

TEXT Ruth 1:6-18

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Proverbs 14:7; 16:19; James 4:4

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to determine what effect the choice of friends has on their spiritual growth.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.
— Proverbs 1:10

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. — Psalm 37:37

ANSWER

TITLE:

ANSWER TITLE: **A Vital Decision**

SEARCH

TITLE:

RESEARCH TITLE: Choosing Friends

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Because of a famine in the land, Elimelech, a man of Bethlehem, took his wife Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, to live in Moab. The Moabites were descendants of Lot (Genesis 19:37); thus distantly related to the Jews, but they were idolaters. Their god, Chemosh, was worshiped by child sacrifice.

After they moved to Moab, Elimelech died. Naomi was left with her two sons, who married two of the Moabite girls. Naomi and her sons and daughters-in-law continued to live in Moab for about ten years, at which time

both of her sons died. Ruth, widow of one of the sons, with a devotion of superb beauty, returned with Naomi to Bethlehem.

Although Ruth was Naomi's daughter-in-law, she was also a friend. It was this friendship and the love and respect she felt for her older friend that, no doubt, drew her to Naomi's God. The eventual blessings and benefits of Ruth's choice were of permanent duration. The character traits and qualities that Ruth found in Naomi are some of the same we should look for when choosing our friends.

YOUR OPENER

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Choosing Friends

TEXT: Ruth 1:6-18

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KEY VERSE: Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.
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The Book of Ruth relates one of the most down-to-earth examples of true friendship in the Bible. It is a story of choices and the consequences of those choices. Ruth unquestionably felt a deep kinship with her mother-in-law which caused her to forsake all that was familiar and journey to an unknown land where she became an ancestress of Christ.

1. What were some of the attributes Naomi possessed which drew Ruth to her? Ruth 1:8,20,21; 3:1,6,18

2. Ruth made one choice, and Orpah another. Their decisions made a great difference in the future events of their lives. What took place in Ruth's life? What, very likely, happened to Orpah?

3. Consider these biblical examples of friendship, and write what influence you think each of the people had on their friend.

Moses and Aaron — Exodus 17:10-13

Joshua and Caleb — Numbers 14:6-9

David and Jonathan — 1 Samuel 18:3,4

Elijah and Elisha — 2 Kings 2:2,4,6

Paul and Silas — Acts 16:25

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

RESPONSES

1. Ruth 1:8 — She was thoughtful and kind to her daughters-in-law.
Ruth 1:20,21 — She retained her belief in God even though she had suffered the loss of her husband and two sons in a heathen land.
Ruth 3:1 — She was caring and concerned about the welfare of her daughter-in-law.
Ruth 3:6 — She had understanding and was willing and able to impart this knowledge to others.
Ruth 3:18 — She was patient and instructed Ruth to be patient.

2. Ruth moved to Bethlehem with Naomi, married Boaz, and eventually became one in the lineage of David and, thus, Christ. Orpah, no doubt, lived the remainder of her life in idolatrous Moab. Ask your students why they think Ruth made the better choice. She was able to move to Israel and obtain a better knowledge of God and live with godly people.

3. Your students will find that Aaron (and Hur) gave Moses vital physical support at time of battle. Joshua and Caleb showed their unity of spirit by their return with a good report. David and Jonathan made a covenant of mutual care and concern. Elisha followed Elijah and recognized his spiritual stature. Paul and Silas gave each other encouragement when imprisoned.

4. What qualities should we look for in friends?

5. Using Proverbs 18:24, how should we go about establishing friendships?

6. An old saying, “Birds of a feather flock together,” might have had its inspiration from Proverbs 13:20. Read this verse and write how you think our associations affect what other people think of us.

7. Why is it important to have godly standards and goals established in our own life while developing friendships?

8. It has been said that every Christian needs a Paul, a Barnabas, and a Timothy in their lives. Paul represents the influence of an older person—a friend who can serve as a spiritual advisor or mentor. Barnabas represents friendship with a peer—someone who holds you accountable and is not afraid to “tell it like it is.” Timothy represents a younger person, or a new Christian who looks to you for spiritual nurturing or example. Why is it important for a Christian to develop friendships on all three levels?

4. This question will no doubt generate various answers, with your students coming up with such thoughts as trustworthy, caring, and full of compassion and consideration. After their ideas have been offered, you will wish to focus on the importance of making sure their friends are Christians and that their lives bear the fruit of the Spirit. Ask your students to name the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23) and describe why each of these qualities would be a valuable or even necessary attribute in a friend.

5. If one wants to have friends it will be necessary for that one to be friendly to other people. Bring out in your discussion that once we have recognized the qualities we would like to have in our friends, we need to focus on developing these qualities in our own lives. In other words, we need to practice the golden rule. If one shuts himself away from other people, it will be difficult to develop friendships. Ask your students what type of person they can make friends with the easiest.

6. Evil people usually associate with evil people. Christians associate with Christians. Discuss with the class the fact that when a person associates with sinners constantly, people who see him will consider him a sinner even though he is not committing sin. The world judges him by his associates. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath right-eousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). Ask your students what they think this Scripture means.

7. As your students respond to this question, they will no doubt conclude that it is vital to have godly standards and goals fixed in order to best choose friends who will strengthen and reinforce those principles. This could be a good time to ask for personal examples from among your students relating incidents when a godly friend influenced or helped them in some special way.

8. The three types of friendships will each add their own dimension to the life. For instance, there are times when we need spiritual counsel, but we also can gain strength by encouraging or nurturing others. If we associated only with one particular group or “type” of friend, it’s possible that our own development would be stunted. Ask your group to mentally assess whether they have friendships that fall into each of the three categories. What benefits have they found in their associations with each?

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What are the most important qualities you look for in a friend? Do you yourself have these qualities?

Do your friends influence your behavior in certain situations? Give some examples. What does this tell us about how we should go about choosing our friends?

What kind of influence are you having on your friends?

How can God help us in selecting our friends?

God gave us Jesus, a perfect example of a perfect Friend. What are some examples of His love and friendship for others?

Can you remember a time when you faced a choice such as Carl faced, as told in the ANSWER story? What decision did you make? How do you feel about that decision now?

If you feel closer to some of your friends at school than you do to those in the church or Sunday school, what does that tell you about yourself?

How does one draw back in a friendship without being offensive?

"Birds of a feather flock together." What is the meaning of this saying?

THINGS TO DO

Referring to the various levels of friendship, enlarge the chart which is on the inside back cover of SEARCH. Have your students decide on which level they might place different individuals in their lives. Use the following list and add any others you can think of. Discuss what might happen to change the levels of friendship with any of these individuals.

- an unsaved young person you were raised with
- your Sunday school teacher
- a visitor to your church services
- a friend from school who attends another church
- your pastor

Give each of your students a sheet of paper on which the following qualities of friendship have been written in the scrambled form. Ask them to unscramble the words and then number them from 1 to 8 in the order of their impor-

tance. Compare lists and discuss the choices made.

NYOTSEH — honesty

MHURO — humor

EINCAPTE — patience

TSRTU — trust

CAEECNTPAC — acceptance

SEGYNRTOIE — generosity

BIATYLI OT SELTIN — ability to listen

IYNETVSISTI — sensitivity

Make a matching game of these Bible friends. Discuss what influence they had on each other.

David Elisha

Moses Silas

Paul Caleb

Ruth Jonathan


Elijah Aaron

Joshua Naomi

Answers for ANSWER

Choosing My Friends

Use the number code to find the qualities of a good friend.



These are qualities I want my friends to have. Do I have them myself? Would I make a good friend?

1 - A	10 - J	19 - S
2 - B	11 - K	20 - T
3 - C	12 - L	21 - U
4 - D	13 - M	22 - V
5 - E	14 - N	23 - W
6 - F	15 - O	24 - X
7 - G	16 - P	25 - Y
8 - H	17 - Q	26 - Z
9 - I	18 - R	

H O N E S T,
 8 15 14 5 19 20

L O V E S G O D,
 12 15 22 5 19 7 15 4

F A I T H F U L,
 6 1 9 20 8 6 21 12

K I N D, H A P P Y,
 11 9 14 4 8 1 16 16 25

P R A Y S, L O V E S
 16 18 1 25 19 12 15 22 5 19