

TRUE FRIENDS

LESSON 1



POWER PHRASE

I can have a relationship with God!

MEMORY VERSE

John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

SUPPORTING DOCTRINES

For supporting doctrines, see our Statement of Faith at www.novoministries.org/statement-of-faith.

GOALS

The child will...

- Understand what it means to have a relationship with God.
- Realize that he is a sinner and that it is only through Jesus that he can be forgiven.
- Ask Jesus to forgive his sins and be the Lord of his life.

REMINDERS

People often blow off children and discredit what they are capable of. Today we want to make sure the children understand that they are not too young to have a genuine, close relationship with God and that God deeply desires to have that kind of relationship with them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to express our gratitude to the volunteers who contributed ideas toward the development of this series. All of our contributors are knowledgeable and have worked extensively with at-risk children. We thank them for the time they have invested in these children.

A SPECIAL THANKS

A special thanks to Chrissy Krahn for her willingness to impact thousands of children with the Gospel by sharing part of her story of how God has worked in her life.

The stories and photos shared in the Gospel Presentation activities are used by permission of the individuals.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

All Large Group or Small Group activity visuals or supply items followed by an asterisk (*) may be downloaded for printing at www.novoministries.org/resource.

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN (BIBLE STORY – MATTHEW 4:23-25; MARK 10:13-16)

Visuals

- Bible Story Visuals*, Key Word Signs*

Supplies

- Bible, Bible Insert for Large Group*, Bible character costumes

Captivate #1 - Act it Out!

- Have the children dress up or pretend to be characters in the Bible Story. Have some boys dress up as Jesus and the disciples and choose some other children to be the children who were brought to Jesus. Have them act out the story as you tell it.

Captivate #2 - Key Word!

- Identify several key words you will use in the Bible Story. Before telling the story, share with the children an action or sound effect to use for each of the key words. Then as you tell the story, make sure to repeat these words often. For example, when you say “children,” the children say “childlike faith”; or when you say “Jesus,” they say, “loved the children.”

Introduction

- While Jesus lived here on earth, He taught people about the Kingdom of God. He had a group of men who traveled with Him called His disciples, or followers. The disciples spent many hours with Jesus, learning from Him and helping Him minister to people. Jesus also was preparing them to continue His ministry after He returned home to Heaven.

Story

- Retell the story from Matthew 4:23-25; Mark 10:13-16.
- See Bible Story Script.

Conclusion

- Although the disciples tried to send the children away, Jesus stopped them. He wanted the children to come to Him. He saw their importance and wanted to be near them. Jesus placed His hands on the children, prayed for them, and blessed them. Jesus showed that children are very important, and He loves them very much. He also demonstrated to the disciples that no one is too young to come to Jesus and have a relationship with God!

TESTIMONY

- Share about when you realized that God wanted to have a relationship with you and when you believed in Jesus.
- Share what you do to learn more about God and how you can live for Him.

CHALLENGE

Visuals

- Key Point Visuals*, Power Phrase Visual*, Memory Verse Visual*

Supplies

- Bible, Bible Insert for Large Group*

Introduction

- In our Bible Story, we learned how Jesus loved everyone, including children. The disciples tried to keep the children from Jesus because they felt they were in the way and unimportant. But Jesus stopped them and told them to let the children come to Him. He wanted the children near Him and to have a relationship with them. Just like the disciples tried to keep the children from Jesus, our sin keeps us from having a relationship with God.

Key Points

God wants me to know Him!

- God is the Creator of the whole world (Colossians 1:16). He made the earth and everything in it. He made people so they could know who He is and have a relationship with Him.
- God loves all of the people in the world very much (John 3:16). When He created the first people, Adam and Eve, He would come and walk around the Garden of Eden with them just because He loved them and wanted to spend time with them.
- In the same way, God wants to have a relationship with us. He wants to spend time with us and gives us an open invitation – meaning we can access Him at any time for anything.
- Revelations 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me.”

Sin keeps me from knowing God!

- God wants people to know Him, but sin keeps them from knowing Him. Sin is anything we think, say, or do that breaks God’s Law.
- The Bible tells us that everyone has sinned (Romans 3:23). It also says the punishment for sin is being eternally separated from God forever (Romans 6:23a), which means we wouldn’t be able to know God. We cannot have a relationship with someone without knowing them, and we cannot know someone that we are separated from.
- Our sin created a separation between us and God that we can’t fix on our own.
- Isaiah 59:2, “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.”

CHALLENGE (CONTINUED)

Key Points (Continued)

Jesus created a way for me to know God!

- Being separated from God, because of our sin, is a huge problem. The Bible says that God in His great love sent Jesus to earth to live a perfect life, without sin (1 Peter 2:22). Jesus came to tell the world about God and how to have a relationship with Him.
- Even though Jesus never did anything wrong, He was willing to take the punishment for our sins. When Jesus died on the cross, He gave us the opportunity to know God (2 Corinthians 5:21). All we have to do is ask and He will forgive us and become the Lord of our lives.
- John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

Conclusion

Jesus came to provide a way to have a relationship with God the Father. He made a way for us to know Him and be able to learn how to obey Him. We must choose if we will accept the gift of salvation and follow Him with our lives (Ephesians 2:8-9). We are never too young to learn about God and ask Him to forgive us and be the Lord of our lives. We can have a relationship with God!

Invitation

For the unsaved child:

- Did you know that you can have a relationship with God? It is a choice that only you can make.
- God sent His Son to die on the cross so you could receive forgiveness for your sins. We have all sinned, and sin separates us from God (Romans 6:23a). Sin is anything we think, say, or do that breaks God’s Law. Jesus paid the price for our sin; He became our Substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Invite the children to stay behind and talk to a leader if they have any questions or would like to ask Jesus to forgive their sins and be the Lord of their lives.

For the saved child:

- Are you growing in your relationship with God or is He just an acquaintance to you? Relationships take a lot of work to build. Are you trying to spend time with God each day, learning about Him through His Word and talking with Him through prayer?
- Encourage children to stay behind and talk to a leader if they have any questions.

RELATIONSHIPS (ARRIVING ACTIVITY)

Visuals

- Pictures of relationships*

Instruction and Application

- Ask the children what they think a relationship is. A relationship is a way in which people interact with each other and are connected. Show the children the pictures of relationships and have them define what each is and how they differ from each other. Ask the children with whom they have each type of relationship. An acquaintance is someone you know very little about. You may know his name and recognize him, but you don't really know personal details about him. A friend is someone with whom you've spent time and know personal details about them. A best friend, though, is someone who knows your deepest secrets. You make it a priority to spend time with this person. Finally, let's talk about God. When He is our Heavenly Father. He loves us unconditionally. He knows everything about us, even the number of hairs on our heads. He wants us to know Him as well. We must decide what kind of relationship we will have with Him and if He will be the priority in our lives.
- Review the Memory Verse with the children. John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."



RESTORED HEART (MEMORY VERSE)

Visuals

- Memory Verse Visual*, Illustrated Memory Verse Visual*

Supplies

- Bible, a paper heart for each child, a ball

A.G.A.I.N. Acrostic

A — Attention Grabber (Grab their attention with an interesting introduction and don't let go!)

Give each child a heart. Explain that sin is what keeps us from having a relationship with God. Ask them to give some examples of sin. With each example, have the children rip off a piece of the heart. Ask how we can make the heart whole again. Explain that it is impossible to make the heart whole again, where it has no flaws. There is nothing we can do to truly restore the heart. The same is true with us. There is nothing we can do to take our sins away. It is only because Jesus was willing to die on the cross for us that we can have our sins forgiven and can have a restored relationship with God.

G — God's Word (Show them that the concept you are teaching them comes from the Bible.)

John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

A — Awareness (Make them "aware" of the words and concepts.)

Greater love — cannot be exceeded or passed, there is no love greater than God's love for us

Someone — Jesus, God the Son

Lay down his life — willingly sacrifice or give up oneself so someone else can live

I — In Their Lives (Teach them to apply the lesson "in their lives.")

Unsaved child (questions to ask an unsaved child)

How much do you think God loves you? Do you realize that Jesus gave up His life so you could receive forgiveness for your sins?

Saved child (questions to ask a saved child)

Do you understand and appreciate the sacrifice Jesus made for you? How are you growing in your relationship with God?

N — Number of Times (Repeat the content again and again until the children understand it.)

Read from Scripture. Repeat after me. Play the Memory Game three or four times.

Memory Game

Have the children sit in a circle or around the table. Each child will say a word of the verse as the ball is passed around the group. If a child misses a word, have him start the verse over. Speed up the verse to make the game more challenging.

ADOPTED (GOSPEL PRESENTATION)

Visuals

- “Who Is God?” and “What to Do Now?” Foundational Gospel Truths Visuals*, Picture of Chrissy Krahn*

Supplies

- Bible, paper, writing tools

Instruction and Application

- Chrissy Krahn’s favorite bedtime story growing up was how her parents had adopted her. She loved to hear how they loaded her brother in the car and drove all night to pick her up from the hospital. She loved knowing that they had chosen her to be their daughter.
- Chrissy grew up in a loving family that went to church regularly. Chrissy learned all about God and the Bible in church and in a Christian school. Chrissy had all the head knowledge, but it hadn’t yet transformed her heart. She knew how to behave and what to say at church, but she acted differently with her friends who were not believers.
- When Chrissy was a teenager she made the decision to ask Jesus to forgive her sins and be the Lord of her life, but she didn’t make it a priority to grow in her relationship with God. Chrissy later got married, and her husband became a pastor. Chrissy knew what her role was and how to act the part, but she still didn’t spend time with God personally. Finally, at the age of 27 years old, Chrissy genuinely desired and actively pursued her relationship with God.
- Around this same time, Chrissy decided she wanted to find out about her biological parents who had given her up for adoption. She got her adoption records and sent a letter to her biological mother’s work. Chrissy met her biological mother but soon realized that she didn’t want a relationship with Chrissy. After the initial visit, Chrissy’s biological mother made no effort to get to know her.
- Chrissy realized that although her adoptive parents may not have given birth to her, they really loved her. Through adoption, God had spared Chrissy from growing up in a very difficult environment. He protected her and placed her with parents who would love her and raise her to know and love God.
- Just like Chrissy, we too can know God as our Heavenly Father, Who will love us and wants to have a close relationship with us. Use the “Who Is God?” Visual to review.
- Maybe we can fool others, but we can’t fool God. He knows our hearts and sees past our actions. We must allow Him to be the Lord of our lives. Use the “What to Do Now?” Visual to review.

Discussion

- Older Team: Have the children discuss how God is like a loving adoptive father.
- Younger Team: Have the children talk about who God is and how much He loves them.
- Quiet Team: Have the children pick one of the verses from the Foundational Gospel Truths Visuals, write it down, and explain what it means.
- Active Team: Have the children sit in a circle and toss the ball to someone in the group, each time saying a letter in the word FATHER. The child to say the letter R should share a way God shows His love for him.

FLASHBACK (REVIEW QUESTIONS)

Supplies

- Review Questions*

Large Group Story Review Questions

- What was Jesus preparing the disciples for? (To share the Gospel after He left)
- Why did people come to see Jesus? (They wanted to hear Him teach or to be healed.)
- Why did people bring children to Jesus? (So He could pray for them and bless them)
- What did the disciples do? (Scolded the people and kept the children from seeing Jesus)
- Why did the disciples try to send the children away? (They didn't think they were worth Jesus' time.)
- What did Jesus say? (Not to send them away; that they were very important)
- What did Jesus do for the children? (He laid hands on them and prayed for them.)
- Who did Jesus say the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to? (The children)
- How did Jesus use the children as an example? (He told the disciples that we should have faith like a child.)

Discussion Questions

- Are you too young to know and love God? Why or why not?
- How can you have a relationship with God?
- How does having a relationship with God make you a better friend?

CROSS NECKLACE (CRAFT)

Visuals

- Craft sample*

Supplies

- 6 beads per child, 20-inch cord or string (one per child)

Instruction and Application

- Give each of the children a cord and six beads. Have the children create a cross necklace using the instructions from the craft sample.
- Talk about how Jesus is the Ultimate Friend. He died and took the punishment for our sin so that we could have a relationship with God. Asking Jesus to forgive us and become the Lord of our lives is just the first step. Encourage the children to wear their cross necklaces as a reminder of the price Jesus paid for us and that each day we can choose to live for Him.
- Review the Memory Verse. John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”



WHAT'S THE POINT? (APPLICATION ACTIVITY)

Supplies

- “What’s the Point?” card*, paper, writing tools

Activity #1

- Give each child a “What’s the Point?” card. Have the children write how they can have or grow in a relationship with God. What choice do they need to make to receive forgiveness for sins and begin a relationship with God?

Activity #2

- Have the children find a partner and discuss how they can have a close relationship with God. Have the children discuss things they can do this week to improve their relationship with God. For children who are quieter, you can have them draw pictures of someone who knows them the best and is always there for them. Remind them that God wants to have a close relationship with them as well.

NOW WHAT? (ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY)

Supplies

- Additional Activity #1: Coloring Page*
- Additional Activity #2: Word Search Activity Page*
- Additional Activity #3: Crack the Code Activity Page*
- Additional Activity #4: The Big Take Away Key Chain*

Instruction and Application

- These activities are to be used with your team as time allows to reinforce the lesson concepts. The children may take these home each week or do them while they are listening to you teach during Small Group. These activities require little to no explanation and can be great for moments when you are transitioning or don’t have time to start another activity.

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