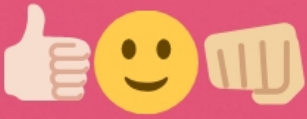
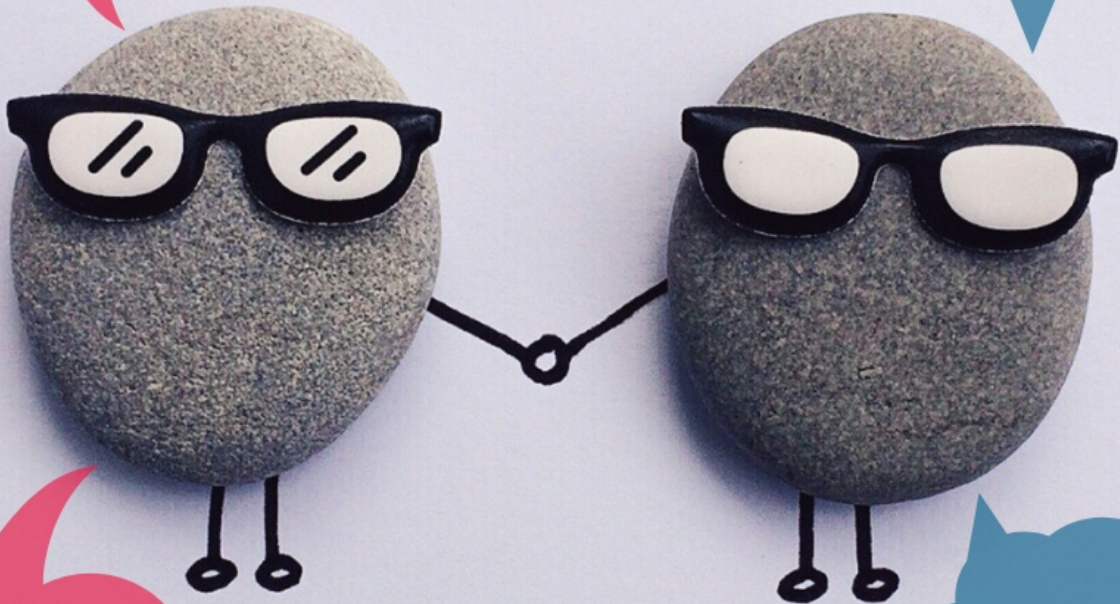


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Friends with Everyone ...

Tween Small Group

Week 2 : What is Friendship?



WHAT IS FRIENDSHIP?

Activity: **Vision Boards**

Supplies: Posterboards, magazines to clip pictures/words out of, glue or tape.

Activity: Cut out pictures/words that represent things we love now and goals/dreams we have for the future and paste/tape them to the board.

What is visualization? It's using our imaginations, picturing what we want to happen in our lives. A vision board reminds us of our dreams and goals, and motivates us to work hard to achieve them.

You have dreams.

You have choices.

You have gifts/talents.

You have responsibilities.

You have callings.

Put them all together and you have this thing called ...life. Look at the things that are important to you. Amidst all of your accomplishments, you're going to meet a whole bunch of people. Some of those people will be in those pictures with you! Others will help you get there! Years from now, a young girl with big dreams may be putting your picture on their vision board! Your life will tell the story of all the people whom you inspired and loved ...and who inspired and loved you along the way. We were made to honor God through everything we do, and love the people in our lives well.

"Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31

PICTURE THIS ...

My cross country team laid face up on the floor of the high-school hallway, eyes closed, no one talking. The coach took us through the upcoming race step by step. His confidence in how we would attack the course slowly became how we saw ourselves racing.

On the bus-ride to the meet, headphones played favorite songs to the pictures our coach had trained us to think about. In one of the most competitive distance running regions in the country, there was no room for error. I compiled a "Motivation Binder" full of things to visualize in preparation to race. I had

"Do you play any sports?" the AU Admissions secretary asked.

"I ran Cross Country and Track," I answered, "but I never made it to the State Meet."

She made a phone call, and in walked Coach.

"If you run for me," he said, "you'll break 5 minutes in the mile."

"That would be awesome," I said, "but I can't afford to be here."

I knew I couldn't afford to go to Ashland University, but I kept driving myself there for college visits anyway.

"Hello?" Back at home sitting on the corner of my bed in my room staring out the window, I heard Coach's voice on the other end of my powdered blue phone.

"How would you like to run for Ashland University ..."

no idea then, what God was preparing me for. Even though I didn't have "State meet" status, I was more talented than I thought!!!

On campus, a college teammate invited me to FCA. One day, I hit my knees during a hard practice, and gave my life to Christ. I wasn't even going to run in college ...and the teammate that invited me to FCA is still one of my best friends over 20 years later.

Visualizing keeps us focused on working hard with the natural gifts and talents we've been given. Sometimes we see clearly how God will use them. Other times, we have no idea. Dreams are God-planted, but they don't always come true in the way we think they will.

The blank spot on your vision boards leaves room for the things ...and the people ...God has yet to bring into your life.

What Does Friendship have to do with it?

Throughout life, God places people. Like Kate, on my college Cross Country Team. Looking back to Week 1 of our study, we learned God knew us before we were born, and we all have a specific purpose in this life. Guess what? So does everyone else. And the people in our lives are meant to be a part of our story.

Why does God purposefully place people in our lives? He loves you. What does love have to do with friendship? EVERYTHING.

"A friend loves at all times, a brother is born for adversity." Proverbs 17:17 (NIV)

I believe we are called to be friends with everybody. But to be friends with everybody we have to be willing to be friends with anybody.

Be kind to everyone in your life. Not all of them will become your best friends, but you'll miss out on some amazing opportunities if you're staring at the hallway tiles instead of smiling and saying "hi."

People are imperfect. People are annoying. People say and do hurtful things. Our friends are those people. We are those people. How are we supposed to love all of that all of the time?

Love isn't a feeling. It's a choice. We're not going to get it right all of the time, but when we follow Jesus' example, we'll do a pretty good job.

WHO ARE MY FRIENDS?

Family Friends

Siblings can become great friends. The day my little sister was born was literally the happiest day of my life. Brothers and sisters know everything about you. Annoying now, but it will be comforting as you get older. Be quick to forgive your family, and try to understand their point of view. Being the oldest child in the family is a totally different experience from being a middle child or a youngest child. Ask your siblings how they feel, and tell them how you feel. Try to learn from each other, because you are not related by accident.

Friending vs Friends

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16

Have you ever had a "friend" walk right by you without saying "hello?" Not every friend or person you "friend" or "follow" on social media will become good friend. If you are on social media, only "friend" or "follow" people you have actually had a real life conversation with. Don't worry, over time, your friend lists will grow HUGE. Be patient, and set a goal to be a genuine friend.

Not every friendship looks the same, and that's OK! Remember Sheldon Cooper's Friendship Algorithm? There's no one formula for every friendship.

No one else is like you! You are unique! When we are confident in the person God made us to be, our light shines! We have a peace and joyand it shows! People notice! There is something different about us that literally shines. And that honors God!

When you score the winning goal, play amazing defense, nail your audition, get the best grade you ever have on your Math test, or slay the stage with the talent God gave you to dance, you bring glory to God!

Have you ever heard a professional athlete thank God after they win a big game? Or kneel down and bow their head after victory ...maybe just look and point up? They are acknowledging that God gave them their talent, and the victorious moments are to glorify Him.

We glorify God when we love the people in our lives well. When we're busy working hard and doing important things with our talents and gifts, we make friends along the way!

Crazy Thoughts and God Girls

"Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble."

Proverbs 13:20

Our bodies are pretty amazing. They can sense when something is wrong. Girls, especially, can tell if something is emotionally off in a situation. Don't be afraid to investigate these feelings, but be sure to check them with truth.

The Bible says to take captive every thought. Why is that? Millions of thoughts come into our minds every day. Some are just plain crazy. You would never say them out loud! They are embarrassing! Where do those come from?!?!

Is something in my life bothering me?

Is something we are talking about making me uncomfortable?

Is this something I would say or do in front of my parents, pastor, or in the grocery store aisle?!

Checking our thoughts keeps us from doing or saying something we will later regret.

What is a God girl? God girls are our sisters in faith who also believe Jesus is their Savior. It's easier to talk to them about our thoughts and feelings. We can trust our God girls because the fruit of their lives are good.

What does that mean? They probably aren't breaking the law, gossiping about others, bullying kids at school, cheating on tests, or being disrespectful to other adults and teachers. Yes, any friend can make these mistakes, so it's not about judging others or thinking we are better. That's dangerous! We're all capable of making horrible choices! Living a fruit-filled life means we have priorities and standards that tend to keep us out of those situations more so than not. Studying and preparing so we're not tempted to cheat. Feeling confident with who we are so we're not tempted to put others down in order to feel better about ourselves.

What's a Boundary?

Boundaries are very important in friendships. A lot of drama results from a lack of boundaries. Do you remember the video we watched in week one about toxic friends, and how they can be like spiders? They don't give us any space? They tell us what to do and they try to change us? Healthy boundaries are tools to help create necessary space from friends like that. It may feel mean or rude, but it's actually a smart decision.

If you feel pressure to spend time with someone, that's a good sign you need a healthy boundary. It's healthy to have lots of friends in life, even though we all love our besties more than the resties.

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Proverbs 4:23

What does that mean? To store up good things in your heart, and our words and actions will be good. *(NIV Study Bible Notes)* If we linger too long around bad behavior, we'll start to act that way ourselves. Another reason for healthy boundaries. This verse below is a great guidepost for healthy friendships.

"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Remember, this is a tall order to fill. We are not going to get this right all of the time, and neither are our friends. It's a good idea to forgive and quickly move on the first time or two a friend crosses your boundary lines. But if it happens a lot, healthy boundaries are a good idea.

Visualize Your Friends

The Book of Proverbs is full of guidelines that help us make good friends and be good friends. Sometimes, we're called to be the good influence in someone else's life. Friendship has less to do with us, and more to do with loving the people in our lives well. Take some time this week to write a note to your friends letting them know what you appreciate about them. When we are good friends, we will find good friends. Pray daily for some good God girls.

Wrap Up:

We talked a lot about what friendship is today, but there's so much more!

Remember to keep the conversation going!

Remember you are always forgiven and never loved less.

And most importantly, don't forget to consider the power of your presence in another person's life.

Have fun loving people well this week!

Tween Discussion:

1. What can we do to be better friends to the people God has placed in our lives?
2. Writing notes to friends is a really great way to show we care. Here are some notecards. Write one to each person in this room. If you know them well, tell them what you love most about them and why you are glad you are friends. If you are just getting to know each other, tell them why you are excited to have them as a new friend in your life.
3. **CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK:** This week, our challenge is to smile and say "hi" to **everyone** you walk by at school **all week long**. Raise your hand if this terrifies you! Raise your hand if you're going to do it anyway! I'm going to take a selfie of all of us, and send it to you/your moms throughout the week. It will be our way of holding each other accountable!

Mom Discussion:

1. What can we do to be better friends to the people God has placed in our lives?
2. When our daughters see us saying "Hello" and smiling to the people we cross paths with, they might follow suit. We get so busy with our lives, and are constantly looking down at our phones. Let's hold each other accountable this week to look up more and notice the people in our lives.