



FOR LEADERS ONLY

GOD VIEW: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FRIENDSHIP AND GOD'S CHARACTER, SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

God created us for relationships. From the very beginning of the Bible, we see how important it is to have wise people in our life who help us understand how to honor God with our actions. When God sent Jesus, we were able to see the best example of friendship ever. Jesus showed us how much He loves us as He laid down His life for His friends. With His words and actions, Jesus showed friendship to everyone He met. We can reflect Jesus' love best when we take time to care for our friends.

FRIENDSHIP is using your words and actions to show others you care.

HEADS UP: IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK ABOUT FRIENDSHIP WITH KIDS

We talk about friendship a lot in 252 Kids. In fact, when Jesus was on earth, friendship was one of the ways He grew as a human. In Luke 2:52, we read how Jesus grew in wisdom, faith in God, and friendship with others. We also talk about friendship a lot because kids in this phase of life are experiencing friendships in brand-new ways. They're starting to discover what it's like to have friends because of a shared interest. They're finding out that they might not want to be friends with everyone. Or maybe they wish they had more friends but aren't sure where to start. As leaders, you can help guide them to discover how God designed us for friendships.

Be considerate of how kids relate to others. Don't assume that every kid finds it easy to make friends, has a best friend, or even has any friend they can trust. Create a safe place for kids to share their thoughts about friendship. You might be the sort of trustworthy person they need to experience a good friendship for the first time.

WEEK 1

Key Question: **What makes someone a good friend?**

There's the old adage: if you want a good friend, you should be a good friend. As preteens are definitely more aware of friends and friend groups, it's important for them to explore how they can personally show friendship to others. We hope they become people who help point their friends to Jesus.

We kick off this series in **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**, where Solomon wrote, "Two people are better than one. They can help each other in everything they do." Solomon went on to explain that—like a three-strand cord—we are stronger when we work together as friends. It's important that we have the right sort of people around us to build us up and help us make wise choices.

Bottom Line: **Choose your friends carefully.** God has designed relationships to help make life easier. As kids become more aware of how their friends influence them, it's important for them to know how to choose good friends. We pray that kids will find friends who encourage

them and help them grow in their relationship with Jesus.

WEEK 2

Key Question: **Who is a friend you can trust?** As we talk about what it means to be a trustworthy friend who keeps their promises, we can ask kids to think about their own friends who can be trusted. Do these friends keep their word? Do they follow through when they say they'll do something? Do they keep their promises? We hope that as kids think about the trustworthy people in their life, they'll discover ways they can be a friend who others can trust in return.

In week 2, we head to **1 Samuel 19-20** and **Samuel 9** and take a look at one of the most famous friendships in the entire Bible, between David and Jonathan. Before David escaped to hide from King Saul, he promised Jonathan that he would always take care of Jonathan's family. David had a chance to follow through on that promise and took care of Jonathan's son Mephibosheth, making him feel like a part of his family.



FOR LEADERS ONLY (CONTINUED)

Bottom Line: **Friends keep their promises.** Trust is a crucial part of friendship. One of the most important ways we can build trust with our friends is by keeping our word. When we promise to do something, we should do everything we can to keep that promise. We pray that as kids learn about David and Jonathan, they'll think about the ways they can keep their promises and show others that they can be trusted friends.

WEEK 3

Key Question: **When have you seen someone stand up for someone else?** It's always good to know that your friends have your back. Many preteens have experienced a time when someone defended them or spoke up on their behalf. Or maybe they've seen someone else stand up for a friend in that way. We pray that as kids remember how others have supported and encouraged them, they'll be inspired to stand up for people too.

In week three, we head to **Acts 9:26-30**. Saul had a bad reputation with the followers of Jesus. So when Saul decided to follow Jesus, the other believers had a difficult time trusting that he had really changed. Barnabas went out on a limb and defended Saul. Because of Barnabas, the followers of Jesus chose to help Saul and trust that Jesus had really changed him.

Bottom Line: **Friends stand up for one another.**

Of course, we don't want kids to put themselves in dangerous situations, but there's an aspect of friendship when we might feel like we need to defend others. It's important that we find a way to stand up for people who are being treated badly. We want kids to understand how they can encourage others and let them know they're not alone.

WEEK 4

Key Question: **Why is forgiveness important?** It would be great if friends got along all the time. But the reality is, people in our life will hurt us . . . and the way we respond is important. Jesus forgives us, so we should work toward forgiving others. Forgiveness allows us to repair and rebuild relationships that are meaningful and ultimately good for us. We pray that kids will understand what forgiveness can look like for their relationships.

We finish up the month with **Colossians 3:13**. Paul wrote, "Put up with one another. Forgive one another if you are holding something against someone. Forgive, just as the Lord forgave you." Forgiveness is a big part of growing friendships. Through this verse, we learn that because God forgave us, we can forgive others when they mess up—especially the people we consider our friends.

Bottom Line: **Friends forgive one another.** As kids learn about God's incredible forgiveness through Jesus, we hope that they will start to understand more about how they can forgive their own friends. It's not just about accepting an apology and saying everything is all right. We pray that kids will understand how they can forgive others and work to rebuild their friendships that are worth saving.