

Playing At Friendship

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Bibles for everyone
- 2 Copies of the scripture passages for each student
- 3 Cutlery knives (not sharp knives, just the ones used in a place setting)—one per student
- 4 Something to “bury” a knife blade into—this could be a Styrofoam square or a piece of fruit—one for each person.
- 5 Several pads of sticky notes

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS:

Knives should be arranged as a centerpiece in the room. When students arrive, invite them each to take a knife with them to their seat.

When you are ready to start, begin the session by asking students to think of a time when they were back-stabbed by a friend, or a time when they did the back-stabbing. Go around the group and ask students to share their examples. Take a vote or come to a consensus on who was dissed the most, or who was the meanest back-stabber, and give that person all of the knives.

Discuss the examples, and how it feels to be the one with all of the knives.

Note to teacher: Some youth will think this is funny, others will take it seriously. That’s okay. Go with the flow, without losing control.

After the discussion, collect the knives and put them back into the centerpiece.

Say: *Back-stabbing friends are nothing new. They are as old as the Bible itself, and the Bible has some interesting things to say about what friends can do to each other.*

CONNECT TO THE BIBLE:

Ask students to look up the Scripture passages in their Bibles and also read them on the handouts. They should do the following:

- 1 Compare what the different translations say. How do they differ?

- 2 Choose 1-2 of the passages that they most identify with. Which one do they like the most?
- 3 Think of modern-day examples of what the verses are saying and be prepared to share those examples.

Note: If your class works better in small groups, divide into groups for this exercise.

Ask students to share the results of their work on these passages.

APPLY:

Hand out the Styrofoam or fruit—one per person, and also the knives. Ask students to bury the knives into the fruit or foam so the handle is sticking up.

Divide students into small groups. Give each group a pad of sticky notes. Ask groups to come up with a list of things that the fruit or foam could symbolize in terms of “burying the hatchet” when a friend does us wrong. In other words, what does it take to reverse the effects of a back-stabbing? What handles can they think of that will help a person who has been hurt by a friend or who has done the hurting? Write those ideas on sticky notes and stick them to the handles of the knives.

Share the handles with the whole group.

RESPOND:

Dim the lights and ask students to close their eyes and listen as you slowly read I John 4:16b-21. When you have read it, ask students to think about the friends in their lives whom they have wounded or who have wounded them—and read verses 19-21 again. Ask students to pray about what it means for them to love those friends, and for God to help them to do that.

Close by repeating this passage from Proverbs several times:

“A friend loves at all times.”

SCRIPTURE PASAGES:

Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted,

Who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me.

—Proverbs 41:9

It is not enemies who taunt me—

I could bear that;

It is not adversaries who deal insolently with me—

I could hide from them.

But it is you, my equal,

my companion, my familiar friend,

With whom I kept pleasant company;

we walked in the house of God with the throng.

—Psalm 55:12-14

A perverse person spreads strife,

and a whisperer separates closes friends.

—Proverbs 16:28

A friend loves at all times.

—Proverbs 17:17

Some friends play at friendship

But a true friend sticks closer than one's nearest kin.

—Proverbs 18:24

Wealth brings many friends,

But the poor are left friendless.

—Proverbs 19:4

Many seek the favor of the generous

And everyone is a friend to a giver of gifts.

—Proverbs 19:6

Make no friends with those given to anger,

and do not associate yourself with hotheads,

or you may learn their ways

and entangle yourself in a snare.

—Proverbs 22:24