section now so that you will know what to expect when you get to the sessions.

#### What’s the Point?

No need to answer that—it’s a rhetorical question! Actually, this is the first heading you will see under the title of any *Faith Works for Senior High* session you turn to. In just a few sentences, I tell you what the session is all about and why you might want to use it with your young people.

#### Background Information

Sometimes this section is short, sometimes it’s longer—it all depends on what the session is about and how much information I thought you would like to know about that topic. There is no need to tell your young people everything that is written in this section. It is just for your information in case they ask you a question, or in case you want some further knowledge of the topic. I highly recommend this section. Please do not do a session without having read it.

#### Materials Needed

This part simply lists the materials you will need for the session. Remember to have all the materials for a particular session ready before the young people arrive.

### Attention Grabber

Remember when I told you there would be more later about icebreakers? Well, the “attention grabber” is the closest thing to an icebreaker that *Faith Works for Senior High* offers. Each session asks you to find a particular object and use it as part of the opening and the closing prayer. The item has been especially chosen for the session’s topic and scriptural lesson, so it is important to have the item when you do the session with your young people. The attention grabber is a prop. The group should be able to see it as soon as they enter the meeting area. (You can emphasize the object by putting it on a small table in the center of the gathering space so that it is really visible. Or if your group gathers around a large table, you could place it in the middle of the table.) Before long, the young people will try to guess what each session is about, using the attention grabber as their clue. To open the session, you hold up the item and start the conversation based on what the object is—a rock, a baseball, a fortune cookie, a mirror—and what it has to do with faith. (Do I have your attention? See how well it works? If you really want to know what these items have to do with faith, you’ll have to keep on reading.)

### Opening

This section suggests what you might say about the attention grabber, and how you might introduce the session. Sometimes the opening includes a story to tell, some questions to ask, or a scriptural passage to read. It’s easy. You just do it. (Nothing you can’t handle, right?)

### Learning Experiences

The actual titles for these parts of the session will vary each time. Sometimes there is a handout for the young people to do. Sometimes there are scriptural passages to look up, discuss, or answer questions on. Sometimes there is a role-play. But do not fear! If any questions in these activities have definite right or wrong answers, I give you the correct answers.

### Snack

You may ask, What’s the point of having a whole section just on snacking? Well, that’s a good question. But actually, it is not a very long section—just a few lines. Besides, it’s kind of fun to come up with a snack that corresponds to the theme of the session. You might even ask the group to guess what the snack will be. The young people may surprise you by guessing correctly.

### Faith Works Project

At last! You have finally come to the section that has inspired the name for this whole program. (Good for you. You kept on reading!)

In this part of the session, your group is asked to plan and carry out a social event, a service project, or some other kind of activity based on the theme and content of the session. I give you some sugges-

tions, but do not limit the young people to these options. Let them follow their imagination and come up with their own ideas.

However, in this part of the session, you do have to be the voice of reality when the young people are planning activities that involve other people. For example, a parish dance or social is not possible unless the date has been cleared through the parish office and the social hall is free; a group cannot count on doing a Gospel skit at a particular Mass unless the pastor says it is okay. The group should put a plan together first, so that when they approach the pastor or the parish staff, they can speak with confidence.

A faith works project planning sheet is provided at the end of this introduction to help you assist the young people in their planning. The amount of planning involved will depend on how big a project the group decides to do. Volunteering to show up one afternoon at a nursing home to play bingo at an already established weekly bingo game will take much less time to plan than deciding to go on a weekend camping trip at a state park one hundred miles away. Both activities are possible, but one requires much more organization, planning, and lead time.

Because of all the variables, the timing of this part of the session will vary. Simple events can be planned in about thirty minutes. Larger, more extensive events can take several weeks to plan, with different committees doing independent work and reporting back to the large group. So if your group meets once a week, do not expect to complete an entire faith works project every week. The first week you might go through the session content and begin to plan the related project. During the second and third weeks of that month, you may still be planning, coordinating, or carrying out the project, which might delay the start of a new session. Remember though that it is not necessary to do a new faith works project with each session. It is okay to begin a new session while a previous project is still being carried out.

If you are questioning the value of actually holding these events, remember that we learn best by doing. Hearing the word of God is great, but if we just listen to it and walk away without ever doing anything about it, without changing our life or making a difference in the world, how is that any good? This is the faith and works argument: What good is good faith if we do not also do good works?

Here’s another way to look at it. If you are concerned with developing a total youth ministry approach in your parish, then consider all the youth ministry components a faith works project can include:

- word (evangelization and catechesis)
- worship (prayer and liturgy)
- justice and service (social action and outreach)
- guidance and healing (tough issues that teens face)
- building community (social activities)
- enablement (leadership training and practice)
- advocacy (making young people and their needs known to others)

If you are still concerned about how teens can develop the needed skills to plan and carry out their own events, start small. The first event will be a learning experience no matter what it is. And if you are

interested in reading about teen leadership and peer ministry, you can check out these resources: *A Chance to Serve*, by Brian Reynolds (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1984), and *Training Teenagers for Peer Ministry*, by Dr. Barbara B. Varenhorst (Loveland, CO: Group Books, 1988).

Are you still with me? Terrific! We are finished with the hardest part. Keep reading!

### Closing Prayer

The closing prayer is usually a simple experience. The same item used as the attention grabber is called back into duty as a prop for the prayer. To begin the prayer, invite the group to gather in a circle, dim the lights or shut them off, and light some candles. Wait until everyone is quiet before proceeding. Then read or have one of the young people read the scriptural passage or poem. Next, ask a question or offer a prayer request for the group to reflect on and share their responses to. Pass the prop around the circle, giving everyone the chance to share; each person should hold the item while sharing and then pass it to the next person. The leader of the group begins and ends the sharing.

When the closing prayer is over, the session is finished. The young people may leave, help with cleanup, or whatever you usually do at the end of your meetings or classes.

### In Case You Have More Time

Are you concerned about how to time a meeting or a class when the faith works planning section can vary so much? Well, there are three possible outcomes when it comes to timing:

1. You plan it just right—the amount of time you have matches the time it takes your group to go through the session and plan the faith works project. Pat yourself on the back!
2. You run out of time—your group is planning a more ambitious project, and you could not finish all the details of the event. You decide to work on it again at your next meeting. No problem. Keep up the good work!
3. You have decided to plan a very simple event, and you still have thirty minutes left before it's time to go. . . . Or this is your second planning session for an event, and you have most of the details worked out. However, there is still time left in the session, and you cannot do any more planning until some outside independent work is done. So what do you do?

You do not panic, because you have already discovered the “In Case You Have More Time” activity, and that means you are prepared for those awkward moments when you have time to fill.

This final part of each session gives you one more activity based on the session topic, so you can just add it on. Isn't life grand?

Well, there it is—*Faith Works* in a nutshell.

I hope it's all you expected and more!

And I know it works.

*Faith Works* can connect faith to works and works to faith!

Faith works. It really does.

## Faith Works Project Planning Sheet

### Overview of the Project

Name of the event: \_\_\_\_\_

Theme: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose: (Why are we doing this? How does this reflect our theme?)

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Starting time: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending time: \_\_\_\_\_

Setup time: \_\_\_\_\_ Cleanup time: \_\_\_\_\_

Food and drink: \_\_\_\_\_

Supplies each participant will bring: \_\_\_\_\_

Supplies the group will provide: \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation: \_\_\_\_\_

Chaperones and adult support: \_\_\_\_\_

Cost: \_\_\_\_\_

Publicity (Invitations? Flyers? Permission slips? Posters?):

\_\_\_\_\_

RSVP date (Phone calls? Permission slips due?):

\_\_\_\_\_

Other important information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Specific Tasks to Be Delegated

Individuals or committees must take responsibility for doing specific tasks based on the needs that surface in all the categories on this sheet. List the delegated tasks and the people responsible for them on the chart below.

|                               | Specific task(s) needed | Person responsible | Date delegated | Scheduled completion date |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Food and drink                |                         |                    |                |                           |
| Supplies                      |                         |                    |                |                           |
| Transportation                |                         |                    |                |                           |
| Chaper ones and adult support |                         |                    |                |                           |
| Publicity                     |                         |                    |                |                           |
| RSVP date                     |                         |                    |                |                           |
| Other                         |                         |                    |                |                           |

## ◆ 1

### Friend or Foe? Scriptural Advice About Relationships

**What's the Point?** "Friend or Foe?" is about relationships. During this session, the young people will begin to understand the difference between advice that tells people what to do about relationship problems and advice that helps them come up with their own solutions. They will learn to critically review the advice given in response to letters about relationships found in popular newspaper and magazine advice columns. The young people will then use the advice column format to sharpen their skills in recognizing the signs of both healthy and unhealthy habits in relationships.

They will also explore the Book of Sirach in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and discover some very timely advice from an ancient and wise source.

#### Background Information Advice Giving

Advice giving has been around as long as elders and parents have been around. At its best, "advice" is an opportunity for a more experienced person to give a fresh and helpful perspective to a less experienced person who is stuck in a problem with few attractive options. At its worst, advice takes away the freedom and responsibility of a person to grow, to take control of his or her own situation, and to choose wisely.

It is always better to guide young people toward their own solutions by asking them questions and making observations (and only giving advice in the most general sense) than it is to tell them what they "ought" to do.

#### Healthy and Unhealthy Habits in Relationships

Healthy relationships maintain a balance between control and service, sensitivity and independence. In a healthy friendship, both people benefit, mature, and have an improved quality of life. If one person's ability is blocked by some actions, attitudes, or influences of another person, then the habits of both people become less healthy. Their



relationship will be less beneficial, and it will not bring about growth, maturity, and an improved quality of life.

In discussions with young people, it is important not to put down anyone as a person. During this session, we will be calling healthy habits “friend habits” and unhealthy habits “foe habits.” This language makes it clear that it is the *actions* we are against, not the *person* doing the actions. Often a good person with positive intentions can develop unhealthy habits. With a little awareness, those habits can be broken and healthy habits restored.

### The Book of Sirach

The Book of Sirach is a wisdom book in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is a collection of wise sayings. This book’s earliest title was probably Wisdom of the Son of Sirach. Later on it was called *Liber Ecclesiasticus*, which means “church book,” because it was used so often by the church to give moral teachings. That is why in some Bible translations, this book is called Ecclesiasticus. The author’s grandson translated the Book of Sirach from Hebrew into Greek, adding a little introduction to the book that included information about himself and the author, his grandfather:

Those who are familiar with these truths must not only understand them themselves but, as lovers of wisdom, be able, in speech and in writing, to help others less familiar. Such a one was my grandfather. . . .

. . . Many sleepless hours of close application have I devoted in the interval to finishing the book for publication, for the benefit of those living abroad who wish to acquire wisdom and are disposed to live their lives according to the standards of the law. (Foreword to the Book of Sirach, NAB)

Although Sirach was written between 200 and 175 B.C.E., and the text was translated sometime after 132 B.C.E., the issues addressed at that time are amazingly similar to the issues of today. The Book of Sirach is not contained in the Hebrew or Protestant Bibles, but it has always been included in the Catholic Bible.

- Materials Needed**
- an advice column from a newspaper or magazine, laminated if possible
  - handout 1–A, “Friend or Foe Habits,” and handout 1–C, “Sirach Speaks on Major Issues,” one for each person; handout 1–B, “Dear Friends’ Letters,” one letter for each small group
  - pens or pencils for the young people
  - food and drink for snack
  - a faith works project planning sheet (located at the end of the introduction)
  - Bibles for the young people

### Attention Grabber An Advice Column

Cut out and bring to the session an advice column from a newspaper or a magazine. “Dear Abby” and “Dear Ann Landers” are common exam-

ples. In this session, the group will look at modern forms of advice as well as ancient, biblical ones.

If you have access to a laminating machine, laminate the clipping. Or use some clear contact paper or acetate paper to cover it. The clipping will be passed around, and this protection will keep it from falling apart.

## Opening (5 minutes)

Hold up the advice column and ask the group the following questions:

- How many of you have ever read this column or a similar one?
- Have you ever disagreed with the advice given in a column like this one?
- Why is there a need for advice columns? Why do so many people need advice in order to solve their problems?
- Have any of you ever been given bad advice by a friend?
- Have you ever given bad advice to another person?

Explain that today’s session will deal with friends, advice, and healthy relationships.

## Friend or Foe? Learning Experience (10 minutes)

Before the session begins, underline in your Bible this passage from Sir. 6:1: “*Be not a foe instead of a friend.*” This is the New American Bible translation, the best one to use for this quote.

After discussing the advice column, ask someone to read Sir. 6:1 aloud to the group. Then invite the young people to try to define the kinds of actions that would make a person their friend and those that would make a person their foe. What is the difference between these actions? You can expect responses like “trust,” “honesty,” and “being there when I needed someone” for friend actions and “talks about me behind my back,” “lies to me,” and “doesn’t stick with me when times are tough” for foe actions.

Summarize the discussion in the following fashion:

A friend goes out of the way for you. A friend makes your feelings and needs a part of her or his life. A friend makes your life better and helps you grow and mature. A friend is someone who accepts you and supports you in good times and in hard times. So people who possess these kinds of qualities have formed some good friend habits.

People can form other kinds of habits as well. Sometimes when they feel insecure, nervous, jealous, or lazy, they do things that can hurt other people and their relationships with them. Sometimes these individuals are simply not aware or not experienced enough to know that they are hurting someone. If people act this way often, they may form foe habits.

## Friend and Foe Habits Learning Experience (15 minutes)

Tell your group that they will be looking at some friend habits and some foe habits, and as they look at them, they should *not* name *other people* who seem to have formed habits like these. They are to focus only on *themselves*, on the kinds of things they tend to do. Distribute handout 1–A, “Friend or Foe Habits.” Have the young people take turns reading the characteristics of each habit and the quotes listed as examples.

Expect some giggling as the young people recognize themselves and their friends in the quotes. But if they start naming people and commenting on who does what to whom, gently remind them that their job here is to look at themselves, not to label others.

Ask the young people if their foe habits have ever caused problems for anyone else. Assure them that everyone’s Foe habits do this at one time or another. Next, ask them if they have ever used some of their friend habits to make the world around them a better place. Remind the group that our challenge in life is always to do what the Book of Sirach says: “Be not a foe instead of a friend.”

## “Dear Friends” Advice Column Learning Experience (35 minutes)

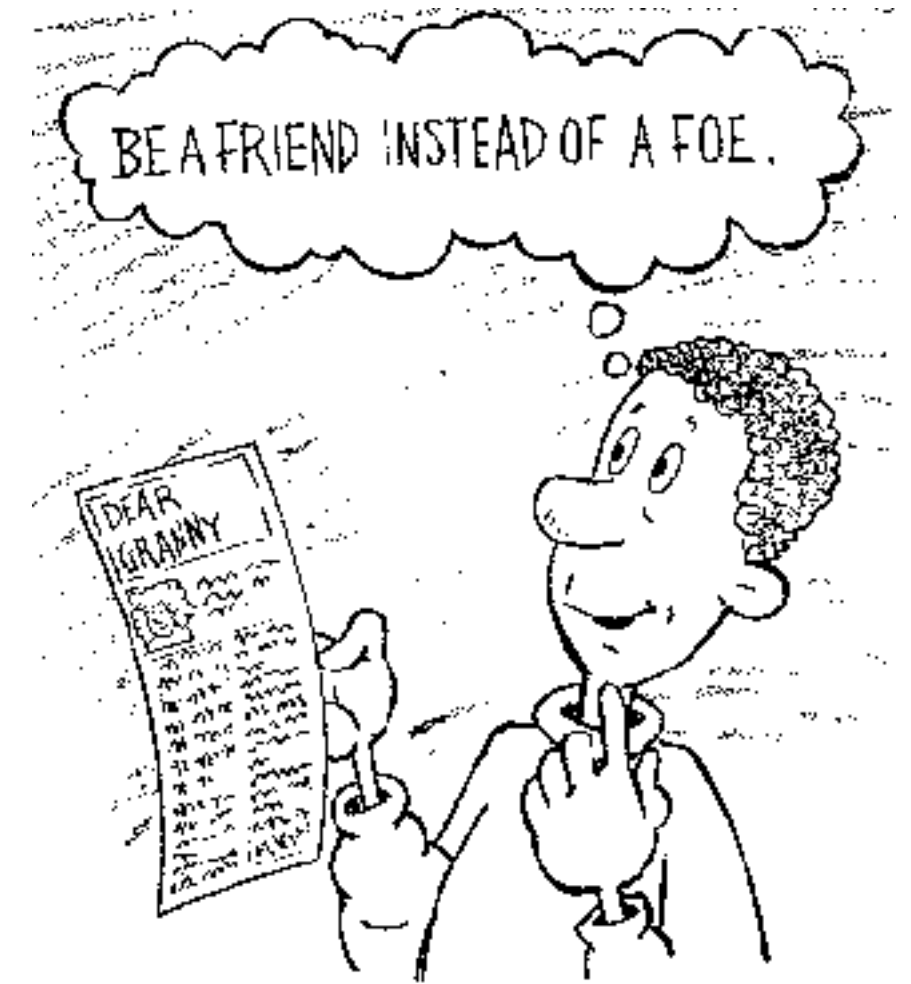
Take out the advice column that you used as the attention grabber. Make it clear to the group that you are going back to the topic of advice. Explain that when a person tells others what to do, he or she takes away their ability to become responsible and to choose for themselves.

Explore with the group what could go wrong if a friend gives another friend bad advice. Expect an answer something like this: “If he follows her advice and it was bad advice, he may become angry with her and blame her for telling him to do the wrong thing, forgetting that he asked her for advice and that he was the one who chose to follow the advice.”

Then ask the group what could go wrong if someone tells a friend what to do, even if the advice is good advice. Expect an answer like this: “If the person follows the advice and it was good advice, she may become dependent on the advice of others and may always put the burden on them to solve her problems.”

Summarize by saying, “In other words, it is not usually a good idea to tell others what they should do when they come to you with a problem.” Then announce to the group members that they will now have a chance to write their own answers to letters from an advice column. Someone will probably inquire, “If we can’t give advice by telling them what they should do, what will we write?” The response to that question is on handout 1–B, “‘Dear Friends’ Letters,” located at the end of the chapter, but it is also included here for your easy reference:

1. Listen to the person and restate what you are hearing. For example, “It sounds like you are really frustrated with . . .”



2. Ask the person some good questions, such as “How do you feel about . . . ?” or “What do you want for . . . ?”
3. Help the individual see options. For example, “I can think of three things you could try. . . .”
4. Let the person decide. Ask, “What do you think you want to do?”
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7. If you catch yourself saying, “If I were you, I would probably . . . ,” you can still recover by adding, “but you and I are different, and you have to decide for yourself what is best for you.”

Arrange the young people in small groups of two or three and give each group one “Dear Friends” letter from handout 1–B. Go over the guidelines briefly. Do not spend too much time on them. It is easier for the participants to learn the guidelines by using them in their letter than by discussing them ahead of time. Then instruct each small group to do the following: read their letter, look for friend and foe habits, and write their response. One person in each group could be designated to write down the group’s response.

When the small groups have finished writing their letters, invite them to take turns reporting to the large group by reading their “Dear Friends” letter from the handout, telling what friend or foe habits they observed in the letter, and reading the response they wrote to the letter. Each person in the small group should take part in the reporting. Allow the participants to ask questions and make comments on one another’s reports.

## Sirach Speaks on Major Issues Learning Experience (10 minutes)

As a conclusion to writing the “Dear Friends” advice column, have the group listen to some of Sirach’s advice on issues that were important to young people during his time and are still important to young people today.

Give everyone a copy of handout 1–C, “Sirach Speaks on Major Issues,” or write each scriptural passage on a separate index card and give the cards to different people to read aloud. Be alert to any misinterpretations of the meaning of the readings and correct them before moving on. Once the passages have all been read, it is time to take a break!

**Snack** Making another person a sundae might be a good way for the young people to practice friend habits. By building a sundae according to another person’s preferences, one has to listen, ask good questions, and serve. Be sure to have enough options (for example, flavors of ice cream, sauces, toppings) so that the young people have to make choices.

## Building Relationships Faith Works (30 minutes)

Ask the group to come up with a service activity or a social event that might deepen their understanding of relationships or help them form new relationships. Here are some suggestions:

- See a movie or a videotape about relationships. (Check theater listings or ask for titles at a video rental store.)
- Contact your local Big Brothers–Big Sisters program or a similar service group in your area. Community service organizations are often looking for groups to do outings with.
- At your parish’s next picnic or potluck, have each young person in your group pair up with a child and find time to sit and talk, play a game, read a book, or do together whatever activities are being offered at the event.
- Invite a speaker to do an assertiveness training workshop for teens in your area. Your group could host the workshop, provide refreshments, write invitations, make posters, and lead opening icebreakers and the closing prayer.
- If your group seems ready to tackle the tougher issues of unhealthy foe habits, ask a speaker to come and talk about racism or sexism.

## Sirach’s Wisdom Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Gather the group in a circle. Call for volunteers to read these passages from Sirach: 6:5–9; 6:14–15; and 9:10. After the readings, bring out the advice column again. Tell the group that Sirach never wrote an advice column, because newspapers did not exist in those days, but he did have a lot of wisdom to share.

Instruct the group members to think of a foe habit they have that they would like to break and a friend habit they have that they would like to strengthen. Then explain that as the clipping is passed around, each person should think about her or his own foe habit and friend habit silently but mention aloud only the friend habit. Start by telling your own friend habit (keep it brief) and passing on the clipping. After the clipping has gone around the circle and returned to you, finish the prayer by thanking God for all the friends in the room.

## Recognizing Good Advice In Case You Have More Time

To do this activity with your group, you will need a collection of advice columns from newspapers and magazines, along with writing paper, an envelope, and a stamp for each person.

Begin the activity by asking your group why advice columnists often tell people what to do. Expect answers like these: “It’s a form of entertainment,” “People feel important and smart when they can tell people what to do,” and so forth.

Form small groups of two or three and give each group a few of the advice columns that you have collected. Instruct them to go through all the letters and responses and find the following items:

- examples of foe habits and friend habits
- examples of telling the person what to do
- examples of listening, asking good questions, and providing options and support

Then tell each participant to think of a real situation and write a letter to one of the advice columnists. Collect the letters and mail them after the session. Remind everyone to keep watching for a reply to their letter in the paper or magazine that carries the column of the person they wrote to.

## Friend or Foe Habits

### Typical Foe Habits

#### Me Habits



##### Characteristics

- Talks a lot about one's own accomplishments, emphasizes own abilities
- Tries to be Superman or Wonder Woman

##### Examples

- "Let me tell you what I do at school. . . ."
- "All my trophies don't fit on my shelf. . . ."

#### Seesaw Habits



##### Characteristics

- Puts others down to make self look better
- Blames others for one's own problems

##### Examples

- "He's such a jerk. . . ."
- "Can you believe that she would . . . ?"

#### Chameleon Habits



##### Characteristics

- Changes one's mind to please others
- Will do anything to be accepted

##### Examples

- "Who else is going?"
- "What would everyone say if I . . . ?"

#### Ostrich Habits



##### Characteristics

- Ignores problems, avoids conflict
- Withdraws, doesn't want to deal with it

##### Examples

- "Why can't we just have fun? . . ."
- "Just leave me alone. . . ."

#### Power Struggle Habits



##### Characteristics

- Uses scare tactics and threats
- Tries to manipulate and control

##### Examples

- "Keep it up—you'll be sorry when . . ."
- "If you know what's good for you, you'll . . ."

### Typical Friend Habits

#### You Habits



##### Characteristics

- Emphasizes others' abilities as well as one's own
- Affirms others

##### Examples

- "I think it's neat that you can . . ."
- "That's great! I'm glad you . . ."

#### Merry-go-round Habits



##### Characteristics

- Is realistic, cooperative, and helpful
- Sees one's own gifts and others' gifts clearly

##### Examples

- "Can you give me a hand with . . . ?"
- "You're good at this! I'm better at . . ."

#### Chimp Habits



##### Characteristics

- Able to relate to all kinds of people
- Knows own wants, yet keeps an open mind

##### Examples

- "I think I'd like to try . . . for a change!"
- "Thanks, but I don't believe in doing . . ."

#### Geese Habits



##### Characteristics

- Communicates well with others
- Watches out for others' needs

##### Examples

- "I get the feeling you. . . . Is that true?"
- "We have to be in this together. . . ."

#### Helping Hand Habits



##### Characteristics

- Doesn't want to control, but asserts self
- Honest, open about own preferences

##### Examples

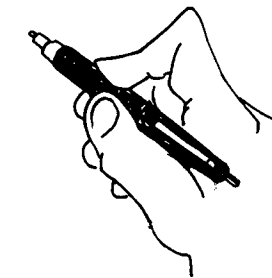
- "I have a need to . . . and you can help."
- "I can see why you think that, but I . . ."

## "Dear Friends" Letters

Dear Friends,

I used to be good friends with Mike. Well, we still are really good friends, but Mike's changing. He's smart, and he's always been popular with girls, but I think he's too smart—or too cool, or he thinks he's too cool. He talks about kids who aren't around, and he puts them down bad. He talks about black kids and Hispanic kids and says nasty things about them (we're both white). He was talking about my old girlfriend once and saying things I KNOW are lies! But what can I say when all our friends are around? I don't want to look stupid. Everyone else seems to like Mike. They all laugh at his comments and put-downs, but I don't think they are very funny. What should I do?

—Too chicken to speak up



What do we say to a friend with a problem if we are not supposed to give advice? Here's an easy guide:

1. Listen to the person and restate what you are hearing. For example, "It sounds like you are really frustrated with . . ."
2. Ask the person some good questions, such as "How do you feel about . . . ?" or "What do you want for . . . ?"
3. Help the individual see options. For example, "I can think of three things you could try. . . ."
4. Let the person decide. Ask, "What do you think you want to do?"
5. Support the person. Say something like "I'll be thinking of you. . . . Let me know what you decide."
6. Do not let the individual trick you into telling him or her what to do, even if he or she begs you to! Just walk the person through the problem, and be with him or her when it's all over.
7. If you catch yourself saying, "If I were you, I would probably . . . ," you can still recover by adding, "but you and I are different, and you have to decide for yourself what is best for you."

Dear Friends,

I have a girlfriend who smokes marijuana a lot and gets drunk. I think she might do other drugs regularly, too. She is popular and pretty, and smart and affectionate. And she's the girl of my dreams, except for the drugs part. She has never pressured me to do drugs with her, but I know she pressures other friends. When I ask her to stop, she says it's nobody's business but her own, and why should I care? (What a question!) If we're talking on the phone, and I bring it up, she says she's high so she can't really discuss anything heavy. She's such a tough talker. She threatens to run away to the city and live where she has "connections."

When we're together and I know she isn't high, I bring up the subject, and she says all of my "interfering with her life" is what drives her to take drugs. Once I think she tried to kill herself with aspirin, but she said it was just an accident. If I tell her parents, she will kill me, or her parents will tell my parents, and they will kill me for hanging around with someone who is into drugs! Either way, I'm dead! What can I do?

—Trying to stay alive



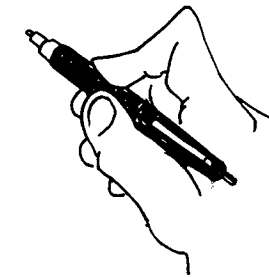
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Dear Friends,

I met someone recently I thought I liked. She is considerate and agreeable. So we started to hang around together, and then I realized she is a very insecure person. I guess I still like her, but I don't want to hang around with her anymore. She always wants to be with me and know what I'm doing. She has no mind of her own. Whatever everyone else wants to do, SHE wants to do. She asks me what I'm wearing to school almost every day so she can wear the same thing. She is so clingy, I can't stand it. But if I tell her this, I will hurt her feelings. When she calls and wants to go out, I have to think up excuses to tell her. I'm running out of excuses, and I thought she would have gotten the hint by now. I don't want to hurt her feelings, and she doesn't have any other close friends. The other girls seem to like to have her around only because she never says no to anyone, and I don't want to make waves with all the other girls in our group. But I'm suffocating. What can I do?

—Trapped



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Dear Friends,

My problem is my parents—I can't get them off my case. I never had any real friends in high school before (well, maybe one or two), but now that I have this job, I've got some really great guys to hang around with. They're all a little older (college age), but they really like me. Having some beers with them sure makes a better Friday night than being bored at some stupid school game or dance where everyone is stuck-up and ignores you anyway.

Besides, I'm never going to college—I'll probably just stay at this neat job and work full-time. My parents seem to think I should go to Harvard or something! They are threatening to make me quit my job unless I pull my grades up. (Who cares about grades? I passed everything last quarter, and I only got two D's!)

I can't wait to get out of the house, but I'm only a sophomore! I can't put up with this for another two years. They are driving me crazy. I have to get them to leave me alone!

Some of my new friends live together at their own place. I'm ready to tell my parents I'm moving out. I don't need them anyway. I'm making some money now, and I'm old enough for independence. That's what I'll do if they can't lighten up. What do you say about that?

—Wants out



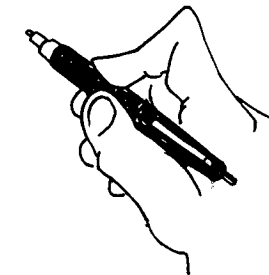
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Dear Friends,

This is my problem. It isn't even really my problem. It's my girlfriend's problem, which makes it my problem, I guess. Well, she's cute and smart and popular. But she's doing everything! She's a cheerleader, she's president of the French Club, and she's the editor of the school newspaper. She gets straight A's, and she even has a part-time job! She never has any time for me anymore! When she does manage to save a Saturday night for me, she's so tired and cranky, it isn't even fun. I tried to convince her not to accept that editor job for the paper, but she says all that stuff really looks good on college applications. All the guys are really jealous of me because I get to date her, so I hate to break up with her. But she's become so burned out, she isn't fun anymore. When I try to explain my feelings, she says I'm jealous because there are so many people who need her! All she talks about are her "achievements." What do you suggest? I want her back the way she used to be!

—Missing my girlfriend



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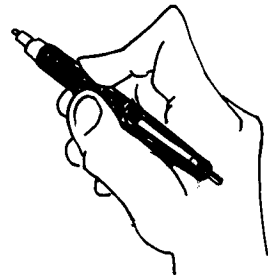
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7. If you catch yourself saying, "If I were you, I would probably . . . ," you can still recover by adding, "but you and I are different, and you have to decide for yourself what is best for you."

Dear Friends,

I had a terrific relationship with someone—or so I thought. We saw each other a lot, had fun together, and seemed to develop a real bond. But all of a sudden, he seemed no longer interested. When I ask him what's wrong, he says, "Nothing," or "I don't know what to say." When I ask him if he still cares about me, he says he does. When I ask him if he still wants to go out with me, he says he doesn't know.

He sure won't talk about it! I don't want to push him, but how can I find out what happened if he doesn't tell me? I still love him. I think he's afraid to tell me he just doesn't love me anymore. I would rather have him tell me and get it over with than string me along like this. I don't know if I should wait for him to figure it all out, or if I should just go find someone else. I would rather wait for him because I think he's so special, but I'm afraid I could be waiting forever. What should I do?

—Confused



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## Sirach Speaks on Major Issues

If you have been assigned to read a passage to the group, read it when your turn comes. Everyone should follow along on the handout while others are reading. Keep this handout for your personal reference.

### On Gossip

Gossips and liars deserve to be cursed, because they have been the ruin of many people who were minding their own business. . . . Anyone who pays attention to slander can never find peace of mind. (28:13–16)

### On Profane Language

Don't fall into the habit of coarse, profane talk; it is sinful. You might forget yourself while in the company of important people and make a fool of yourself with some foul word that comes to you naturally. Think how your parents would feel! You would curse the day you were born and wish you were dead! If you fall into the habit of using offensive language, you will never break yourself of it as long as you live. (23:13–15)

### On Betraying Secrets

If you repeat secrets that have been told to you, you are destroying the confidence others have in you, and you will never have a close friend. Respect your friends, and keep faith with them. If you do betray a friend's confidence, you may as well forget you have a friend. You have killed that friendship just as surely as if you had taken a weapon and killed an enemy. Your friend is gone. You can no more get him back than you can get a bird to come back to your hand once you let it go. Don't bother going after him. It's too late. He is gone, like a deer escaped from a trap. Wounds can be bandaged and insults can be forgiven, but if you betray a confidence, it is hopeless. (27:16–21)

### On Safe Drinking

Don't try to prove your [maturity] by how much you can drink. Wine has been the ruin of many. . . . Wine can put new life into you if you drink it in moderation. What would life be like without it? Wine was created to make us happy. If you drink it in moderation and at the right time, it can lift your spirits and make you cheerful, but if you drink when you are angry and upset, it leads to headaches, embarrassment, and disgrace. (31:25–29)

### **On Avoiding Burnout**

Don't get involved in too many things. If you try to do too much, you will suffer for it. You won't be able to finish your work, and you won't be able to get away from it either. (11:10)

### **On Criticism**

Before you start criticizing, get your facts straight and think the matter through. Don't interrupt while someone is speaking; hear what [they have] to say before you answer. Don't get into an argument over something that is none of your business. (11:7-9)

### **On Sexual Sins**

There are any number of ways to sin and bring down the Lord's anger, but sexual passion is a hot, blazing fire that cannot be put out at will; it can only burn itself out. A person who lives for nothing but sexual enjoyment will keep on until that fire destroys him. (23:16)

### **On Parents**

Honor your father with all your heart, and never forget how your mother suffered when you were born. Remember that you owe your life to them. How can you ever repay them for all they have done for you? (7:27-28)

### **On Kindness**

Yes, kind words are more effective than the best of gifts, and if you are really concerned, you will give both. (18:17)

(All of the passages on this handout are reprinted with permission from the Good News Bible.)