

Friends of God



SMALL GROUP LESSON

Lesson Objective:

God really wants me to know him personally, as a friend – and he’s gone to great lengths to pursue that relationship!

Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. Computer or internet connection to watch the YouTube video
2. Deck of cards
3. Some additional paper for drawing or writing, and pens/pencils/markers.
4. Copies of the Student Response sheet (printed below)
5. Bibles so you can look up the Scripture story (or copy the ones below)
6. A passion to see students transformed in their friendship with God!

Instructive Prep:

Even the idea that the Creator of the Universe, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the Alpha and Omega, would want us to know him personally is so absurd that many of us don’t fully grasp it. Sometimes kids have heard this and bought in, and sometimes they still feel distant. With military kids, it can be described as God being the installation commander; everybody knows who he is and some stuff about him, but don’t know him personally. What if you were on his basketball team and played twice a week; how would that change your relationship? He is still the commander of the base, BUT you have a personal, b’ball partnership with him, which allows you to know him on a whole different level – as a friend!

When students can more fully take hold of that reality and know without a

doubt that this SUPREME COMMANDER wants each of us to know him personally, then that can change everything for them. Not only does he invite us to know him, but he also wants to know us (and does completely: see Psalm 139 – ALL of it)

This session is designed to look at some ideas about what it is like to be friends with God. You can help kids make the progression from wherever they are now to a point of deeper understanding and excitement over the reality that ***God really wants me to know him personally, as a friend – and he’s gone to great lengths to pursue that relationship!***

The progression of these studies is four-fold: *learn, feel, do and what next*. The aim is for students to learn something new, connect at an emotional level to some degree, and participate in doing something during the study (like drawing or writing about their experience of God). Finally, the *what next* focuses on a change in attitude and/or behavior, which you will find in the challenge of the Life Application section. Remember, the movement is toward spiritual and emotional transformation in kids’ lives, so the application section based on God’s truth is really the crux of the time together! Have fun and lead well.

INTRO:

This is a story about a boy who decides to PCS. His travels bring about numerous adventures, and eventually, he comes to understand that Someone has been with him during the whole journey!

INTRO STORY:

Watch either one of these video trailers of the upcoming episode:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAdq_sj1e8w&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kq_19Zh5Qss

The Horse and His Boy by C.S. Lewis

The book *The Horse and His Boy*, which is part of *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, tells the story of Shasta, a boy who escapes a life of slavery in a foreign land atop the back of a talking horse from Narnia named Bree. The two of them begin a journey to "Narnia and the North!" Bree was stolen from there as a foal and Shasta, while he is not certain of his origins, believes he must belong to Narnia or one of the

Northern countries.

Shortly after they begin their long trek Northward, they cross paths with two other travelers -- a native girl who is fleeing her oppressive family and another talking horse from Narnia. The girl is named Aravis and her mare is called Hwin. Since the four of them have the same destination, they decide to join up. Together they engage in many adventures.

Desperate to get to the North, Shasta and Aravis with their mounts Bree and Hwin encounter soldiers and royalty, are captured and chased by men and lions, disguise themselves to sneak through a city and then spend the night in a valley of tombs, get separated and reunited with each other, cross a large blazing hot desert and then race through a mountain range until finally reaching the home of a hermit. They are all completely exhausted, half-starved, and wounded. During their trek across the desert, they saw the army of the land they were fleeing from coming up behind them -- intent on conquering Narnia and vanquishing Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, the Kings and Queens who were enthroned there.

Shasta is determined to reach Narnia ahead of the bloodthirsty army, so he leaves his companions at the hermit's and begins to run on foot. He takes a mountain pass and in the dark of night loses his way high up on a mountain peak. It is there that he finally encounters Aslan. It is there in the mists of the mountain that he comes face to face with the Friend that has been at his side through the whole journey.

"Who are you?" [Shasta] said, scarcely above a whisper.

"One who has waited long for you to speak," said the Thing. Its voice was not loud, but very large and deep. ...

"I can't see you at all...Oh please -- please do go away. What harm have I ever done you? Oh, I am the most unluckiest person in the whole world."

[Shasta goes on to tell the voice about his journey so far and all the troubles he has run into, particularly with many different lions he encountered who chased and injured him and his friends.]

"I do not call you unfortunate," said the Large Voice..."There was only one lion...I was the lion." And as Shasta gasped with open mouth and said nothing, the Voice continued. "I was the lion who forced you to join with Aravis. I was the cat who comforted you among the houses of the dead. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you while you slept. I was the lion who gave the Horses the new strength of fear for the last mile so that you could reach King Lune in time. And I was the lion you do not remember who pushed the boat in which you lay, a child near death, so that it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at midnight, to receive you."

"Then it was you who wounded Aravis?"

"It was I"

"But what for?"

"Child," said the Voice, "I am telling you your story, not hers. I tell no one any story but his own."

"Who are you?" asked Shasta.

"Myself," said the Voice, very deep and low so that the earth shook: and again "Myself," loud and clear and gay: and then the third time "Myself," whispered so softly you could hardly hear it, and yet it seemed to come from all round you as if the leaves rustled with it.

Shasta was no longer afraid that the Voice belonged to something that would eat him, nor that it was the voice of a ghost. But a new and different sort of trembling came over him. Yet he felt glad too. ...

[Then the mist and darkness faded away and light that seemed to be the sun shone all around Shasta and, behold, it was the lion Aslan, shining in all his royal glory, brighter than the sun. He stood before Shasta radiating such power and light that Shasta fell to his knees before...]

"...Aslan, the great Lion, the son of the Emperor-over-sea, the King above all High Kings in Narnia...He couldn't say anything but then he didn't want to say anything, and he knew he needn't say anything."

The High King above all kings stooped towards him. Its mane, and some strange and solemn perfume that hung about the mane, was all round him. It touched his forehead with its tongue. He lifted his face and their eyes met.

Intro Questions:

1. Who is your favorite character in The Narnia series and why?
2. How would they make a good friend?

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Use a deck of cards to determine the order that kids will answer the next questions. Have everybody pick a card and answer with the lowest card going first and the highest value card going last. After the first question is answered, draw another card and do the same thing for subsequent questions.

1. What emotions do you think you would feel if you were in the presence of the great Lion, Aslan?

2. Have you ever felt like you were in God's presence? Describe the experience by using the piece of paper to draw or write about it. If you've never felt that, then do the same with what you *think* it might be like.
3. Have you ever believed that God was around a lot more than you initially thought? Have you ever looked back at some base or installation where you have lived and noticed that God was watching over you there? Describe it.
4. Write your own questions: _____

CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGES

There are two sets of passages here. The first in Genesis establishes the tone for God creating us in his love to be personally known by us and to intimately know us as his creation. The second group of New Testament passages speaks to the way God has addressed the brokenness we caused in this friendship through our disobedience and sin. Together, they paint the grand canvas of the friendship we were designed for and the possibility of a restored friendship with God today through Jesus Christ!!

Genesis 2:7 – 3:21

⁷Then the LORD God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live. ⁸Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the East, and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹He made all kinds of beautiful trees grow there and produce good fruit. In the middle of the garden stood the tree that gives life and the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. (*verses 10-14 omitted*)

...

¹⁵Then the LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it. ¹⁶He told him, "You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, ¹⁷except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day. "

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him." ¹⁹So he took some soil from the ground and formed all the animals and all the birds. Then he brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and that is how they all got their names. ²⁰So the man named all the birds and all the animals; but not one of them was a suitable

companion to help him. ²¹Then the LORD God made the man fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the flesh. ²²He formed a woman out of the rib and brought her to him. ²³Then the man said, "At last, here is one of my own kind— Bone taken from my bone, and flesh from my flesh. 'Woman' is her name because she was taken out of man." ²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one. ²⁵The man and the woman were both naked, but they were not embarrassed.

(Genesis 3:1 -7 tells of the deception of the snake, Satan, and Adam & Eve's disobedience that breaks their relationship with God.)

⁸That evening they heard the LORD God walking in the garden, and they hid from him among the trees. ⁹But the LORD God called out to the man, "Where are you?" ¹⁰He answered, "I heard you in the garden; I was afraid and hid from you, because I was naked." ¹¹"Who told you that you were naked?" God asked. "Did you eat the fruit that I told you not to eat?" ¹²The man answered, "The woman you put here with me gave me the fruit, and I ate it." ¹³The LORD God asked the woman, "Why did you do this?" She replied, "The snake tricked me into eating it."

God Pronounces Judgment

¹⁴Then the LORD God said to the snake, "You will be punished for this; you alone of all the animals must bear this curse: From now on you will crawl on your belly, and you will have to eat dust as long as you live. ¹⁵I will make you and the woman hate each other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies. Her offspring will crush your head, and you will bite her offspring's heel." ¹⁶And he said to the woman, "I will increase your trouble in pregnancy and your pain in giving birth. In spite of this, you will still have desire for your husband, yet you will be subject to him." ¹⁷And he said to the man, "You listened to your wife and ate the fruit which I told you not to eat. Because of what you have done, the ground will be under a curse. You will have to work hard all your life to make it produce enough food for you. ¹⁸It will produce weeds and thorns, and you will have to eat wild plants. ¹⁹You will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything, until you go back to the soil from which you were formed. You were made from soil, and you will become soil again. "

²⁰Adam named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all human beings. ²¹And the LORD God made clothes out of animal skins for Adam and his wife, and he clothed them. *(After providing for them, God removed them from the garden.)*

Comment: *It is clear in this story of the beginning of all earthly things that God had a very personal, walk-in-the-garden-together kind of relationship with Adam and Eve. He loved them personally and they knew him personally. But*

the relationship was broken, and the experience of intimacy changed because of disobedience. And that's why we find ourselves on this side of Eden.

2 Corinthians 5:18

¹⁸All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his *friends* and gave us the task of making others his *friends* also. ¹⁹Our message is that God was making all human beings his *friends* through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his *friends*.

Romans 5:10-11

¹⁰We were God's enemies, but he made us his *friends* through the death of his Son. Now that we are God's *friends*, how much more will we be saved by Christ's life!
¹¹But that is not all; we rejoice because of what God has done through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has now made us God's *friends*.

Colossians 1:21-22

²¹At one time you were far away from God and were his enemies because of the evil things you did and thought. ²²But now, by means of the physical death of his Son, God has made you his *friends*, in order to bring you, holy, pure, and faultless, into his presence.

Comment: *What Christ does to restore the relationship, the friendship between us collectively and us individually with God is truly amazing! God provides this answer to our great dilemma and all that we lose in not having a friendship with God by reconciling us to him...the very thing we were originally created for. This good news story is what should drive the experience of this session together.*

LIFE APPLICATION:

1. Wherever you find yourself now, how would you go about building a *better* friendship with God? Write a letter to God describing how you think your friendship is right now and what you want to do to enhance it.
2. Read this quote from Christine Pohl and Chris Heuertz:
Most of us understand friendship with God in a very individualistic way – a close, loving relationship between Jesus and me. Such a relationship is a priceless treasure of the Christian life. Yet there is more; friendship with Jesus is also bigger and more spacious. In

drawing closer to Jesus, we discover that we cannot love him without loving others. Our friendship with Jesus does not become diluted as more people are included in God's heart of love. The relationships are mutually reinforcing. Love is not a scarce commodity we need to ration in case we run out. God's friendship is a gift available to anyone who is open to receiving it.

Brainstorm with your small group what they think about this quote and how you might build a deeper friendship with Jesus *together as a group*. Then implement a couple of your ideas!

3. Write your own challenge: _____

STUDENT RESPONSES:

1. DESCRIBE WHEN GOD WAS PRESENT:

2. BETTER FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD:

3. QUOTE & BRAINSTORM DEEPER FRIENDSHIP:

Most of us understand friendship with God in a very individualistic way – a close, loving relationship between Jesus and me. Such a relationship is a priceless treasure of the Christian life. Yet there is more; friendship with Jesus is also bigger and more spacious. In drawing closer to Jesus, we discover that we cannot love him without loving others. Our friendship with Jesus does not become diluted as more people are included in God's heart of love. The relationships are mutually reinforcing. Love is not a scarce commodity we need to ration in case we run out. God's friendship is a gift available to anyone who is open to receiving it.