



Date: _____

Series: Fitting In and Finding Friends
Fall Year 1, Lesson 17

Choosing Friends? What Are You Looking For?

Take Home Point: *Choose friends that bring out God's best in you. *Repeat this phrase throughout the lesson.

Bible Event: 1 Kings 12:3-18, King Rehoboam chooses the wrong kind of friends. They give him bad advice and he loses part of his kingdom.

Key Verse: John 15:16a: "You didn't choose me, but I chose you. I have appointed you to go, to produce fruit that will last..."

We will help kids know:

- Through Jesus, God chooses us as his friends and that brings out the best in us.
- A helpful guideline in choosing friends is to ask, "Is this friendship helping to bring out God's best in me?"
- As Christians, we do not want to avoid those who may be bad influences, if we can influence them rather than them influencing us.
- To choose a friend, be a friend.




We will help kids feel:

- Aware of how important it is to choose the right kind of friends.
- Secure that Jesus has chosen us as we trust in him.

We will help kids do:

- Help kids make a report card identifying traits they would like to find in a friend.
- Measure themselves to see how well they will do as a friend.

THIS LESSON'S ROADMAP

| DESTINATION | PAGE # | DISCOVERIES ON YOUR JOURNEY | SUPPLIES NEEDED |
|---|--|---|--|
| Small Group Warm-Up  | 3 | Kids discuss why we choose the friends we do. What characteristics are important to us? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship Report Card for each child (p. 15) • pencils • apple slices • dipping caramel |
| Large Group  | 4 7 10 12 13 | Overview Introduction: “ Thinkendo and the PTA Evaluate” Essay One: “Strike Three-You’re a Friend” Essay Two: “Bad Friends, Bad Advice” Essay Three: “A Friend in Need is a Friend, Indeed!” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a copy of the three essays for three individual readers (p. 10-14) • unique clothes for an outlandish teacher look • chairs or masking tape arranged in rows • chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart with writing utensil • teacher’s desk • apple • classroom props such as a globe • two chairs up front • two pieces of paper • two markers • crown |
| Small Group Application  | 4 | Discussion questions help kids to understand “good character.” Questions help prepare them for future friendships. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship Report Card (p. 15) from warm-up activity |

Small Group Warm-Up: 15 minutes



Purpose: *Get pointed in the right direction! Build relationships and help guests feel at ease. Do the learning readiness activity that will point your group in the right direction for the lesson.*

As kids gather: *Listen to memory verses from last week and give coupons for memory verses, remembering to bring your Bible, and bringing a guest.*

Begin: *Review the group covenant signed by all. This can be as simple as reading it and reminding all that they have signed it. (See lesson 16.) Welcome new kids and invite them to sign the covenant.*

Supplies needed: Friendship Report Card for each child, pencils, apple slices, dipping caramel

Pass out a Friendship Report Card and a pencil to every kid. Say:

Let's pretend that you just moved to a new town or are starting at a new school and have to make all new friends. What are some important characteristics you would look for in a friend? How would that person act around others? What are they like "on the inside"? What kind of special interests would they have? What do they wear?

Here is a friendship report card. Underline four or five characteristics you would choose in a good friend. You can write down anything else that would be an important quality you would look for in a friend. You can make up whatever you want for the perfect friend.

Give kids a few minutes to complete their assignment and then say:

This report card reminds me of being in school. In school, some kids like to give the teacher an apple as a way of showing friendship. Here are some apple slices. Why don't we eat some while we talk about why we chose certain qualities for our friendship report card. We can even dip our apple slices in caramel.

After some discussion say:

What kind of friends would God want us to choose? Today we will discover that God wants us to **choose friends that bring out God's best in you.* While you are in Large Group, think about characteristics in a friend that will bring out God's best in you.

Large Group: 20-30 minutes



Purpose: *Help kids observe what the Bible says. Present the Bible Event in creative fashion. Help kids begin to interpret what it means.*

Overview

Introduction: “Thinkendo and the PTA Evaluate”

The large group leader dresses and acts like a teacher, Mrs. (or Mr.) Thinkendo. Mr(s). Thinkendo asks for kid volunteers to portray Mr. and Mrs. Schmittengoober, PTA members selected to evaluate some student essays. Three essays about friendship are read and graded.

Essay One: “Strike Three-You’re a Friend”

Essay Two: “Bad Friends, Bad Advice”

Essay Three: “A Friend in Need is a Friend, Indeed!”

Small Group Application: 20-25 minutes



Purpose: *Help kids map out the meaning of the Bible event in their lives. Use the questions to stimulate discussion, but don't feel tied to them. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you. Include personal examples from your own faith journey. The example of Christ at work in your life will leave lasting impressions of how Christ can work in the children's lives.*

Use your Bibles! Children need to learn how to look up references and follow along when scripture is read aloud. Allow for quality time of prayer at the close of the lesson.

Observation Questions: What happened?

In the first essay read in Large Group, how did Jenny’s teammates influence her? What kinds of things did she do that she normally did not do because her teammates were doing them?

How was Teresa different than the other teammates? *(She always seemed to have a smile. She said encouraging things to others.)*

Why do you think Jenny decided to encourage Teresa? *(Maybe Teresa’s encouragement brought out God’s best in Jenny.)*

In the second essay about King Rehoboam *(This story is found in 1Kings 12:3-18), did the king’s friends bring out his best or his worst? How?*

Interpretation Questions: What does this mean?

In the third essay, who does the true King represent? (God, the Father) Who does the Prince represent? (Jesus)

What do the broken crowns the people wear symbolize? (Our brokenness because of sin. Selfishness and trying to be king of our own lives. This is not the way God intended us to be.)

How did the prince pay for all the broken crowns? (He died and rose again.)

What does the prince's crown exchanged for the broken crowns represent? (The crown of life. Believers in Jesus become sons and daughters of the King. They also inherit God's kingdom, and receive privileges of princes and princesses. For example, believers can communicate with the King of the Universe through prayer. The King provides for and protects his people.)

Application Questions: What does this mean to me?

Application Activity:

Look again at your Friendship Report Card. Would you now change the characteristics you think are important in a friend if you want them to bring out God's best in you?

Discuss which characteristics of friends (or think of other qualities) that bring out God's best in us.

Now, grade yourself in these qualities. Mark your grade in the boxes next to the characteristics you think are important in a friend. How good of a friend are you? Do you bring out God's best in your friends?

Today, we learned that it is important to **choose friends that bring out God's best in us.*

Jesus is the perfect friend. He laid down his life for us, his friends. Jesus chose us to be friends. We did not choose him first. Jesus chose sinners to be his friends, even though he was perfect and did not sin himself.

We can choose people that do not always act or behave the best, as long as we influence them and do not let them influence us. Just like Jesus, we have to remain very close to God in heaven by talking to him, reading his word (the Bible), and also having Christian friends who can encourage us to be strong.

Closing Prayer:

Give thanks that God chose us to be his friends and sent Jesus to lay down his life to win that friendship. Pray for wisdom to choose friends that bring out the best in us. Pray also to be a good friend to others by bringing out God's best in them.

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Large Group Presentation

“Thinkendo and the PTA Evaluate”

Setting: a classroom

Have a teacher’s desk up front with a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart behind or next to the desk. Add other props such as an apple and a globe. Two chairs up front are necessary for the PTA members that will be visiting the class.

Arrange chairs in rows for students. (Masking tape lines on the floor would work if you choose not to use chairs. Students could sit along the lines in rows.)

The presenter is Mr. (Mrs.) Thinkendo, the teacher. The teacher needs to be dressed in unique clothes that can give her an outlandish teacher look.

In advance, ask for three volunteers to read the essays. These children or adults should be extremely competent readers. You may give them the scripts well ahead of time so they can practice reading dramatically and with expression.

Mr(s). Thinkendo opens the class by writing her name on the board and announcing how delighted she is to welcome some parents from the parent/teachers league. Mr(s). Thinkendo goes into the audience and pulls two kids forward to portray Siegfried and Shirley Schmittengoober, the PTA representatives. She asks these parents (student volunteers) to evaluate some of the essays the kids have written.

The Schmittengoobers will grade the essay however they want, based on how well the main character chose a friend. Mr(s). Thinkendo gives the Schmittengoobers each four pieces of paper and a marker. They use the paper and markers to write their grade for each character in the essay and then display to the students.

Mr(s). Thinkendo announces the first essay, “*Strike Three—You’re a Friend,*” and introduces the reader. The reader should be a female wearing a softball cap.

Following the essay, Mr(s). Thinkendo asks the Schmittengoobers to give Jenny a grade for how well she chose her friends at the beginning of the essay. Before the Schmittengoobers reveal their grades, Mr(s). Thinkendo polls the audience and asks for those who would give Jenny an “A” for how well she chose her friends at the beginning of the story to stand up. Who would give her a “B”, a “C”, “D”, “F”?

Mr(s). Thinkendo asks the Schmittengoobers to hold up their grade cards and then interviews them on reasons why they gave Jenny the grades they did.

Next, Mr(s). Thinkendo asks the Schmittengoobers to grade Jenny on how she picked her friend at the end of the essay. She polls the audience again in the same fashion as

before. She then again interviews the Schmittengoobers to ask reasons for their grading.

Essay Two, "Bad Friends, Bad Advice."

Mr(s). Thinkendo introduces the reader who might be wearing a crown or dressed as a king. After the essay is read, Mr(s). Thinkendo asks the Schmittengoobers to write down the grade they would give Rehoboam (ray-huh-boh' uhm) for how well he chose his friends. Did his friends bring out God's best in him?

Before the Schmittengoobers reveal their grades, the students are polled as to the grade they would give Rehoboam. The Schmittengoobers then reveal their grades and explain the reason why they gave Rehoboam this grade.

Essay three, "A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed."

Mr(s). Thinkendo introduces the reader of the last essay. He is wearing a plain t-shirt and jeans. After the essay is read, have the Schmittengoobers and the students give the son of the king a grade for the friendship he gave to the people. Interview the Schmittengoobers asking them why they gave the grades they did.

Large Group Teaching

Mr(s). Thinkendo asks the Schmittengoobers how the prince of the third essay is like Jesus. Then says:

Jesus is the best friend anyone can ever have. He showed us the greatest love by giving his life for us. The Bible says, "*Christ died for us while we were still sinners. This demonstrates God's love for us.*" (Romans 5:8)

God Chooses Us

Did we choose God or did he choose us to be friends? Who gave us the crown of life? John 15:16 says, "*You didn't choose me, but I chose you. I have appointed you to go, to produce fruit that will last...*"

Just like the story of the Prince coming into the kingdom to make princes of those who would receive his message, God chooses us to be his friends.

Jesus is a friend who brings out the best in us. He offers us his friendship so we can be princes and princesses in his kingdom. We can then give to our friends the same kind of love and acceptance that Jesus gives to us. This is how a friend can bring out God's best in us.

We can then choose friends even from kids who aren't good influences as long as we influence them more than they influence us.

To do that we will need to have other Christian friends to help encourage us in God's ways.

When we demonstrate God's love and ways to others we produce fruit that will last.

Mr(s). Thinkendo thanks the Schmittengoobers for their help in class today. She then dismisses the class to break out into their small groups with:

Class dismissed!

“Strike Three—You’re a Friend”

Essay One

Jenny loved her softball team. Softball, after all, was one of her favorite things to do. But her team was something special—she had to try out to make it.

Jenny worked extra hard all spring doing softball drills with her dad and visiting the batting cages. But there was something extra-special about this team she wanted to be on. It wasn’t just that they were so good and that they beat the other teams in the league. No, the girls on this team seemed to be so cool. They always seemed to have such a good time together. And they even looked pretty while they played softball!

When Jenny got on the team, she wondered if some of these girls would be her friends. At first, they didn’t talk to her very much. They were too busy talking amongst themselves. But as the season went on, they realized Jenny was a great softball player and they began to include her.

Now Jenny heard some of the things the girls talked and laughed about. Jenny didn’t want to be left out so she went along with her teammates as they talked and laughed, even though sometimes they made fun of other girls.

As the following season began, Jenny was excited. Now the girls on her team were becoming some of her friends. But she also noticed that she was becoming more and more like the girls who poked fun of others. One day, Jenny really noticed it. That was the day Teresa showed up.

Teresa was new to the team. She certainly wasn’t pretty, but she was a pretty good softball player. She worked hard and always seemed to have a smile. She said encouraging things to others, even if they ignored her.

At the first game, Teresa was up at bat when there were two runners on base. The pressure was on. She had two strikes. The dugout was quiet as the pitcher delivered her ball. Thump! The ball hit the catcher’s glove—Teresa had struck out.

Three of Jenny’s friends made comments questioning why Teresa ever made the team. They laughed amongst themselves but were quiet when Teresa walked back into the dugout.

Two innings later, Teresa was up to bat again. Again, there were two strikes. Inside the dugout the girls said, “Oh no. Here we go again. Let’s watch what Teresa, the Strikeout Queen, can do...or what she *can’t* do.”

And then it happened. Thump! The ball hit the catcher’s glove again. Teresa had struck out.

Jenny watched Teresa's downward glance as she shuffled to the dugout. This time the other girls weren't quiet. They openly criticized Teresa and even asked her why she thought she was good enough to be on this team.

During the ninth inning, the score was tied. The winning run was on third and guess who was up to bat—Teresa. The girls in the dugout moaned. As the girls talked, Teresa overheard them say, "Strikeout Queen."

The ball was pitched, the bat was swung, and guess what?!! Thump! Oh, no, Teresa struck out again. Words were heard from the dugout, "Loser!" "Strikeout Queen of the Universe!"

Teresa hung her head low and tried not to let the tears show. Then Jenny said, "That's okay! You'll get it next time. Someday you're going to be the Homerun Queen! Shake it off."

The girls in the dugout stopped and looked at Jenny. "What is she saying?" they thought. But Jenny didn't care what others thought. She didn't want to be friends with those who only criticized.

Jenny noticed that Teresa looked up and gave her a half smile. Jenny knew then that she had found a true friend. Who knows? Maybe Teresa would someday be the Homerun Queen!

“Bad Friends, Bad Advice”

Essay Two

This is the true story of a king who lost his kingdom because he took bad advice from bad friends...it is found in 1 Kings, chapter 12.

Young Prince Rehoboam (ray-huh-boh' uhm) grew up in the splendor and luxury of one of the most powerful kingdoms in the world. Though Rehoboam had a life of luxury with his friends, he failed to heed the wisdom of his father Solomon, and did not turn his heart towards his father's God, the only true and living God. Instead, Rehoboam turned his heart to the false god of his mother. She worshiped the god of her native homeland for she was not from Israel.

After Solomon died, Prince Rehoboam was to take his father's rule. But the leaders were in no hurry to see him crowned as king because he lacked wisdom and leadership.

The leaders met with Rehoboam to ask him how he would lead their people, for they were tired of the heavy taxes and workload placed upon all the people by Rehoboam's father. They wanted the king to understand that they needed rest from their work.

Rehoboam announced that he would need three days to decide. He needed to consult with his advisors. First, he called the old men who were wise advisors of his father Solomon. They told him, "Give the people rest, for Solomon, in his older years, taxed them too hard and worked them too long."

Then Rehoboam sought out his old friends, the young men of the palace who like him and only cared for pleasure and power. "What should I tell the people?" he asked his friends.

His friends gave him their advice. "Tell them 'If you thought Solomon was tough on you, I will be many times more.' Show them now that you are in control and you are the king."

So, Rehoboam returned to the leaders with that reply. "If you thought my father was hard on you, I will be many times harder, for now I am king." With that, the leaders turned and walked away. They would not follow Rehoboam.

So it was with the people. Why should they follow someone who did not understand them?

Soon after that, the land of Israel was divided into separate kingdoms. Rehoboam, who sought bad advice from his friends and followed a false god, led the southern part of the kingdom. Most of the tribes of Israel followed another leader because they did not want to follow Rehoboam.

“A Friend In Need Is a Friend, Indeed”

Essay Three

There once was a King who surveyed this entire kingdom and found his people in need. It wasn't that the people lacked food, clothes, houses, or friends. Those things were most available and most prized. For you see, when the King looked out over his kingdom, he saw that his people needed a king because each one of them saw himself as his own king, his house as his own castle, his friends as his own subjects.

Though this might seem to be a pleasant kingdom, it was not. For when each man saw his own house as his own castle and those around him as his own subjects, soon all were fighting about who was the greatest king of all. The people needed to know the true King. They needed to know that *they* were subjects of the true King and not kings themselves. They needed to become friends with the King.

“How will the people know? How will they understand?” said the King to himself. “I must show them who I am. I must show them I am King. Who shall I send?”

Inside the King's courtroom a voice was clearly heard, “Send me, Father. I will lead them back to you, the true King.”

“I will send you, my Son,” said the King. “Show them who I am and offer them my friendship.”

The King's Son traveled through the kingdom wearing a prince's crown. While traveling throughout the kingdom, the Prince noticed all the people wore broken crowns. They even used these broken crowns to fight each other.

Everywhere the Prince went he talked about his Father the King, and he talked about his kingdom. He said, “You are not your own kings, but you can be friends with the true King.”

Some asked, “How is that done?” Others yelled defiantly, “What do you mean we are not kings?” Still others seemed not to care and turned their ears away.

“I'll tell you who is the true King,” said the Son. “The true King loves so much that he would give all for you to be part of his kingdom, so you would be free to live for him—not yourself. He wants to free you from being your own king.”

“What?!” cried those in the crowd. “How dare you say we are not our own kings!” Then they grabbed the Son and beat him. “Take it back! You're no King's Son at all.”

As the people beat him, they heard him say in with his last breath, “The King has chosen you to be his friend...but you must lay down your crown to pick up his friendship.”

Yet, the people beat him more. They took off their crowns to beat him, and soon he was dead. They left the Son in the junkyard and propped him up, crowned with an old broken crown.

Many would have forgotten about this so-called Son of the King, but for a strange occurrence that happened a short time after. Though people went three days later to remove the Son from the junkyard, they did not find him dead. Instead, they found him walking around alive.

The Son explained, "I'm here to tell you that you don't have to wear your broken crowns anymore. Now you can exchange your broken crowns for a Prince's crown, like mine. I have paid the price for all the broken crowns worn against the King. I have paid this price so that you can be friends of the King."

Friendship Report Card

Choose four of the following characteristics that you would most like in a friend. You may add another to the list if you would like to make up one of your own.

- ☐ **LOYAL:** Won't say bad things about you behind your back.
- ☐ **HONEST:** Will tell you what is best for you even if you don't like it.
- ☐ **FUNNY:** Has a fun sense of humor.
- ☐ **LISTENER:** Doesn't always talk about himself/herself and likes to hear what you say.
- ☐ **ATHLETIC:** Plays sports well.
- ☐ **SIMILAR:** Likes to do the same stuff or hobbies as you.
- ☐ **CONVENIENT:** Lives near you.
- ☐ **CHRISTIAN:** Shares the same Christian values or beliefs.
- ☐ **SMART:** Makes good grades and doesn't do stupid things.
- ☐ **ATTRACTIVE:** Nice-looking and/or wears nice clothes.
- ☐ **RICH:** Has lots of money.
- ☐ **POPULAR:** Everyone else likes him/her.
- ☐ **OTHER:** _____