

Teaching Guide for  
**Becoming Friends**

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*To Jeff Johnson, who tragically died shortly after his original course was published. May the memory of his wonderful contributions to youth ministry be sustained by this revision of his work.*



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# Introduction



## THIS COURSE AND THE DISCOVERING PROGRAM

This Discovering Program course, *Becoming Friends*, reaches into the core of a young person's deepest fear and greatest joy—friendship. Most young adolescents, like most people of all ages, respond readily to an invitation to relationship. They come alive when they sense a spirit of openness and welcome. This course functions like a series of invitations to young people to come and see and experience friendship. It challenges the leader to create an atmosphere in which young people can risk sharing themselves and thereby discovering their own goodness. This discovery and offering of one's self is indeed one of life's greatest joys.

The Discovering Program consists of fourteen six-session courses for use with middle school or junior high students. *Becoming Friends* is designed to involve middle school students in skill-building activities such as group discussions, team research and reporting, and shared prayer. Because the skills developed in these activities are employed in other Discovering courses,

consider using this course to introduce the program or scheduling it among the first courses offered in the program. Other Discovering courses also deal with relationships. These include *Understanding Myself*, *Learning to Communicate*, and *Making Decisions*.

Like all other courses in the program, this one offers the students opportunities that meet their developmental needs for positive interaction, creative expression, meaningful participation, and a sense of competence and achievement. All these needs are addressed within the context of religious experience appropriate to junior high–age people.

The six session plans of this course are each designed for a 1-hour meeting. If your group is scheduled to be together for more than an hour, the sessions can be extended with the optional approaches suggested at the end of each session plan. Also consult these approaches as alternative strategies if your teaching style or the students' learning style calls for changes.

The time estimates suggested for the session steps are based on a group size of about fifteen participants. If your group has considerably more or fewer members, you may need to make minor adjustments in the session plans. The options at the end of each session plan often suggest adjustments for different-size groups. This course, like all Discovering courses, works well with larger groups, but in such cases you will have less opportunity to address the students' individual contributions and needs.

## BACKGROUND

### The Young Adolescent and This Course

Educators and parents agree that the junior high years are among the most difficult for young people. Today's young adolescents face an increasing number of adult-level decisions about drinking, drugs, sex, family, and personal relationships. As they are beginning puberty, young people become acutely aware of the decisions they have to make in these areas. As the values and attractions of the outside world begin to occupy their attention, their physical, emotional, and cognitive lives are also undergoing a radical change. Twelve-, thirteen-, and fourteen-year-olds have only the brief span of childhood experience and wisdom to draw on, yet they often attempt to deal with adult-size, far-reaching decisions.

This collision of a newly developing self with a newly experienced world contributes to characteristics that adults who live or work with young people know all too well—self-absorption, boundless physical energy, unpredictable mood swings, voracious appetites, soaring idealism, constant testing of limits, brutal honesty, and awkward social skills, to name a few.

Beneath all these agents of change and challenge that young people face lie the great questions that human beings must answer for themselves, which are just beginning to intrude into the consciousness of young adolescents:

- Who am I? Am I normal? Who will I be as an adult?
- Do I belong? Who are my friends? Am I a good friend? How do I fit into my family? How do I relate to the other sex?

- What am I going to do with my life? How will I make a living? How can I best prepare for a career?
- What do I do when life does not work? How do I handle failure, pain, suffering, and death?
- Does life have any meaning? How does Christianity relate to my daily life? What is success?

Young adolescents commonly struggle with concerns about school performance, physical appearance, and popularity among peers. These are all problems that relate to belonging. Questions of failure, rejection, and pain enter into their consideration insofar as these issues threaten their immediate life; these great life questions are generally not yet a philosophical concern for them. The great questions about individuality, the future, and the meaning of life usually remain in the wings and do not take center stage until the high school or post-high school years.

In their concern about belonging, young people desperately need to know that they are more like their peers than different from them. Though high school students tend to accept individuality in their classmates, being different is not okay in junior high. Therefore, effective ministry helps young adolescents recognize that they are more alike on the inside than they may appear on the outside. They need to know that they all share many of the same fears, feelings, questions, and concerns. They often do not advert to these more interior concerns because they spend so much time and energy keeping up their external appearances.

As young adolescents struggle to fit in, they begin to discover the power and mystery of their sexuality. They are faced with the need to sort out their masculinity or femininity amid a cultural context that offers a mixture of confusing images often portraying immature relationships. Most young people search for role models in the media while trying on different identities that appear to work for their peers.

As junior high people become more self-aware, they also tend to feel that they are all alone in their experiences. They have yet to learn that they are fundamentally like everyone else in the world. Knowledge of a shared humanity has not yet rooted in their consciousness. Consequently they need help surfacing their concerns and admitting their new feelings and fears. They need to learn how to talk about their questions and decisions with someone who can help them. As they increasingly rely on one another for information and support, young adolescents need to learn how to truly help one another and when to seek outside help from knowledgeable and trusted adults.

Before their adolescence, the vast majority of young people looked unquestioningly to their family for guidance about relationships. Within the family, issues of sexuality and belonging have imprinted indelible patterns on them. Junior high people carry what they have learned into their relationships with one another. They experiment with independence from the family while remaining dependent on the family. They make initial connections between home and the rest of the world, between their inner life and others' lives, between their actions and the accompanying consequences,

between religious faith and everyday life. Their closest friendships provide the context for making these connections.

Young adolescents live in the two main worlds of the family and the school, stopping only momentarily and infrequently to consult their personal thoughts and inner life. Though young people need time to be silent and reflective, they regularly fill up opportunities for solitude with music, telephone calls, and television. Most of them do not seek quiet time, or know how to use it. This course encourages the healthy “self-talk” that is key to an integration of all the simultaneous growth that is happening in their life.

## The Theology of This Course

Healthy friendships are essential to personal and spiritual growth. The Gospel of John places Jesus’ words about friendship in the Last Supper discourse:

“This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.” (John 15:12–15, NAB)

This passage is a powerful image of faith. It summarizes the essential teaching of this course—that God is our friend. The following corollaries of that teaching are communicated throughout the sessions’ readings and activities:

- God is a friend to all persons. The Old Testament reveals a God who seeks a loving relationship with people. From the first commandment, to have no other gods, to the Incarnation of Jesus, God tries to get close to us. The Incarnation is the ultimate revelation of God’s desire to be deeply involved with humanity. Jesus came and dwelt among us (John 1:14); he pitched his tent among us, that is, made our home his home. This tells young people that God is a friendly God—not distant, silent, and uninvolved. God is present and actively seeking ways of communicating unconditional love to all people.
- Friendship was important to Jesus. The Gospels abound with examples of friendships that were a delight and a deep challenge to Jesus. He built close friendships with the twelve Apostles and, within that group, intimate relationships with Peter, James, and John. Jesus valued his deep friendships with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. He broke unjust and exclusive social and religious rules and related with women, sinners, and foreigners. He constantly stretched the boundary of who could and ought to be a friend. Junior high people need to learn that Jesus was totally human, like us “in every way, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15, NAB). Faith becomes more realistic to young people when they see Jesus as a flesh-and-blood God with whom they can identify.



- The Scriptures teach about friendship. This course uses Gospel stories and the wisdom literature of Proverbs and Sirach to teach young people that the Scriptures are the collected wisdom of the community. It shows young people that their friendship issues are also issues that Jesus and his ancestors struggled with in their lifetime.
- Friendships are strengthened by prayer. Young people are delighted to discover that God is a friend who wants to hear from them. This course teaches them prayer as communication with God as a friend. It also emphasizes the role of intercessory prayer as a means of caring about friends and turning worry into positive action in support of them.
- God is experienced in the love and care shown among friends. For many young people, God's love is felt when friends listen to their troubles, help them get through their pain, support them as they pursue their dreams, and accept them for who they are. When young people truly befriend one another, God is truly there.

### **This Course and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church***

All Discovering courses rely on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a primary resource and a guide to theological accuracy. The *Catechism* can also serve as a valuable source of both information and inspiration for the teacher. We encourage you to review and reflect on certain sections of the *Catechism* as you prepare to teach *Becoming Friends*.

The *Catechism* discusses who we are as persons in part 3, “Life in Christ.” Specifically, paragraphs 1700 to 1706 discuss the dignity of the human person and the need to grow spiritually and emotionally as we grow physically. Paragraphs 1878 to 1883 deal with the person and society, and the notion that we develop our potential by interacting with others. The section on virtues, paragraphs 1803 to 1845, contains much information that may come up for discussion as you teach this course.

### **Teaching This Course**

Teaching Christian values and beliefs to young adolescents is perhaps easier than being a junior high student who is trying to live Christian values. If you teach on Wednesday nights, use a “Thursday morning mentality”—that is, direct the session toward empowering the young people to meet their world on Thursday morning. This perspective will serve as a reality check and help the young people stay interested and motivated. If you have visited the school or schools your students attend, you can recall the hallways, lunchroom, and classrooms. You can almost hear the conversations, see the faces, observe the cliques and the loners. This setting is where your sessions must make sense. Otherwise the young people may decide that the material being covered sounds and feels like some adult, religious stuff they need to learn for some reason that presently escapes them.

The sessions in this course may be viewed as labs for relationships, as places where the trust level is such that the members of the group are willing and able to take risks. The sessions also offer young people the quiet

they may lack at school or at home to reflect on the shifting relationships they call friendships.

The sessions of this course assume that you are willing to befriend young people, and successful sessions require some personal sharing about your faith and friendships. The course sessions also afford you the opportunity to grow and mature in your own prayer and relational life. For example, the third session, which is on friendships between boys and girls, offers an excellent opportunity to reflect on your adolescent and adult relationships and thus continue the lifelong task of integrating sexuality and spirituality.

The importance of content (the what of teaching) often outstrips the value of process (the how of teaching). In this course, however, process is also a great teacher. An environment conducive to friendship, an aura of respect and acceptance, an easy relationship between group members—all of these teach. People who know how to befriend one another and who work on building relationships of care and concern form the foundation for much that young people learn about morality and sexuality, about the church as a community of relationships, and about God as a friend. This course does not instruct young people about the church as the community of believers or the Mystical Body of Christ, but it does provide them with experiences of how friends can be church, that is, how they can risk, care, grow, and pray together. Through these experiences young people can get a taste of what true community is all about. This course hopes to stimulate the religious imagination of young people by offering them rich images and experiences of friendship and faith, which can enable them to see God as their friend.

Realize that the primary religious image in this course is you. The young people can learn much from how you teach them, how you interact with their peers, and what stories you share. Most people come to faith through the witness of other people. Religious tradition is transmitted primarily through personal experiences and relationships and deepened by reflection and study. Teaching a course on friendship to young adolescents is a true act of faith. Take time to read the Scriptures and to pray the prayer provided at the beginning of each session in this course. Your role is to create an atmosphere where God's spirit can gather and unify the group, remove fear, and empower the students to risk being the best they can be with one another.

Last, enjoy these young people and enjoy yourself. The most important lesson the students can learn is that God delights in them as whole, happy people who know how to care about and for one another. So do something faith-filled and daring in the teaching process—have fun!

### **Course Components**

Each course in the Discovering Program consists of two components: a teaching guide like this one that fully describes the course goals, objectives, content, and session plans, and a companion student booklet. The booklet is not a conventional textbook, in that the students are never expected to read it outside of the sessions. In fact, substantial reading is never required as a regular feature of the learning process. Nor does the booklet look like a textbook; for instance, it contains no recognizable chapters as one would

expect in a standard text. The student booklet for each Discovering course, rather, is to be used only in conjunction with the session plans described in the teaching guide. It is effective in this way because of the following features:

- The booklet provides a kind of running summary of the themes and essential information that are presented through the engaging session plans. This gives the students a record of what they have learned in the course. It is also a helpful feature when a student misses a session; at the next session, you can ask him or her to briefly review relevant pages from the booklet.
- The booklet uses sidebars related to the main topics to draw the young people further into the material and enrich their learning. You may use the sidebars in any way that seems appropriate—perhaps as discussion-starters, topics for journal entries, or simply focal points for a brief silent reflection.
- The booklet includes an occasional personal reflection or journal-writing activity that students are asked to complete quietly on their own.
- The booklet presents activities designed for use in small groups—such as discussion-starters, role-plays, and vignettes.
- Finally, the booklet’s attractive design—using original art, bold colors, interesting type, evocative photos, and so on—is intended to support the total learning process.

Note that for this course some booklet pages are referenced only in options or not at all. These pages may be used like sidebars: you may incorporate them into your session plans in some way, or simply allow the students to discover and read them on their own.

### **Student Booklet Sidebars**

The student booklet includes a number of quotes, poems, and bits of interesting information that are not central elements of the course content. Set off graphically from the other booklet materials, these sidebars are generally not referred to in the session plans. They are included in the booklet to spark the students’ interest and imagination. As you prepare for each session, reflect on the sidebars and decide if you wish to use any of them in your teaching.

### **Student Booklet Bound into the Teaching Guide**

For your convenience and easy reference, a complete copy of the student booklet for *Becoming Friends* is bound into the back of this guide. You may find it helpful to tab or mark the booklet pages related to a given session as you prepare to teach it. That will make it easy to flip back and forth between the guide and the booklet.

### **Student Booklet Pages in the Session Plans**

As a visual aid, reduced versions of some student booklet pages are reproduced in the left-hand margin of the session plans. Such pages appear at the beginning of the related instructions. If more than one booklet page is involved in an activity, only the first of those pages is reproduced in the margin.

### **Prayer Experiences**

Establish a prayer area within the room where you will meet with your group. This area will become a focal point for a time of prayer during each session. An enthroned Bible in a designated place in the prayer area attests to the importance of the Scriptures and of shared prayer. Items such as a candle and a plant or flowers are recommended for the enthroned Bible.

A prayer experience ends each session of this course. Everyone is called to prayer through simple words and actions, such as lighting a candle, moving to the prayer area, asking for silence, or playing music conducive to silent reflection. These simple gestures help settle everyone down and center them for reflection and prayer.

### **Some Preparation Needs**

The learning activities of *Becoming Friends* are intended to relate to the real issues of young people's friendships. Different cultural, regional, family, and school settings affect young people's lives and relationships. If you are not familiar with the cultural, family, or school settings of your group, do some research into the young people's lifestyles. The awareness you gain through this study can help you as the group discusses issues such as boyfriends and girlfriends (session 3), challenges of friendships (session 4), and troubled friends (session 5).

You may choose to talk to other teachers in the religious education program, parents, local youth leaders, school officials, social workers, law enforcement personnel, and high school or junior high personnel as you attempt to ascertain the crucial issues and influences that face junior high students. The insights of these people can help you prepare for and approach this course.

### **Teaching Strategies**

Before teaching each session, read the plan and become comfortable with the teaching strategies. Note the materials and preparation required. As you teach the course, you will see that from time to time, the group responds more readily to specific learning activities. This is the group's unconscious and rather spontaneous way of showing you how it learns best. Allow a time of experimentation as you learn about the group as a whole, and expect the students to take some time to learn about your personality too. If problems arise and you are teaching alone, seek someone with whom you can discuss your difficulties and from whom you can receive an objective response, support, and advice.

**Discussions.** Because young adolescents come with a variety of personalities and developmental levels, they need a variety of learning strategies and activities. One learning method used in this course is discussion.

Group discussions are not the primary vehicle of this course, because young adolescents frequently experience difficulty expressing their thoughts with clarity or confidence. Even brief discussions sometimes end up being a disaster, although at other times they may be wonderful. Nevertheless, discussions are recommended in some cases, and they can be effective if you keep a few things in mind. First, whatever the problem in a disastrous dis-

cussion, the leader is usually not its source. Second, limit your objectives to these two, given in order of importance:

1. to show the students that they are not the only persons in the whole world who think or feel a certain way
2. to exchange and develop ideas that are important to some students but not to all their peers

Third, encourage each student to contribute something. In an attempt to involve everyone, ask questions that call for nonthreatening responses. Use questions that appeal to the mind and to the emotions. Ask the young people how they feel about the concern under discussion, as well as what they think about it. Try to listen with all your senses to their verbal and nonverbal responses.

**Candles for the closing prayers.** The closing prayer of the first session establishes a small rite that is followed in ensuing sessions. The students are given votive, or vigil, candles, and glass holders, for their use during prayer. Because the candles are inside glass, they need to be lit using a taper. Also, see if it is feasible to purchase the candles and holders and to present them to the young people as gifts at the close of the last session.

**The melodrama in session 3.** The third session contains a melodrama that can simply be read or can be made into a full-blown production with props and an expanded audience. Decide on the level of involvement you wish and take time to develop the production accordingly.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Curriculums take on greater clarity, direction, and purpose if they are described in terms of goals and objectives. This observation is based on a commonsense principle: We have a difficult time getting somewhere if we do not know where we are going. Educators who design learning experiences must identify their destination as a first step in determining how to get there. The statement of goals and objectives is a practical way to identify the desired outcomes for a program.

In the Discovering Program, goals and objectives are used in the following ways.

**Goals.** Goals are broad statements of what we wish to accomplish—learning outcomes we hope to achieve. The coordinator's manual for the Discovering Program provides the goals for all the courses in the curriculum. Each course within the total program also includes a statement of its goals. The goals often have an idealistic quality, inviting the teacher to reflect on how the course relates to the personal and faith development of the young people. At the same time, the course goals are realistic, measurable, and attainable. As a teacher, at the end of the course, you should be able to look back and determine if you have in fact achieved the course goals.

**Objectives.** Objectives are statements that define how to get to the goals. They name specific tasks that must be accomplished if the goals are to be achieved. The coordinator’s manual identifies the objectives for each course in the curriculum. Each course, in turn, supplies a clear statement of objectives for each session in the course.

## The Goals and Objectives of *Becoming Friends*

### Goals

The goals for this course in the Discovering Program are as follows:

- that the students identify and improve their social skills in beginning and maintaining friendships
- that they identify the value of developing a wide variety of friendships
- that they recognize how friends can be appropriately responsible for one another’s well-being
- that they acknowledge God as a friend

### Objectives

Each session has its own objectives, which will help realize the course goals. The objectives of *Becoming Friends* that follow are phrased as tasks for the young people.

#### *Session 1: “New Friends”*

The students will do the following:

- distinguish between a friend and an acquaintance
- identify the qualities of true friendship
- evaluate their ability to make and maintain friendships
- reflect on the gifts they bring to and find in relationships

#### *Session 2: “Many Friends”*

The students will do the following:

- identify different kinds of friendships
- distinguish between healthy and unhealthy friendships
- reflect on the quality of their friendships

#### *Session 3: “Girlfriends, Boyfriends”*

The students will do the following:

- identify the similarities and differences between same-sex and other-sex friendships
- recognize Jesus as a person who enjoyed the friendship of men and women

#### *Session 4: “Challenges of Friendship”*

The students will do the following:

- practice conversational skills
- identify obstacles to building healthy friendships
- learn some ways to overcome obstacles to building friendships
- pray silently in a conversational manner

*Session 5: “Troubled Friends”*

The students will do the following:

- identify signs of troubled friends
- consider their responses to troubled friends
- realistically evaluate the limits of their ability to help troubled friends
- pray for troubled friends

*Session 6: “Being a Friend”*

The students will do the following:

- discuss biblical views about friendship
- apply their ideas and advice about friendship issues
- identify their most significant insights about friendship
- recognize that they have been called to friendship with God in Jesus



**SESSION**  
**1**

# New Friends



## AN OVERVIEW OF THIS SESSION

### Objectives

The students will do the following:

- distinguish between a friend and an acquaintance
- identify the qualities of true friendship
- evaluate their ability to make and maintain friendships
- reflect on the gifts they bring to and find in relationships

### Session Steps

This session uses pages 1 to 3 of the student booklet and includes the following steps:

- A. an introduction and an icebreaker (10 minutes)
- B. a word-association activity and the student booklet activity “Having a Friend, Being a Friend” (10 minutes)
- C. an exercise on friends and acquaintances (15 minutes)
- D. a discussion of friendship in the Bible (10 minutes)
- E. a presentation and the student booklet activity “Qualities of Friends” (10 minutes)
- F. a closing prayer (5 minutes)



## BACKGROUND

This session is designed to provide a secure, supportive environment in which the students can be comfortable with one another and can together explore friendship. The degree of the students' trust within the group will largely determine the success of this course. Consequently this session provides group-building activities that encourage lighthearted and nonthreatening self-disclosure. These opening activities aim to create a welcoming atmosphere that invites the students to begin forming solid relationships with one another.

This opening session also offers the students valuable, practical information that may have escaped their attention or that, though experienced, may not yet have been explored. The students learn about the differences between acquaintances and friends. They see what the Scriptures have to say about friendship. They reflect on traits that they admire and enjoy in friends, and they identify and examine their own best friendship-building qualities. In the closing prayer, they open their life and their struggles to God, who knows and loves them just as they are and who invites them to friendship.

In summary, this beginning session creates an environment where friendship can grow. Throughout all the activities and discussions, the students should sense that loyal friendship is possible here; that in their relatively short life, they already have experienced valuable friendships; and that they already possess good friendship-building qualities. At the end of the session, they should be poised to meet and work together in subsequent sessions, where they will have opportunities to learn about and experience the task and privilege of becoming friends and to take the first deliberate and caring steps toward that task and privilege.

## PREPARATION

### Materials Needed

- chairs or pillows, one for each student and one for the teacher
- newsprint and markers
- student booklets, one for each student
- pens or pencils
- blank self-adhesive labels, one for each student
- two sheets of plain wrapping paper or butcher paper, about 3-by-6 feet
- masking tape
- one or more copies of resource 1–A, “Friendship in the Bible,” cut apart as scored
- a tape or CD player, and a recording of reflective music (optional)
- a small table, a placemat or a small tablecloth, a Bible, a Bible stand (optional), and a pillar candle and matches (These items are referred to in subsequent materials needed lists simply as an enthroned Bible.)
- votive candles and glass holders, one for each student and one for the teacher
- a taper

## Other Necessary Preparations

Prepare to lead this session by doing the following things and checking them off as you accomplish them:

- For step A.* Set up the meeting room as described in step A.
- For step E.* Prepare a story to share with your group as directed in step E.
- For step F.* Arrange the prayer area as described in step F.
- If you wish to change the procedure to better fit your teaching preferences or the learning style of your group, see the Options section at the end of this session plan.

## Teacher Prayer

During your preparation time, take a few moments for quiet prayer. Calm your thoughts and be silent in God's faithful presence. When you are ready, complete the following scriptural reading, reflection, and prayer.

### *Scriptural reading*

I have been made the servant of [the] gospel by a gift of grace from God who gave it to me by the workings of [God's] power. I, who am less than the least of all God's holy people, have been entrusted with this special grace, of proclaiming to the gentiles the unfathomable treasure of Christ and of throwing light on the inner workings of the mystery kept hidden through all the ages in God, the Creator of everything. (Eph. 3:7–9, NJB)

*Reflection.* What part of the “unfathomable treasure of Christ” do you want to proclaim to the young people in this session?

### *Prayer*

Gracious God, thank you for the privilege of leading this group of young people. May your calming spirit be present, helping us to relax and grow comfortable with one another. May our barriers and defenses dissolve as we begin the journey toward becoming friends. Bless my preparation time so that I may be enthusiastic and confident when I meet with my group. Teach me to care for the young people as individuals. Bless me with patience, wisdom, and a sense of humor. Amen.

## PROCEDURE

### A. Introduction and Icebreaker: The Name Game (10 minutes)

*Before the session.* Procure one chair or pillow for each student and for yourself, and arrange these in a circle in your meeting room. As much as your situation allows, create an inviting and welcoming environment.

1. Welcome the students individually as they arrive; introduce yourself to each person and begin learning everyone's name. When it is time to begin, ask the students to sit in the circle you arranged earlier, and introduce yourself to the whole group. You might want to tell about your family, your work, your hobbies, and so forth.

Then tell the students to close their eyes and bring to mind a picture of each of the following people:

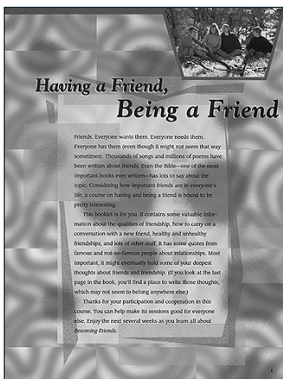
- ▶ a close friend who is near your age
- ▶ a friend who is a lot older than you are
- ▶ a friend who is a lot younger than you are
- ▶ a friend who is struggling with a problem
- ▶ a friend of the other gender
- ▶ someone who used to be a friend but no longer is

Explain to the young people that they will be exploring many aspects of having friends and being a friend during the course, including situations involving the kinds of friends you just described. Note that during this first session, they have a chance to get to know one another and to begin to explore the general topic of friendship.

2. In your own words, outline a get-acquainted game as follows:

- ▶ I will allow a few seconds for each of you to think of a word that describes you and begins with the same letter as your first name. Two examples are Soccer-Playing Sabrina and Musical Mike.
- ▶ I will begin by saying my own descriptive word and name, and everyone will repeat it together. Then the person on my left will say his or her descriptive word and name, and my word and name, and the group will repeat these two names. This process will continue until everyone has had a chance to give their descriptive word and name.

Begin this exchange as you just described, and proceed around the circle in order. Keep this introduction light and fun. Do not hesitate to help students who appear to be shy or afraid of being embarrassed.



Booklet page 1

## B. Word-Association Activity, and Booklet Activity: “Having a Friend, Being a Friend” (10 minutes)

1. Tell the students that this exercise is an opportunity for them to speak before they think. Explain that you will give a word and ask them to respond spontaneously by saying any word or phrase they associate with it. Then, for warm-up, offer a familiar word such as, “school,” to which they may respond with words such as, “homework,” “books,” “teachers,” and “friends.” If you are not sure they understand, offer another word, such as, “weekend,” to which they may respond with words such as, “fun,” “television,” “family,” “sports,” “friends,” and “sleeping late.”

2. Write the word, “Friend,” across the top of a sheet of newsprint in large letters. Announce that you would like the group to call out as many free associations with this word as they can in 3 minutes. Tell them to refrain from commenting on their responses. Give a signal to begin, then write all their suggestions on the newsprint. Use more than one sheet if necessary.

3. After 3 minutes stop the process. Read aloud the students’ words and phrases. Note that the group has created a long, varied, and interesting list of words and phrases associated with the word *friend*, and that this indicates that the students have already had a lot of experience with friends and friendship. Show them the student booklet for the course and point out that it deals with many of the ideas and situations on their list.

4. Distribute the student booklets, pens or pencils, and blank self-adhesive labels. Tell the students to write their name on the label and stick it on the cover of their booklet.

Give the students a few moments to look through their booklet. Then ask them to turn to “Having a Friend, Being a Friend” on page 1, and read aloud the essay there. Point out page 24, which is a place to write their thoughts, keep track of sayings, or jot notes to themselves. Tell the students that although the booklets are theirs, you will collect them at the close of each session. Assure them that you respect their privacy and will not read what they have written. Also, announce that at the end of the course, they may take their booklet home.

Instruct the students to put their booklet aside until it is needed later in the session. Or, if you prefer, collect the booklets at this time and redistribute them when they are needed in step E.

### **C. Exercise: Friends and Acquaintances (15 minutes)**

1. Comment that the word *friendship* often is used to describe various relationships, but that a real friendship is truly unique. It differs in important ways from other kinds of relationships, such as casual relationships and acquaintanceships. Define an acquaintance as a person one meets in passing but does not know very well. Invite the young people to suggest types of people that they might characterize as acquaintances, such as classmates they see only at school or teammates they just play a sport with.

2. Separate the group into one team of girls and one of boys. Give each team markers and a sheet of plain wrapping paper or butcher paper. Tell the group that the first part of this exercise involves making an outline of a person. This outline will be used to create a poster for distinguishing between friends and acquaintances.

Ask for one volunteer in each team to lie faceup on the paper while another person uses a marker to outline her or his body. After the outline is complete, the teammates are to use markers to add peripheral decorations or designs to the outline. For example, they might add shoes, earrings and

bracelets, hair, a hat, or a face. However, caution them to leave space on the body for words that will later be supplied by the group as a whole. Give the teams 3 minutes to add these features.

3. When the drawings are done, tape them to a wall and use a marker to label one, “Friend,” and the other, “Acquaintance.” Regather the group and ask the students to identify the traits of a true friend. As they do so, list their ideas inside the figure labeled “Friend.” Proceed in the same way to compile a list of traits of an acquaintance. As the young people participate in this activity, be aware that you may need to offer suggestions and help refine or restate their responses. You might also help them by asking them to think of a specific friend and a specific acquaintance rather than the more abstract ideas of friend and acquaintance.

The students might suggest the following traits of a friend:

- is fun to be with
- shares common interests
- is honest
- is trustworthy
- is caring
- brings out the best in me
- likes me
- accepts me
- is a good listener
- knows me well
- initiates opportunities to be together
- has a good sense of humor

Their list of traits of an acquaintance might include the following:

- does not spend much time with me
- does not share most of my interests
- is not necessarily concerned about my feelings
- does not know me well
- does not spend time with me on personal things
- is with me because of circumstance rather than choice

If the group has missed any of these major distinguishing characteristics for friend and acquaintance, feel free to add them to the appropriate list.

Note: Keep the outline with characteristics of friends posted for use in steps D and E.

## **D. Discussion: Friendship in the Bible** (10 minutes)

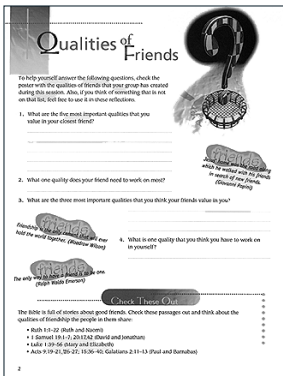
1. Assign each young person a partner. (If you have an odd number of students, form one group of three people.) Give each pair one or two scriptural quotes from resource 1–A, “Friendship in the Bible.”

Direct the students’ attention to their poster listing the qualities of a friend. Tell them that the partners are to read their scriptural passage aloud

to each other, then together decide which of the qualities listed on the poster is reflected in the passage. Caution them that their passage may be about a quality that is not listed. If it is, they should get ready to describe that characteristic in two or three words so that you can add it to the poster. Allow about 3 or 4 minutes for the pairs to complete their work.

2. Ask for a volunteer from one pair to read the pair's passage and tell the rest of the group what characteristic of friendship it found in the passage. If the pair found a characteristic that is not listed on the poster, add it to the poster. Continue this process until all the pairs have had a chance to report their findings. To keep the process moving along, do not engage the group in any lengthy discussions about the characteristics.

3. Close the activity by thanking the young people for their work. If the majority of the qualities they found in the scriptural passages were already on the poster, congratulate them on their insight and biblically compatible view of what it means to be a friend. Tell them that in the final session of the course, they will have another opportunity to look at friendship in the Scriptures.



Booklet page 2

## E. Presentation, and Booklet Activity: “Qualities of Friends” (10 minutes)

*Before the session.* Prepare to tell the group a brief story about a close friend of your own. Limit your presentation to 3 minutes. The most effective story would probably be about a friend when you were in junior high school, but it could be about a friend now. In preparing your tale, consider the following questions:

- What did (or does) your friend look like?
- What was (or is) his or her personality?
- How did the two of you grow to be friends?
- What kinds of things did (or do) you enjoy doing together?
- What significant experiences strengthened your friendship and sustained it through tough times?

1. Direct the students to bring their booklet, and a pen or pencil, and gather around you. Tell them to leave enough space between people so that they will not be distracted by one another.

2. When everyone is settled, tell the story about a close friend that you prepared before the session. Allow the students to ask questions if they want to. Your presentation of an important friendship in your life can help the young people reflect on their best qualities that help them to forge friendships.

3. Direct the young people to “Qualities of Friends” on page 2 of their booklet. Encourage them to think about one or two particular friends as they do the exercise there. Assure them that their written reflections are for their eyes only. If you have decided to use reflective music, begin playing it at this time. Allow about 5 minutes for this activity. During this time check to see that the prayer area is ready for the closing prayer.

## **F. Closing Prayer** (5 minutes)

*Before the session.* Arrange votive candle holders for everyone around the pillar candle in your prayer area. Gather votive candles for everyone and place them near, but not on, the prayer table. Also have a taper on hand.

1. Ask the group to move quietly to the area you have prepared for prayer. When the students are settled, tell them that during their time together for this course, they will have a chance to learn more about how to make friends and be a friend, and to experience those processes. They will be able to explore the similarities and differences between same-gender and other-gender friendships, and to look at how they can help friends who seem to be hurting. Note that throughout all their time together, they will consider Jesus’ friendships and will see how he invites them into friendship with him and with God.

2. Distribute votive candles to everyone and light the pillar candle on the prayer table. If possible, lower the lights. Pick up the Bible and read John 8:12. Invite the students to come forward one by one and place their unlit candle in a holder. Direct them to use the taper to transfer the flame from the pillar candle to their votive candle. (In the interest of safety, take care to follow this procedure carefully.) Ask the students to take their lit candle back to their place and prepare for a brief period of reflection.

3. After all the young people have returned to their place with their lit candle, offer the following questions, pausing for a few seconds after each. Invite the students to reflect quietly on them.

- ▶ What is the quality you value most in a friend?
- ▶ What is the best quality you bring to a friendship?
- ▶ Who do you want to thank for being your friend?
- ▶ What would you like to tell God about your friendships?

Ask the group members to close their eyes and be still inside as you pray something like the following:

- ▶ Gracious God, we thank you for this time together and for the new relationships begun here. Thank you for all our friends—past and present, young and old, male and female. In the next few weeks, help us learn more about friendship and discover how we can grow to be better friends. Most of all, thank you for being our friend, and someone who loves us all the time, no matter what happens. Amen.

4. Extinguish the candles. Tell the students that in the next meeting, they will listen to popular music that speaks of friendship. Invite them to bring songs about friendship to play. Ask them to think seriously about the music they choose and to be willing to talk about their selections.

Collect the booklets and candles, and thank the young people for their participation in this session.

## OPTIONS

After reading the session plan, you may choose to do some things differently or to make additions to an activity. Consider your time limitations first and then the following optional approaches.

**For step A.** If your group seems quiet or shy, eliminate the part of the name exchange where each student identifies all those who have introduced themselves. After each person identifies herself or himself, simply lead the group in the litany of characteristics and names, starting with your own.

**For step A.** If you have a large number of students, you may want to use this team-forming exercise after you introduce yourself. This exercise will take approximately 5 minutes, so be sure to allow for time adjustments later in the session.

Before the session, brainstorm small teams of fictional friends. Each team should contain about seven characters, but the teams do not have to be the same size. You might use teams of friends from comic strips, popular movies, or classic television shows, that you can be sure are familiar to all participants. For example, one team might consist of Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Lucy, Linus, Woodstock, Schroeder, and Peppermint Patty, all of whom are from the *Peanuts* comic strip. Another team might include Bert, Ernie, Big Bird, Cookie Monster, Oscar, and Elmo, all from the children's television show *Sesame Street*.

Write the name of each character on a separate self-stick name tag. As the students arrive, give each one a name tag. Be sure to mix up the characters so that friends who arrive together do not all end up in the same team. If you think the participants may not know one another (perhaps because they attend different schools), provide markers for the students to add their own name to the tag before putting it on.

After you introduce yourself and the session, tell the participants to gather into teams by finding other characters that belong with theirs. Then lead the separate teams through the name game described in step A, moving back and forth between the teams as necessary.

**For step A.** If the members of the group are strangers, spend more time helping them get to know one another. Ask them to introduce themselves further by naming a favorite or least-favorite class at school, telling about their family size and composition, or identifying their junior high school (if they attend different schools) or their favorite hobby, rock group, or song on the charts.



Or you might ask questions such as the following:

- What was the high point or the low point of last summer (or the last semester)?
- What do you want to tell about yourself that nobody would guess?

This option will take about 5 minutes. If you feel that the students would benefit from completing it, you could eliminate step D altogether or simply do two or three citations from it with the full group.

**For step A.** Consider providing time to establish ground rules for the group. This is particularly important if the members of the group are new to one another or if this is the first session of the school year. Invite the young people's suggestions about rules that facilitate mutual respect and care and that enable the members of the group to enjoy their time together and to learn something as well.

As the young people offer their ideas, list them on newsprint or poster board in simple, clear sentences. Look for ideas such as the following:

- One person speaks at a time.
- No interrupting is allowed.
- What is said here, stays here.
- Each person is free to speak or not to speak.
- The meetings begin and end on time.
- Each person respects the necessity of quiet time.

You may wish to post these, and remind the students of them from time to time as the need arises.

This option will take about 5 minutes. If you feel that the students would benefit from completing it, you could eliminate step D altogether or simply do two or three citations from it with the full group.

**For step B.** If you divided the participants into teams in step A, you might want to do the word-association activity in those teams. Appoint a leader in each team to write the words and phrases on newsprint as others call them out. After 3 minutes have the leaders post the newsprint in front of the whole group. Read the results, noting duplications among the teams.

**For step C.** If your group is larger than fifteen students, divide it into four or more small teams of all boys or all girls, and proceed with the outline drawing in part 2 of this step. Then tell each team to write the characteristics of either friends or acquaintances in its outline, assigning these categories equally between the teams and asking the teams to label their figure appropriately. As an alternative you may want to have each team come up with three to five characteristics in each category and list them under appropriate headings in their figure. After 5 minutes or so, post the figures and compare the results.

**For step D.** Some groups have more experience with the Scriptures than others and are more comfortable finding their way around the books of the Bible. If your students have already taken the Discovering Program courses *Exploring the Bible*, *Exploring the Story of Israel*, and *Meeting Jesus*, you may want to give them a chance to hone their skills by looking up the passages for this step themselves. Simply write the scriptural citations from resource 1–A on separate pieces of paper. Give each student a Bible and each pair of students one or two citations to look up. Proceed with the exercise as directed in step D.

This option may take a little extra time, so if you use it, be sure to make any necessary adjustments in other parts of the session.

**For step E.** If you have a large group, invite three or four people to come to the table at one time and light their candle. You might also consider having adult volunteers light each student's candle as he or she comes to the prayer table.

**For step F.** To extend the prayer, ask for nine volunteers each to read one verse from the poem "A Friend Is . . ." on page 3 of the student booklet. Signal the first person to begin reading after the reflection questions in part 3 of this step. When all the volunteers are done, read the last verse of the poem aloud yourself. Then move directly into the closing prayer at the end of part 3.