

CONFLICT

Week 2: Handling Conflict with Friends

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW

Friendships are valuable gifts in life, but if we aren't careful, we can lose our friends because of explosive conflicts and disagreements. It's impossible to get along 100 percent of the time, but we can take steps to avoid relationship-destroying conflicts. This lesson will give your students three practical ideas—based on Jesus' actions and instructions—that can help prevent the demolition of friendships through conflict.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT: Jesus modeled what it means to be a true friend.
2. WHY: Teenagers don't have to travel the path of explosive conflicts that destroy friendships.
3. HOW: Students will be encouraged to find ways to protect their friendships by putting others first, making sacrifices, and forgiving one another.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

John 15:12-14

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

Colossians 3:13 and James 3:3-18

TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you'll definitely want to refer to it as you lead your lesson.

Read John 15:12-14.

Jesus came down to this earth to demonstrate the love God has for us and to show us how to extend that love to others. Jesus experienced all the highs and lows of friendship. He was loved, he was betrayed, and he was admired. People gossiped about him,



LEADER
TIP



people followed him, and people judged him. Through all of these circumstances, Jesus never demanded his own way. From the moment he was born to the moment of his death and resurrection, he was living out love for others.

In John, Jesus calls his followers his “friends.” He was talking about true, genuine friendship—a focus on others, a willingness to make sacrifices, and a heart to forgive. Jesus loves everyone so much that he was willing to die for them. He left the perfection of heaven and came down to a broken earth to pay the penalty for sins he never committed. He demonstrated friendship by loving people that were unloved, judged, and betrayed. He asks that his followers display the same depth of love.

Encourage your students to recognize how Jesus defines friendships and to understand that if we follow his model, we’re more likely to avoid the explosive conflicts that can destroy friendships. True friendship is all about putting the needs of others first. A friend willingly makes sacrifices. A true friend forgives. Jesus isn’t asking us to do something he hasn’t already done first.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

Text Message Questions

We’ve provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- How can conflicts and disagreements destroy a friendship? Let’s talk about it tonight at small group.
- How can you avoid the conflicts and battles that kill friendships? Come to small group tonight for some ideas.

Parent Email

We’ve provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We wrapped up our two-week small group series on conflict by examining ways our teenagers can avoid the explosive conflicts that damage and destroy friendships.



We focused our attention on John 15:12-14, when Jesus said people who obey his commands are his friends.

Jesus was talking about true, genuine friendship—a focus on others, a willingness to make sacrifices, and a heart to forgive. Jesus loves everyone so much that he was willing to die for them. He was willing to leave the comforts of heaven and come down to earth to pay the penalty for sins he never committed. He demonstrated friendship by loving people that were unloved, judged, and betrayed. He asks that his followers display the same depth of love.

We encouraged our students to recognize how Jesus defines friendships and to understand that if they follow his model, they're more likely to avoid the explosive conflicts that can destroy friendships.

Here are some questions you might want to ask as you're talking with your teenager about this week's lesson:

- Think of a time when a friend put your needs before his or hers. How did that act of kindness affect your friendship?
- How might your sacrifices help you avoid destructive conflicts or disagreements with friends?
- Think about your friendships. How can small things make a big impact, either positively or negatively?

Have an awesome week!

CONFLICT

Week 2:
Handling Conflict With Friends

2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then lead the activity below.

Begin your small group time by playing a round of Will It Break? Bring four to six items from home—things that you have no interest in ever seeing or using again—that you can drop from a height of 5 to 10 feet. Choose some objects that you know will break, some that definitely won't, and some that might.

This game is best played outside. You'll need a hard surface—a patio or driveway usually works best. You'll also need a ladder or a chair—something to give you elevation over that surface. Talk to your small group host about their preferred spot, and be ready to clean up the mess immediately after the game.

Climb on the chair or ladder with the first item. Before dropping it, ask your students to vote on whether they think it will break. Then, drop the object and see if it breaks. Repeat this for the remaining three to five items. Make sure your final item is something that definitely WILL break.

Before you drop the final object, **ASK:**

- *I want you to imagine that this final object represents the friendship you have with another person. What are some of the big, explosive conflicts that can destroy a friendship?*

After a couple minutes of discussion, go ahead and drop the final item. Then **ASK:**

- *Is it possible for me to restore this object I've just broken?*
- *How is this similar to the damage that explosive conflict can create in a friendship?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Friendships are valuable things that we can treasure and protect. If we allow ourselves to get caught in explosive conflicts with our friends, we may reach a place where these relationships are damaged and destroyed—just like this object. Fortunately, we can take some steps to avoid these kinds of conflicts. We*



can't avoid all conflicts or disagreements with our friends, but these moments don't have to demolish our friendships.

Make sure you clean up all shards or pieces of your objects before continuing with your lesson.



If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you'd like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.



TEACHING POINTS

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) Put others first, (2) Be willing to make sacrifices, and (3) Forgive one another.



Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read John 15:12-14 together as a group. Consider allowing one or more of the teenagers to read the text.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's spend a few minutes looking at three choices we can make that can help us avoid the explosive conflicts that destroy friendships.*

1. Put others first

ASK:

- *What's the difference between being selfish and being selfless?*
- *Which one of those character qualities—selfishness or selflessness—is more likely to create conflict in a friendship, and why?*
- *Why is it so easy and natural to be selfish? Why do we choose selfishness even though it ruins friendships?*
- *In these verses, Jesus says that people who follow his commands are his friends. How does that make you feel to know that if you're a follower of Jesus, you're his friend?*



- *Think of a time when a friend put your needs before his or hers. How did that act of kindness affect your friendship?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *When we are truly putting others first, we aren't looking for anything in return. We focus on helping and serving other people because it's the right thing to do. We're available to listen if a friend is having a hard day. We offer words of encouragement when someone needs support. We stand up for someone who's been rejected or ridiculed. God calls us to live selfless lives—lives that aren't centered on our needs but are focused on serving and helping others and serving and honoring God.*

2. Be willing to make sacrifices

ASK:

- *In verse 13, Jesus says laying down your life for a friend is the greatest possible demonstration of love. You may never be called to make this sacrifice, but what are some other sacrifices you can make for your friends?*
- *Why is a sacrifice such a powerful statement of love and support for a friend?*
- *How might your sacrifices help you avoid destructive conflicts or disagreements with friends?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice by dying on the cross as the way to provide forgiveness for our sins. We probably won't ever have the need or the opportunity to sacrifice our lives for another person, but we can sacrifice our time, our energy, and our resources to help a friend in need. Even a little sacrifice can go a long way because it demonstrates our love for that person.*

3. Forgive one another

ASK:

- *Have your feelings been hurt by someone you consider a friend? How did you react or respond in that situation, and are you still friends with that person? [NOTE: Watch the conversation carefully; you don't want it to turn too negative or become a gossip fest.]*
- *Why is it so hard to forgive people, even our closest friends?*
- *Is it possible to really forgive and forget? Why or why not?*



- When you choose to not forgive someone, how can that decision affect your relationship with that person?
- How can forgiveness help you move past a conflict with a friend?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Forgiveness means letting go of the hurt caused by others. Forgiveness is tough, especially when you have to do it more than one time. If we've made the decision to follow Jesus, we've already received forgiveness from God for our mistakes and sins—and God wants us to be willing to forgive the people in our lives, too. When you find it especially tough to forgive, ask God to give you mercy for that person and to help you forgive.*

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

ASK:

- Read James 3:3-12. Of all the small things with great power in this passage, which one is the most impressive to you, and why?
- Think about your friendships. How can small things make a big impact, either positively or negatively? Give us some specific examples.
- Now read James 3:13-18. What examples do you see here of choices or habits that can either destroy a friendship or make a friendship stronger?
- Read Colossians 3:13. What would it be like to live out this verse in your life? What changes might be required?

APPLICATION

Ask each student to find a partner for these questions.

ASK:



- On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being lame and 10 being stellar) how would you rate yourself as a friend? What are three things you could do to improve your score this week? Consider writing down your ideas and exchanging lists. Call or text each other this week to see how you're doing with your list.
- What's one way you can put other people first this week?



- *Think of someone who has a need that you could meet this week. What is one sacrifice you can make to help this person?*
- *Do you have a friend that has wronged you and you need to forgive? How can you extend forgiveness this week?*

SUMMARY



LEADER
TIP

End your small group lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.



LEADER
TIP

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

