How to Make Good Friends

Lesson 4: Growing Godly Friends
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Unit Summary
The ability to choose good friends is an invaluable skill for children to possess. Few things will shape their futures more significantly. The friends that children select will dramatically influence their character, their choices, their interests, their conduct—and the direction of their lives!

In this unit, you will help children become thoughtful and intentional about their friendship choices—yielding dividends that will last throughout their lives. You will guide your children to understand that friendships are not merely gifts from God, but lasting treasures that they must intentionally seek.

Lesson Summary
Relationships do not remain frozen in time and space. They are fluid and changing—and they impact us greatly. Just as we are continually growing, learning, and maturing, so are our friends. In this lesson, you will introduce your children to four types of people from the book of Proverbs: the wise, the simple/naive, the fool, and the scoffer. Your kids will learn to differentiate between and identify each type of “friend.” They will discern four very different ways people approach life—and the inevitable outcomes. This may be the most useful way to help your children choose good friendships.

Paul’s Power Principle: Your friendships greatly impact your walk with God.

DISCIPLE TARGETS
In this lesson, your children will...

KNOW
• Godly friendships with other Christians help draw them closer to the Lord

FEEL
• Excited to be a friend who inspires others to walk with God

DO
• Break off from any friendship that may be pulling them from God’s best
Welcome!—Candy Hunt

**Supplies:** bag of candy

As the children arrive, let them know that you have hidden candy throughout the room in pairs of two pieces of candy. They are to look for the candy. When they find a pair of candies, they can eat one and are to give the other piece to a friend, and then both take a seat. Once they have a piece of candy, they are to stop looking for more, whether they found it or were given it. That way there will be some for everyone. (If you observe a child break the rules, you may be able to use that in your lesson later when you discuss the four types of friends.)

Let’s Meet-n-Greet!

Greet the kids around you. Find out if they have a pet and if they do, what the name of their pet is.

Leaders, be sure to stop whatever you are doing to move through the audience and greet the children, especially those you do not recognize. Announce any birthdays for the week. (See the *How to Use DiscipleTown* guide for quick and easy ways to acknowledge visitors and birthdays.)
Let’s Worship!
Reinforce the lesson by praising God for the way He transforms us to be more like Jesus. Thank Him for the “little Christs” He is making in the room today.

Recommended Song: Trust the Lord, public domain

Puppet Intro
Leader & puppet introduce today’s lesson. You will find a scripted version of this intro at the end of the lesson. Supplies: puppet, paper

Puppet brings an application he would like the leader to fill out—an Application to Be My Friend. Leader looks it over. He is encouraged that the puppet is being more thoughtful in choosing friends but isn’t sure that an application is the best idea. Instead, leader explains that we evaluate our friends based on their character and how they treat others. We need to forgive our friends (no one is perfect), but we need to ask, in general, does this friend help us grow closer to God, or draw us away from God? Review with the puppet Dee’s Disciple Tip from last week: a true friend C-A-R-E-S. The puppet can make some humorous comments or give examples as each letter is reviewed. Encourage the children to tell what each letter stands for.

Option: Use the PowerPoint slides from last week’s lesson on the screen while you review.

Let’s Play!—The Friend Factor Game Show
Select two boy and two girl volunteers from the class to compete in a game-show style competition. The audience participates by rooting for their team and guessing who will win. Set up the stage with four chairs, two on each side, and a sign that says “The Friend Factor.” Ask each child two questions, one at a time, and have him or her write each answer on a notecard that they give to the emcee. Blindfold their partners and give them three options as to the answer (only one of which is correct). While the blindfolded partner guesses at the correct answer, have the non-blindfolded partner hold up a card with the number 1 or 2 or 3 (the number of the partner’s answer) as the emcee reads them. In this way, the entire class can see the correct answer. If the blindfolded partner answers incorrectly, the opposing team gets the opportunity to guess which of the other two answers is correct. Then the emcee reveals the correct answer. If the team that was up answers correctly, award 100 points. If not, and the opposing team answers correctly, award the opposing team 50 points. Repeat this process for the opposing team, and then switch roles/blindfolds.

Question Suggestions:
1) My favorite video game is…
2) My favorite color is…
3) If I could meet anyone in the world, it would be…
4) Don’t ever ask me to…
5) My best vacation was…
6) I think the funniest thing in the world is…
7) I once ate a…
8) I once had a pet named…
(or make up your own!)

NOTE: You will want to plan ahead to make up other possible answers so that they sound plausible.
Connect with Your Kids

_This object lesson primes the kids to think about value._ **Supplies:** special friend guest

This is a great opportunity on the last week of the series (unless you are using the Review Lesson next time) to wrap up the series by introducing the children to a friend that you truly admire. If possible, bring this person to children’s church and honor him or her. Surprise your friend by seating him or her in a comfortable chair and telling the kids why you admire your friend. Or, put up a picture of this person and talk about him or her. Perhaps you can go through each letter of “a true friend C-A-R-E-S” and talk about how this friend lives up to those characteristics. This is an opportunity to truly honor a friend of yours. If you honor someone who cannot be there in person, then perhaps you can send him or her a video of children’s church as a gift.

DiscipleTown Visitor

_Find a script version of this segment at the end of this lesson._

_Milkman Mike:_ Milkman Mike comes out and puts a small milk carton in front of every door (if you have a town set) or delivers some milk to the leader. Leader says we don’t often see milkmen anymore because of refrigerators. Milkman Mike explains that in the old days before milk could be refrigerated, farmers milked the cows twice every day. Then a milkman came to each home and delivered just enough milk for a few days. It was delivered fresh in small glass bottles. Milkman Mike says he kind of misses those days, as he got to see everyone nearly every day and deliver milk to keep them healthy. He always looked forward to seeing his customers. Mike says that he became friends with all his customers that way, and they looked forward to what he would bring. Leader explains that just as Milkman Mike helped his friends grow by bringing milk, today we’re learning how we grow through our friendships—in the way we treat our friends, by what they bring into our lives, and what we pour into their lives. Milkman Mike says that even though there aren’t many milkmen anymore, we can all be like a milkman. Leader asks how, and Milkman Mike explains that each day we can provide our friends with just what they need for that day: we can pour into them some encouragement, some nourishment, and some friendship. Give them just enough for the day, and then come back the next day and do it again. In doing just a little each day, we draw closer to our friends. We help them draw closer to God, and we grow healthier spiritually at the same time. The leader likes the idea and suggests we all be spiritual milk-kids to our friends.
Let’s Search!—Bible Dash

Supplies: Bibles

Ask all kids with Bibles to participate, or invite a few volunteers to come to the front. As children hold Bibles closed with hands on covers, state the Bible reference twice, then on the command “SEARCH!” have the students race to locate the verse. Once they have a finger on the verse, they can stand and call out, “FOUND IT!” Have the first child read the verse aloud while you project the verse on a screen via PowerPoint. See suggestions below for comments on each verse. Keep your comments brief and to the point of the lesson.

- Proverbs 17:9 Forgive your friends, or lose them.
- Proverbs 27:10 Close-at-hand friends are a blessing in hard times.
- 1 Samuel 18:1 One in spirit—Jonathan loved David as he loved himself.
- Proverbs 27:17 Friends sharpen each other.
- Proverbs 27:6 Friends help each other, even when it’s hard.
- Ecclesiastes 4:10 Friends help each other in tough times.

Paul’s Power Principle: Your friendships greatly impact your walk with God.

Let’s Learn!—Growing Godly Friends   Various Proverbs

This month we have been exploring how to choose good friends. First, we learned how to choose the ultimate Best Friend, Jesus! Then we talked about choosing to be a good friend. Last time we saw how to choose good friends. Today, I’m going to let you in on some really wise words from the wisest man in the Bible. If you listen to Solomon’s advice carefully, you’ll have wisdom that will make a huge difference the rest of your life, when it comes to friendships. We will look at four types of friends that Solomon describes in the book of Proverbs. These are four types of people that everyone knows. And unfortunately, if you aren’t careful, there is a serious danger that some of you could turn into the kind of friends that aren’t good—so listen up! My prayer is that all of us will become the fourth type, the Wise Friend! But first, let’s grab our Bibles and ask God to help us clearly see what He wants to show us today. Pray, asking God to give the children clarity and openness to what He wants to show them through today’s lesson.

1. The Simple Friend (has no direction)

Read Proverbs 1:22. The Simple Friend is someone who doesn’t think about his or her actions. Instead, he or she just follows the crowd and does what is “popular” or what feels right. Simple people have no consideration for the consequences or the future.

Their Brain—Empty: They thoughtlessly follow the crowd.
Their Heart—God Who?: They don’t know God.
Our Response—Teach: We should try to tell them about God.

We can influence the Simple Friend toward God.
2. The Fool (chooses poorly)
Read Proverbs 17:16. The Foolish Friend is only concerned with doing what is fun. He or she is out for a great time but often ends up in trouble. His or her life will never amount to anything, and in the long run, it won’t be much fun. Fools constantly make poor choices because they don’t think ahead.

Their Brain—Warped: They think what’s wrong is fun.
Their Heart—Ignores God: They never think about God, only themselves.
Our Response—Challenge: We should challenge them to obey God.

We can have some influence on Foolish Friends toward God but need to be cautious that they are not influencing us. We must honestly be sure that our influence is greater on them than theirs is on us.

3. The Scoffer (defends wrong)
Read Proverbs 21:24. The Scoffer may have once been a Fool, but he now knows that what he is doing is wrong—and doesn’t care. He is rebellious and likes doing wrong and makes excuses for his choices. He is angry and defensive and extremely selfish. Scoffers will use people and hurt people and feel no remorse. They are dangerous.

Their Brain—Backwards: They have decided to live as though “wrong” is “right” but know that what they are doing is truly wrong.
Their Heart—Rejects God: They don’t believe in God or actively oppose Him.
Our Response—Avoid: We should love them, but not be close friends with them.

We can rarely influence Scoffers. We need to show them love and be willing to defend our faith when the opportunity presents itself, but in general, Scoffers should be avoided. Their motives are destructive and deceptive, and they will tear us down. Scoffers can be reached for the Lord, but doing so requires extreme caution, as they lead many astray.

4. The Wise Friend (follows God)
Read Proverbs 1:5. The Wise Friend listens to God and always tries to learn and receive guidance from good sources.

Their Brain—Learning: They follow God.
Their Heart—Loves God: They are devoted to God.
Our Response—Befriend: These are the type of people we are looking for!

When you find someone like this, you want him or her as a friend! You not only hope that you can influence them, but you hope that they will be an influence on you!

Read Proverbs 27:17. All four of these types of people will always be around us. We can’t change other people, so the important thing is to know how to respond to make sure that we keep growing in wisdom.

Here’s the key—understand that friends either draw us closer to God or pull us away from Him. And we either draw our friends closer to the Lord or farther away. So, there are two important questions we need to ask.

1) Do I draw my friends closer to God or farther away?
2) Do my friends draw me closer to God or farther away?

Friendships are constantly changing from one stage to the next. We all start out as Simple Friends, but with God’s help, we grow into Wise Friends. First, choose Jesus as your Best Friend. Second, become a good friend to others. Third, choose good friends. Finally, watch out for Foolish Friends and Scoffers. Let’s grow godly friends—our lives will be so much better as a result!
**Suggested Bible Narrative**

Parable of the Two Sons—Matthew 21:28-32

This parable contrasts two sons. One boy said the right thing, but did the wrong thing. The other boy at first said the wrong thing, but in the end he did the right thing. Their words did not matter as much as their actions. When it comes to our friends, we need to carefully look at the lives they live, not just the words they say. The familiar saying is true: “Actions speak louder than words.”

**Dee’s Disciple Tip:** Help Godly Friends G-R-O-W by:

- **G**—Going to church
- **R**—Reading the Bible
- **O**—Obeying God
- **W**—Winning wise friends

**KeyVerse**

**Topic:** The Secret to Friendship  
**Reference:** Philippians 2:3-4

By now, the children should know the KeyVerse fairly well. This week, invite some children to stand up and recite the verse from memory. Then review the concepts you have discussed in the past three weeks: SELFISH AMBITION (taking advantage of others to get ahead of them), HUMILITY (having an accurate opinion of oneself), and OWN INTERESTS (being concerned with ONLY our own interests; ignoring the interests of others). Talk about how this verse is a formula for having good friendships that last.

Read the verse several times, but emphasize each word in order as you read it. In other words, the first time you read it, dramatically emphasize “DO NOTHING out of selfish ambition…” The next time you read it, dramatically emphasize “Do nothing out of SELFISH AMBITION or…” You really need to emphasize the key words, with your volume and body language—the more humorous, the better!

Use the small group time as an opportunity to reward the children who have learned the KeyVerse for the unit!
Dramatize the Point
Act this out or read as a story. Supplies: five actors

According to the book of Proverbs, there are four ways to get chocolate cake before dinner. Set up a table with a cake on it. Demonstrate four scenes to illustrate four ways four types of kids would try to get the cake. (Every child would want the cake! Wanting the cake is not a sin, but how you get the cake can be.)

Imagine these four children coming to their mom one hour before dinner.

Scene 1 (Simple) Sees cake, takes a bite, gets into trouble.
Scene 2 (Fool) Sneaks cake and eats it under the table.
Scene 3 (Scoffer) Cuts two large pieces of cake. Eats one and gives the other to naive younger sibling. Says, “Stick with me; I’ll take care of you.”
Scene 4 (Wise) Walks in and tells mom, “The devil told me to sneak a piece of chocolate cake, but Jesus said to ask you because He knows you want what’s best for me.”

Which of these kids was Simple? Which was a Fool? Which was a Scoffer? Which was Wise?

Object Talks—The Baseball and the Mitt
Supplies: video projection

The video clip for this lesson features Karl, the Kidologist, doing a short object lesson using a baseball and a mitt. Rather than comparing these objects directly to a spiritual concept, this video instead demonstrates a spiritual conversation between two friends and how godly friends challenge and encourage each other. Use this short teaching video to show the kids or to train a leader to do the talk “live.” Featured verse: 2 Corinthians 5:9

Let’s Talk!—Small Group Discussion
Take turns pairing up and sitting back-to-back. Lock arms together and with knees bent and feet pushing into the ground, try to stand up without using your hands at all. It takes some practice and teamwork. See which pair can do it the fastest. Next, try going up and down!

Small Group Questions:
1) Describe the Simple Friend in your own words.
2) Describe the Foolish Friend in your own words.
3) Describe the Scoffer Friend in your own words.
4) Describe the Wise Friend in your own words.
5) Think of a friend who is drawing you away from God.
6) Think of a friend who is drawing you closer to God.

DiscipleTown Super Citizen
Reward a child who worshiped enthusiastically.
Let's Pray!
Dear Jesus, Thank You for being the best Friend I could ever need or want. Thank You for helping me be a good friend to others and for teaching me through your Word how to choose good friends. We need Your help in having discernment about our friends. We want to be the type of friends who draw others closer to You. And when we realize that a friendship is pulling us away from You, give us the courage the break away from that friendship so our relationship with You stays strong. God, we have learned so much about friendship in the past few weeks. Help us to remember and to apply what we have learned so that in the years ahead we can make wise choices and be intentional in our friendships. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Cy’s Challenge: Choose one friend this week and do something to encourage and build him or her up!

Let’s Review!
If you have extra time, use these review questions to keep the kids focused on the lesson until time to dismiss. A handful of candy will help you keep their attention. After each question, take a minute to reiterate the lesson point related to the question.

1) Friendships either _____ or _____.
2) Proverbs tells us about four types of people. The first is the _____ friend who has no _____.
3) The second type is the _____ friend who makes _____ choices.
4) The third type is the _____ who _____ God.
5) The fourth type (and best) is the _____ friend.
6) The type of friend we should avoid is the _____.
7) As _____ sharpens _____, so one friend sharpens another.
8) How can we help our godly friends G-R-O-W?
For the Home

**DiscipleTown Table Talker:** Give each child a copy of this week's *DiscipleTown Table Talker*. Be sure to show them how to put it together and encourage the kids to ask their parents to lead family devotions three times this week.

**Parent Email:** Copy and send the email below to help your parents connect with their kids during the week. Send them early in the week, but not on Sunday. As a courtesy, be sure parents have opted to receive these emails. Review and edit as necessary to reflect the lesson elements you have used. You can also find this email as a Microsoft Word document in your download bundle.

Dear Mom and Dad,

For the past month, we have been studying *How to Make Good Friends* in children’s church. I hope you have found the *DiscipleTown Table Talker* helpful to stimulate some fun and meaningful family discussions on friendship around the dinner table.

It has been our goal to help your child(ren) understand that friendships are not only a gift from God, but something to be intentional about. Friendships are not simply static—our relationships are fluid and changing, and they impact us greatly. Just as we are growing, learning, and maturing, so are our friends. In this past lesson, the children learned to differentiate between and to identify four types of friendships from the book of Proverbs. They saw four very different ways people approach life—and the inevitable outcomes. This may be the most useful way to help your child(ren) choose good friendships.

We looked at “Simple Friends” who go with the crowd with little thought about the future or the consequences of their actions. We considered “Foolish Friends” who solely focus on fun and therefore makes poor choices that can get them into trouble. We warned them about “Scoffers” who are rebellious and intentionally try to lead others astray. Lastly, we looked at the “Wise Friend.” We encouraged your child(ren) to seek out friends and to be friends who follow God and are always learning—humbly trying to do the right thing.

Thank you for the opportunity to partner with you in helping to challenge your child(ren) in the area of their friendships. It is my prayer that through this series they have given careful thought and consideration to their friendships. We hope that they will draw closer to Jesus, they will strive to be a better friend, and they will be wise in choosing good friends the rest of their lives.

If there is ever any way that I can come alongside or pray for your child, please do let me know.

Partnering with you to form young disciples,

[Your Name]
How to Make Good Friends  
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Chip’s Snack Time!

**Supplies:** licorice, O-shaped cereal

You will need “shoelaces” of licorice and a box of Froot Loops or Cheerios cereal. Thread the licorice shoelaces with the Cheerios or Froot Loops and tie them up. The kids can wear these around their necks before going home and enjoy eating slowly. Just as a necklace can make us look good or complete an outfit, the friends we choose will determine how others perceive us.

Group Activity

**Supplies:** magnets, scrap metal discs, coins

Collect some scrap metal discs (punch-outs from metal electrical boxes) and genuine coins. Demonstrate to the children how a magnet picks up worthless metal, but precious metal is not attracted to a magnet. This is one way of testing precious metal.

*When scrap metal is tested for value, it is tested with a magnet. Whatever sticks to the magnet is not valuable. BUT if a metal doesn’t stick to the magnet, there is a good chance it is a precious metal!*  

*When it comes to friendships, we need to have our own tests. These tests help tell us whether a person will stick with us through thick and thin, and whether he or she will stick with God!*
DIRECTOR’S NOTES

The words in italics are notes for you and your puppeteers; they are not to be read aloud.

Puppet* has a sheet of paper to hand leader.

Puppet: Hello, [leader name]. Would you mind filling this out for me?

Leader: Well, let’s see, what is it? Not your homework, I hope?

Puppet: Funny. No, it’s an Application to Be My Friend.

Leader: An application?

Puppet: Yes! We’ve been talking about how we must be careful in choosing our friends, so this will help me weed out unqualified friends. Be sure to fill out your address and phone number for the background check!

Leader: I’m glad to hear that you are being more thoughtful in choosing friends, but an application isn’t the best way to go. It’s a little legalistic and cold.

Puppet: But efficient!

Leader: Um, maybe. We should evaluate our friends based on their character and how they treat others.

Puppet: What about when they mess up?

Leader: Well, we forgive our friends—no one is perfect. Actually, the evaluation is simple.

Puppet: It is?

Leader: In general, does a friend help us draw closer to God, or steer us away from Him?

Puppet: That is simple. The Bible can guide us in our evaluations.

Leader: Now you get it!

[Review with the puppet Dee’s Disciple Tip from last week: a true friend C-A-R-E-S. The puppet can make some humorous comments or give examples as each letter is reviewed. Encourage the children to tell what each letter stands for.]

*PUPPET: Develop a puppet character to use regularly. The children will get to know the personality and enjoy these regular visits. Dee, Cy, and Paul puppets are available at DiscipleLand.com
DIRECTOR’S NOTES
The words in italics are notes for you and your volunteers; they are not to be read aloud.

You will need a white coat, a milk carton, and milk bottles. Milkman Mike* comes out and puts milk in front of every door (if you have a town set) or delivers milk to the leader.

Leader: Wow, we don’t often see milkmen anymore because of refrigerators.

Milkman Mike: That’s right. In the old days before milk could be refrigerated, farmers milked the cows twice every day. Then a milkman came to each home and delivered just enough milk for a few days. It was delivered fresh in small glass bottles. These days, only a few people still order milk fresh from a dairy farm.

Leader: You’re Milkman Mike, right?

Mike: That’s me! I kinda miss those old days. I got to see everyone nearly every day and deliver milk to keep them healthy. I always looked forward to seeing my customers—they became my friends, and they looked forward to what I would bring.

Leader: Hey Mike, just as you helped your friends grow by bringing milk, today we’re learning how we grow through our friendships—in the way we treat our friends, by what they bring into our lives, and what we pour into their lives.

Mike: You know, even though there aren’t many milkmen anymore, we can all be like a milkman.

Leader: How so?

Mike: Each day we can provide our friends with just what they need for that day—we can pour into them some encouragement, some nourishment, and some friendship. Give them just enough for the day, and then come back the next day and do it again. In doing just a little each day, we draw closer to our friends. We help them draw closer to God, and we grow healthier spiritually at the same time.

Leader: I like that idea! [To audience.] Hey! We should all be spiritual milkmen—milk-kids—to our friends!

*CHARACTERS: These are suggested characters and names. Please feel free to change or adjust to suit your kids’ needs and tastes.
Each DiscipleTown Unit will teach your kids an essential “how to” skill to become victorious disciples of Jesus!