

TEXT John 15:9-17

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES John 13:1; Hebrews 13:5

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain why Jesus is their closest Friend.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. — Proverbs 18:24

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. — Proverbs 18:24

RESOURCE MATERIAL Tract No. 3 — When You Need a Friend
Tract No. 80 — For Another’s Crime

ANSWER TITLE: **Jesus As a Friend**

SEARCH TITLE: **Your Friend, Jesus**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The Bible makes many references to friendships, and among them is that of David and Jonathan, Elijah and Elisha, and the Apostle Paul and Timothy. But when all of these instances of rare friendship are seen, read about, and admired, a greater friendship needs to be considered: that of Jesus. Jesus lived and eventually died, not only for His friends, but also for His enemies. When put to death by cruel and unbelieving men, He prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

Jesus set a perfect example for all who are interested in making friends. He went about doing good. He was inter-

ested in others, caring about their needs, making Himself available in good times and bad, listening, reaching out, touching, providing for, and showing compassion.

John, spoken of as the Apostle of love, kept close to the Lord during His three years’ ministry. He responded to His love, and was eyewitness of Christ’s death, the final outpouring of His love to mankind. John saw the effect of that love in his own life, and the lives of others. The subject of God’s love struck deep into his soul as is evidenced by the profound teachings in his writings concerning the love of God.

YOUR OPENER

Your Friend, Jesus

RESPONSES

1. The dictionary says a *friend* is “one attached to another by affection or esteem.” Discuss with the students that this definition shows that a friendship is not an association forced upon an individual. A friend is one whose company they seek and enjoy. Encourage the exchange of ideas among the class members, bringing out the benefits of friendship. Everyone needs someone they can trust, someone with whom to share plans, hopes, ambitions, sorrows, and joys.

2. Allow time for your students to give their answers, which will possibly include thoughts such as betrayal of trust, lack of interest, finding other friends, or ceasing to share. The level of one’s friendship might be raised by such things as having a cheerful disposition, being sincere, being helpful, and being communicative. Bring out through discourse that all these answers apply directly to friendship with Jesus. If they are negative in their approach to Him, they will not have a good relationship with Him. The opposite is true if they do their best to be positive in their approach to Him.

3. Jesus loves His children in the same measure that the Father loves Christ. The text shows us that Jesus took the initiative in His friendship toward us. He sealed that friendship when He laid down His life for us. Ask the students, “Who are Jesus’ friends?” They may answer that the people who are saved are His friends. The text tells us that we are Jesus’ friends if we do what He commands us. Ask the students to relate other incidents in which Jesus demonstrated His friendship toward mankind. Any and all of His miracles show this facet of His love.

4. Jesus said that a servant does not know what his lord does; but as friends, Jesus told His disciples all things that He had heard from His Father. Ask your students what the differences are between being a servant and being a friend. They should bring out that a servant is obliged to do what he is told, often without explanation of the reason for doing it. A friend is entrusted with the plan and purpose of the project. Do Jesus’ followers feel worthy of the status of friendship with the divine Son of God? The Apostles Paul, Peter, John, and Jude all called themselves servants of Jesus Christ in their writing to the churches. It is a high privilege to be considered a friend of our Lord, a calling that demands a diligent observance of the things that He has commanded.

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RESOURCE MATERIAL: Tract No. 3 — When You Need a Friend, Tract No. 80 — For Another’s Crime

Of greater value than the rarest of jewels is the possession of a true friend, one in whom we can place an absolute trust. Everyone needs a friend—someone with a kindred spirit to share the joys and the interests of life, someone who can be relied upon for advice in time of perplexity, someone who can comfort a troubled heart in the day of grief. Jesus is that perfect Friend. When He comes into the heart, He is able to satisfy every longing of the heart and to give flawless counsel in every time of need.

- 1. What is the dictionary definition of the word *friend*? Why is it necessary to have friendships?
- 2. What circumstances might arise which would cause a person to change the level of friendship upon which he has placed another person? How might your answers apply to friendship with Jesus? (See Levels of Friendship chart on inside back cover of this book.)
- 3. Our key verse states, “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly.” In what manner did Jesus prove this statement true in His friendship toward us?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Henceforth I call you not servants . . . but I have called you friends"?

5. What advantages are there in having Jesus as your best Friend?

6. How can our relationship with Jesus be maintained?

7. What evidence will be obvious in our lives when Jesus is our closest Friend?

8. Many people in the world seemingly do not love Jesus at all. How then can He be their closest Friend? See Romans 5:10.

5. This question offers an opportunity for a circle response, considering that the advantages are seemingly endless. The discussion should include that Jesus is absolutely trustworthy. We can tell Him our deepest secrets. He is always helpful in times of illness, for He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. We can be content always, for He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Having given the witness to believers of sins forgiven, He gives the assurance that as long as His commandments are kept He will never retract this knowledge. Jesus desires that His friends might have joy, and that their joy might be full. He gives eternal life to those who believe in Him.

6. In order to hold on to our friendship with Jesus, we must do what He commands us. Ask the students how they would sustain a friendship with their closest friend? Bring into class discussion that they must show an interest in Jesus by reading, studying, and heeding His Word. It will be necessary to evidence an appreciation of His interest in them by spending time in prayer with Him. He talks to us as well. Bringing forth fruit for Jesus is another condition which evidences their relationship with Him.

7. When Jesus is our closest Friend, not only will we love Him but we will love one another. Have the class suggest other indications that Jesus is their closest Friend. Suggestions may include that they will not be ashamed of Him, they will be willing to speak to others about Him. In addition, the places they go, the words they speak, and the way they live will all be indicative of their relationship with Him.

8. Christ died for all men when they were still in their sins, before there was any love in their hearts for Him. A discussion can be centered around the fact that Jesus was not willing for any to perish, but that all should come to repentance. God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die for the world, that whosoever believes in Him should have everlasting life. Jesus loves the hearts of men before they are saved, but how much more He loves them after they are saved! Sum up your lesson by reinforcing the thought that we do not love Christ first, but that He loves us and calls the sinful heart. The more we respond to His love, the closer our friendship becomes.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What is a friend?

Jesus said He loves you. How did He prove His love? How does He? How will He?

Explain the difference between a servant and a friend?

In what ways will a friend show his friendship?

Why is Jesus always our Friend, even if we do something wrong?

Is friendship reciprocal? Can it be stronger on one side than the other? With this in mind, on what level is your friendship with Jesus?

If Jesus were listing the things about you that would help Him determine if, or to what depth, you are His friend, what would He list? On what level would He place you?

Have you ever felt you were "let down" by Jesus? If so, were you really?

In the ANSWER story, what was it that made Becky so upset? What did her mother suggest to help her? How might you use that same advice when you have a problem?

THINGS TO DO

A possible introduction to this activity might be: "Friends like to do many of the same things. You may have friends you like to go camping with. Some of your friends may like to collect the same things that you do. Perhaps you have a friend that shares your liking for a favorite color. Whatever it is, friends have things in common. If Jesus is your best Friend what things do you have in common with Him?" Have your students list on a chalkboard, things they have in common with Jesus as their best Friend. For example:

1. Love for everybody, even for those who don't love us.
2. God is our heavenly Father.
3. Joint heirs with Jesus.
4. Obey God's Word.

You may be quite surprised by the things they suggest.

On a sheet of paper, have your students trace around each hand, positioning the outlines so they appear to be reaching toward each other. Above the top hand write "Jesus." Then have the student write his own name next to the lower hand. In block letters across the top write the words, REACHING OUT IN FRIENDSHIP. As your class discussion progresses, have your students fill in on the

hand marked "Jesus" the things He has done and does to prove He is our Friend. On the lower hand, write things we can do to prove our friendship for Jesus.

Remind your students that a close friend is someone who will share the sorrows as well as the joys that come into their lives. If they love Jesus, they have found the very best Friend of all. List the following Scriptures (not the answers in parentheses) on a chalkboard. Have your students look up the verses and select the key word in each verse which describes what Jesus adds to a person's life when he makes Jesus his best Friend. Discuss with your students ways in which they can add to their friendship with Jesus.

Jeremiah 31:3 — (Love)

Psalms 31:19 — (Good)

Psalms 31:21 — (Kind)

Psalms 130:4 — (Forgiveness)

Proverbs 3:5 — (Trust)

Matthew 5:7 — (Mercy)

2 Corinthians 1:3,4 — (Comfort)

Hebrews 13:6 — (Help)

Answers for ANSWER

Do You Need a Friend?

Jesus is the best Friend you could ever have. The Bible tells us of many people who loved Jesus. Below are the names of eighteen of His friends. Fill in the blanks with their names.

JOHN	ANDREW	THOMAS
MARY	JOANNA	LAZARUS
PAUL	JOSEPH	STEPHEN
PETER	MARTHA	ZEBEDEE
SIMON	PHILIP	ZACCHAEUS
JAMES	SIMEON	MARY MAGDALENE

