

## What Kind of Friend are you?

Hey, there! Today we are going to explore friendship, BFFs and close relationships. What kind of friend are you? Think about that. How would your close friends describe you? \_\_\_\_\_

On the other hand, what do you look for in someone to be a close friend? \_\_\_\_\_

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In this day and age, friendships are much different than in your parents' younger years. Every day we see teenagers sitting together, not talking, but looking at their phones. There is much concern of what is being written about ourselves on social media. In fact, we worry way too much. Great emphasis is placed on others' opinions by many teenagers. Bullying, rating of each other and downright meanness has led to high rates of depression, suicidal thoughts and actions.

Humans are social animals, and we love having close friends and relatives. Some friends are actually closer to us than our actual family in some instances. In church we refer to our "church family." These are people we see on the Sabbath and are close to because of our similar beliefs. Our church family acts as a strong support line all the time as we go through our daily lives.

Did Christ have friends? What did he say about them? If you read the gospel of Mark, it seems that Christ surrounded himself with men of good heart, who loved him and tried to protect him from harm that the crowd could potentially do to him. No matter which story you read of Christ, like the 5 loaves and 2 fishes, or the storm on the sea afterwards, Christ always has a lot of the disciples with him.

In Luke 6:41-53 read what happened.

It seems that Christ needed a break from the crowd and sent his friends ahead so that he could have some quiet time with God. Then as the disciples were rowing the boats through the storm, what did he do? \_\_\_\_\_

Can you imagine what the disciples were thinking as they watched Christ? What would you have done if you were there? \_\_\_\_\_

Let's read about another group of friends who have a mission to fulfill for their friend. Mark 2:1-13.

We see a group of men who have decided that they are going to help out their paralyzed friend, no matter what.

What was their first obstacle? \_\_\_\_\_

Then what did they have to do next? \_\_\_\_\_

What did these men have that drove them to continue, despite the problems that they ran into? \_\_\_\_\_

The words that Christ spoke to the sick man made some people mad. Why did they not like what he said?

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At the time of Christ, the Pharisees and others did not understand who Christ really was, and his relationship to God. As a result, they were highly upset by the words spoken to the sick man.

Now, let's go back and look at the scene. These men were courageous to have lowered their friend down. If you had a sick friend and you knew that someone could heal him, could you go through this kind of action to see that he was made well? \_\_\_\_\_

Let's look at another scenario in the Old Testament. Take some time and read Job 1-2. Job was a very righteous man, who God describes as being perfect and upright. So, Job was well thought of by God and had a special place in God's heart. When God allowed Satan to test Job, his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, show up. (Job 2:11.) Contrary to what most of us would do, this is how they reacted: Job 2:13 " So, they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him." Wow! Can you imagine doing that? Just by being present they tried to comfort him without saying anything.

They started out being really good to Job. However, that is not all that they did. If you read on, you find that they accuse him of doing bad things and that he was being punished for whatever he had done wrong. Some friends, huh? We can come away from this with several good lessons.

- 1) Get to know your friends on a deeper level. Not just that you play video games or watch You tube videos together. What do your friends like, think, and believe? This week, ask more questions of your closest friend. You might be surprised.
- 2) When your friends are hurting, or in trouble, avoid making criticizing accusations. Often, they only need someone to listen to them. It is helpful to actually verbalize what is happening. The person who is talking out the situation might be able to work out loud a solution to what they perceive is happening. Just nod and say something in a loving way.
- 3) Be there for them when they ask you to be. I know that it is hard to not say something critical of the situation, but try to be caring without making them feel worse about what is going on. You can pray with them, let them cry, give them a hug or go for a walk. We all have a tendency to try and give advice, but try your best to be positive and supportive.

So, to wrap up our lesson, friendship is an important part of our lives. It is a living thing that has to be nourished and kept alive.

What can you do to encourage good friendships? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of friend are YOU?

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Would you have lowered your friend down into a home to insure that he be healed? \_\_\_\_\_

What important qualities should your close friends demonstrate? \_\_\_\_\_

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In times of trouble, how can you help your friends? \_\_\_\_\_

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