

Get Ready!

Jesus is a Friend

By: Rebecca Dauksas



Text

John 15:1-15

Key Quest Verse

“You are my friends if you do what I command” (John 15:14).

Bible Background

In John chapter 13, Jesus is in the last week of His ministry before He will endure crucifixion. He will soon be arrested, tried and convicted. Jesus wants to prepare His disciples for the horrible days which are to follow. He shows His disciples through example that they should serve one another as He washes their feet (13:1-18). He predicts and explains that He will be betrayed in 13:21-31. Judas Iscariot leaves. Jesus continues to share with the disciples what they must know to prepare them. He has the difficult task of explaining the events that are about to occur. He predicts Peter’s denial of Him (v. 38). He offers them comfort in chapter 14 (v. 1) and promises that He will ask the Father to send the Spirit of truth (v. 16). He reassures them of the closeness that they will share with Him and the Father (v. 20-23). In John 15, we are brought into the middle of a discussion between Jesus and His disciples. He has so many teachings of which He wants to remind them. He explains that He is the vine and they are the branches (v. 5). He instructs them to bear fruit and to love. Love is a common theme throughout this passage (13:1, 13:34 & 35, 14:15, 14:21, 14:23, etc). In this tender instruction Jesus calls the disciples His friends (v. 13-15). He opens the promise to all of us in John 15:14 stating, “You are my friends if you do what I command.” What is His command? He states it very plainly in verse 12 and again in John 15:17, “This is my command: Love each other.” We will be a friend of Jesus if we do as He commands – love.

Get Ready!**Lesson Quest****What I want my students to:**

- Know:** Jesus has promised to be a friend to anyone who follows His commands.
- Feel:** Acceptance, because Jesus is always with them and wants to be their friend.
- Do:** Develop a better friendship with Christ and others by following Christ's example.

Leader's Devotion

As teachers, there are times when we feel the added responsibility of teaching. In addition to the many other aspects of our lives, we also need to be prepared to share challenging, informative, interactive lessons with our students that will impact them and draw them into a relationship with God. Wow, that is a big responsibility! We also want to spend some time with our students individually. We want to know how things are going in their lives. A lot of our relationship building is done outside the classroom. I have a few youth that always seek me out and tell me what they have been doing during the week. With other students, it takes time to build a relationship. As we examine the friendship offered by Christ, let's take a fresh look at the life of Jesus. We often think about the sacrifice of Himself at the cross, but He also offered up Himself everyday to those around Him. He was surrounded by people wanting to see miracles, be healed or be taught (Mark 6:34). He did not have a permanent residence (Luke 9:58). He was opposed, criticized and questioned by the religious leaders of His day. Yet, He spent time with the disciples, teaching and being an example to them. When I see His example, I am filled with gratitude and a desire to be a teacher and give friendship to my students. Christ prepared Himself for the challenge by relying fully on God. He spent time in prayer with His Father, He memorized scripture (Luke 4) and He knew that He was doing God's work (John 8:28). The friendships that developed with others wanting to serve God was probably natural, but He was also a friend to the outcasts of His society (Mark 2:16). In actuality, these individuals probably needed a friend more than anyone else. This week let's prayerfully examine the friendships that we want to build with our students. How can we strengthen our friendships with each of our students? Let's also reflect on the greatest friendship that we personally share with our Savior Jesus Christ.

Get Set!**Option A****WANTED: GOOD FRIEND**

Materials: Newspaper (classified employment section), paper, pens

Procedure: Divide the class into a few groups. **Most of you have probably looked in the want ads in the newspaper before. The employment section contains openings for jobs. Here is one for a _____.** Here is a list of the requirements for this position. **Today we want to write an ad for a best friend. On the top of your paper write “Wanted: Best Friend.” In your ad be sure to include hours, requirements and benefits. For instance, the position of my friend needs to be available from 8am to 9pm and must be able to be reached by phone after dinner hours. Must have a good sense of humor and love sports including soccer. Should also like fast food, especially Pizza. Must have a Christian attitude. Benefits include having a best friend like me in return. Work together on your ads for a few moments and then we will read them out loud to the rest of the class. Allow 3-5 minutes for the students to work on their ads. Glance over the ad before a student reads the ad written by each group. Now of course, we do not actually advertise for a best friend, but writing these ads may show us what we value in a friendship, what we want our friends to be. We are going to discuss friendship today. We want to look at the one person who can be a PERFECT best friend.**

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY**Option B****GIFT**

Materials: A gift from a friend (a picture, basketball, jewelry, a Bible, a book, etc.)

Procedure: **I brought something special to show you. This is a gift from my friend, _____. He/she gave this to me because _____. Share why the gift is important to you and what is special about your friendship with this person. Being a good friend to someone else means that we listen, help, encourage, and give to that person. Being a giving friend doesn't necessarily mean a physical gift, but it should be a gift of our time or ourselves. Maybe you have a tough time making friends. Today we will discover that as Christians we have the greatest friend ever. Jesus Christ has told us that we are His friends if we follow His commands. We can learn how to be a true friend to others by following Christ's example.**

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Get Set!



Bible Story

Teacher Tip: Provide markers for students to highlight portions of the story in their Bibles

Materials: Cluster of seedless grapes, and /or grapevine wreath (to illustrate the vine and the branches), napkins (Teachers note: A grapevine wreath can be used with an arts & crafts activity later in this lesson unit.)

Procedure: Jesus was the most perfect human being that ever lived. He provided the ultimate example of how to live our lives to please God. This is the reason that we call ourselves Christians. We are living our lives by copying what He said and did. Because He was perfect, we can look to Him as our “Perfect Friend.” He was so much to the people around Him. He was not only a Savior, Lord, and the Christ, but He was also a friend. He enjoyed the friendship of Lazarus, Mary, Martha and His disciples. Friendship can be described in a lot of different ways.

Today we want to discover how we can become a friend of Christ. We want to see how to be a better friend to those around us. Let’s look at John 15:1. Jesus was talking to His disciples right before He would be arrested, tried and crucified. He knew that His time with the disciples was short now. He shared information about the coming events. He wanted to comfort and encourage them. It was during this important conversation that we will begin reading in verse 1 through 6. Read through verse 6. **How does Christ describe Himself in this passage?** (The true vine v. 1, the vine v. 5.) **How does He describe His Father?** (The gardener.) **How many of you have seen someone prune a tree or vine?** This pruning removes the unnecessary part of the plant, so it can devote more energy into producing fruit. Show the class the grapes and the grapevine wreath. **Isn’t it amazing that some branches of the grapevine make delicious clusters of fruit while some produce nothing but leaves?** **Christ tells us in this passage that He wants us to produce fruit. What do you think that fruit would be?** (Accept any possible answers – they may include fruit in keeping with repentance in – Matthew 3:8, fruit resulting from promoting the Kingdom of God – Matthew 21:43, fruit that will last – John 15:16, fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22 & 23, fruit of the light, goodness, righteousness and truth – Ephesians 5:9, bringing others to God – Luke 10:2 or doing good deeds Colossians 1:10.) **We see from this passage that we have to be attached to Christ to produce any fruit. We can’t do it on our own. Let’s read verses 7 and 8. What do you think about the statement in verse 7, “ask whatever you wish and it will be given you?”** (Let the students respond. Example: If we are truly following Christ with our hearts and are following His words, we will pray for God’s will and we won’t ask for selfish things.) **So, according to verse 8, how do we become disciples, or followers of Christ?** (Let students respond. Bear much fruit.) **Let’s continue reading with verse 9 through 12. How are we to love?** (As Christ has loved us – v. 12.) **Let’s see, read verse 13. How can we lay down our lives for our friends?** (Let students respond. Examples: By giving our time and helping others even if it is an inconvenience in our own lives, giving our lives in ministry to God and others.) **Jesus tells us how we can be His friend in verse 14. Read the verse. How do we become a friend of Christ?** (If we do what He commands.) **What are the commands of Christ?** (Love God and others. He shows us how to do this through the writings of the New Testament.) **Read verse 15. How does Jesus bring His disciples and all of us into a friendship with Him?**

Get Set!

Bible Story

CONTINUED

(By sharing everything with us.) He communicates with us through the scripture. He explains things to us through these written words.

We see that Jesus is completely connected to us. He used the example of the vine. We also see that He is always available to us. He wants us to communicate through Him to the Father. We can share anything with them. In the same way that Jesus is a perfect friend to us, we should try to be a good friend to others. We should be interested in our friend's lives. We should really care about what our friends are going through and spend time with them. We should try to understand their feelings. And just like Jesus, we should make our friends feel loved and accepted. Let them know that they can share things with us, because we will not share it with others. We should also understand that Jesus wanted the people around Him to feel loved and accepted, but He also encouraged these same individuals to live for God. Several of the individuals that Jesus developed friendships with were not living godly lives, but He showed them by example and through what He said how to live for God.

In the same way, we accept our friends, but we should not accept the sinful behavior that some of our friends may have. Accept the person, don't approve of the sin. Not everyone who offers love and kindness will receive it with gladness. Christ was not always appreciated even though He was the perfect example of love. We can not control others actions. Some individuals will not welcome or give back the love that we show to them. That is okay, because we are commanded to love. We can live a life that shows true friendship and love to others, because we have the love of Jesus and our Father to show us how. We love because we know that God and Christ love us.

Go!



Friendship Crossing

GAME

Materials: Four objects to set up the square playing area

Quest Connection

I want to read a couple of verses for you. They are in the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 4, verses 9 & 10. It says, “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” What do these verses mean to you? Friends are great. We can share fun stuff together, but they can also help us out when we need someone to talk to or if we are in a tough situation. We want to be a real friend to those around us. Stick with your friends when tough times hit. That may be the time when they need a friend the most. Remember that Christ never leaves us when things go wrong. What are some things that you could help your friends work through? (Divorce of parents, death of a family member, being rejected by others, disease, etc.)

Procedure: Clear furniture and any other obstacles from the playing area. Mark off a large square area – if weather permits, play outside. Use 4 objects to set up the square playing area. One side of the square is Friendship Land and the other side is Start. Choose three players to be “Faithful Friends” and one player to be the “Adversity.” Explain that each student wants to cross over to the to Friendship Land. Each student must be accompanied by one of the “Faithful Friends” as they move across Friendship Crossing. The “Faithful Friend” player can only accompany one player at a time. If the “Adversity” tags you, you have to go back to the start line and wait for another chance to cross over with a “Faithful Friend.” A player is safe when the “Faithful Friend” player crosses you over the line into Friendship Land. The object is to move as many students over to Friendship Land as possible in two minutes. (If you are playing with a smaller group, reduce the number of “Faithful Friend” players, make the playing area smaller and reduce the playing time.)

Close

Have the youth sit and relax while you hold the following discussion. **How did it feel waiting for the Faithful Friend player? Did you want to forget the Friend player and head out on your own? Who was tagged by the “Adversity” the most? Which player reached Friendship Land first? Jesus said that He was our friend if we followed His command. His command was to love each other. He wants us to love all the time, not just when things are going well for our friends. Let’s show that we are really Christ’s friend by being patient, kind and helpful when our friends are hurting.**

Go!**What a Friend We Have in Jesus****MUSIC**

Materials: Copy of traditional hymn entitled “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” CD of the song entitled “Friends” (Available in CDs of “Wow Gold”/Word Entertainment or “The Michael W. Smith Project”/Meadowgreen Music Co.)

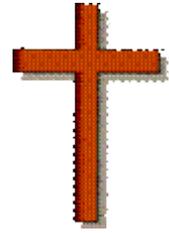
Quest Connection

There are many Christian songs about friendship. Some stress the friendship that we share with Christ.

Procedure: You may want to introduce the song “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” at this time. Sing or recite the words together from this traditional hymn. Have a musician from your congregation play the accompaniment for your class. Ask what meaning or ideas this song creates for your students. **Some songs have a message of the special friendship that Christians share. One of these songs is entitled “Friends” by Michael W. Smith. We are going to listen to that song now. Smith is an award winning singer, songwriter and music executive. His wife Debbie wrote the song Friends. In 1999, he performed this song at the Columbine High School memorial service. Play song. When you hear this song does it make you think about your own friends? What is the meaning of the statement that “friends are friends forever when the Lord is the Lord of them” and “that the friendship never ends?”** Let students respond. Example: Christians will share not only friendship in this life, but also in the Kingdom of God. We are sad when we are separated from our friends during this lifetime by a move or death, but we know that we will be together forever in God’s Kingdom.

Close

Prayer: Dear Father, we thank You so much for Jesus. We thank You for giving Him to us as our Friend. We thank You for our church and our Christian Friends. We pray for our friends that have not decided to follow Christ. Please use us to help them build a relationship with You and Your Son. Please give us the wisdom and courage to share You with our friends. We love You, dear Father, and we thank You for everything. We pray through our Savior, Jesus Christ’s name, amen.

Go!**Friendship Cross****ARTS/CRAFTS**

Materials: White poster board, markers, ruler, scissors, clear tape, hole punch and string (for hanging)

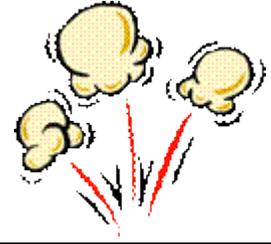
Quest Connection

A cross is used as a symbol to remind us of Jesus and the sacrifice He made for all of us. We are going to decorate our cross with things to remind us that Jesus is our friend and all of us are friends in Jesus.

Procedure: Take two square pieces from the top of our poster board and remove two rectangular pieces from the bottom of our poster board to form a cross. Let's put our Quest Verse at the top of our Friendship Cross. "You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:14.) Write your name with one of the markers. You can also write phrases that remind you of the special friendship that we share with all Christians. Allow students to write phrases on the cross like "friends 4 ever" or "love one another." If you are using pictures, add them at this time. Let students hole punch the cross and hang each in the room with the string. Let new students or absent students add their names to the cross over the next few weeks. If you add pictures to the cross, take pictures of students. Take pictures beforehand and have them developed or use a Polaroid camera.

Close

This cross symbolizes that though we are all different, we are all Christians because of Jesus. We are all friends because Jesus brings us together.

Go!**Butterfinger Popcorn Balls****FOOD**

Materials: Six cups popped popcorn, 3 Butterfinger candy bars, 1/2 stick butter or margarine, 3 1/2 cups miniature marshmallows, large bowl, nonstick cooking spray, medium saucepan, spoon, wax paper

Quest Connection

God is always with us. As long as we follow God, we know that He and Jesus will stand beside us no matter what difficult situations we encounter. There is a verse about this in the Old Testament. Proverbs 18:24 states, “A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Today we are going to make something that will remind us of this verse. It is a very sticky treat called Butterfinger Popcorn Balls.

Procedure: Combine popcorn and chopped Butterfingers in large bowl. Melt butter in medium saucepan over low heat. Stir in marshmallows. Heat, stirring constantly, until marshmallows are melted and mixture is smooth. Pour over popcorn mixture; quickly toss to coat well. Spray students’ hands with nonstick cooking spray. Form popcorn mixture into 2-inch balls. Place on wax paper to cool.

Estimated times:

Preparation: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 5 minutes

Cooling time: 10 minutes

Close

As treats cool, discuss the following: **What do you think the first part of Proverbs 18:24 means? A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.** (Let students respond.) **We are told to choose our friends carefully. There is a verse in Psalm 119:63 that also states, “I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.” David would be a friend to anyone who respected God. We should treat our Christian friendships as very special friendships. These are special to us, because we are all following God and working toward the same goal – to live our lives close to God and spend eternity with Him and our friends in His Kingdom.** Enjoy the treat or wrap in pieces of wax paper for students to eat later.

Go!**“I Am the Vine”****ARTS/CRAFTS**

Materials: Grapevine wreath, ribbon, scissors, tape, glue gun, seasonal outdoor material (below), you may have the students find the items to use or you may provide these: Cuttings from any greenery (you can take along pruning shears and show the students pruning as you collect the clippings to be used), evergreen, pine, holly, leaves, acorns, dried wheat, ornamental grasses, black-eyed susan, flowers, seed pods, dandelions, herbs, etc.

Quest Connection

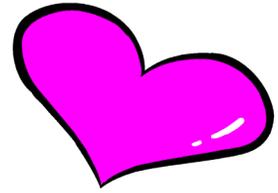
Our friendship wreath contains several objects from nature. If a plant is to continue to grow and develop fruit, it must stay connected to the stem. It provides the nutrition and water. It keeps it alive. In the same way, we must stay connected to Christ to continue to grow in our spiritual lives. We do this in prayer, Bible Study and doing what Christ has told us to do. We want to create a friendship wreath to hang on our classroom door.

Procedure: Have students print John 15:1 on a piece of paper. (Option: You may want to have the students collect items that they will use in the wreath. This offers the perfect opportunity to look at trees or vines and discuss pruning. If this is not possible, you may choose to use silk flowers purchased from a thrift store.) After gathering the materials, have students add objects to the wreath. Secure the plant material by placing the stems in between the grapevines, tying stems with ribbon or hot gluing items. Secure the piece of paper with your written verse in the center of wreath with tape and/or ribbon. Secure a piece of ribbon to hang the wreath.

Close

We will have our wreath here to remind us that Jesus is the vine, God is the gardener and we are the branches. We can bear fruit if we follow Christ’s command to love each other.

Teacher’s Note: Crafts that the students have created are great visual aids to remind the students of previous lessons. They are great to have in the room. New items can be added and removed throughout the year. The students will enjoy having their own artwork around their room.

Go!**Love is a Verb****CHRISTIAN LIVING****Materials:** Journal Page, pencils**Quest Connection**

Jesus said that we should love each other. Let's read John 15:12-14. "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you" (13.) "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (14.) "You are my friends if you do what I command." Laying down our lives means action. We can't just say that we love others, our actions have to show it. Laying down our lives means making time for others and putting others first.

Procedure: Have the students fill out the Journal Page answering the following question: How can we show love to the members of our congregation? (Accept all reasonable answers. Examples may include: showing respect to others, by visiting shut-ins, visiting a retirement center, by doing yard work for elderly members or members with special needs, offer to clean up after a meal or other church activity, doing yard work at the church, setting up chairs or tables for church activities, write cards or design cards on the computer and print out for those sick/absent or someone who may need encouragement.)

Close

Making time for others and loving others as ourselves takes a lot of effort on our part. We have to work at being loving to those around us. We should ask God to fill us with His Power. His Spirit will give us the strength to be loving and kind to others. We also want to ask God to help us see the needs of others. If we are completely focused on ourselves, it is impossible for us to show love to those around us. How will you show love to your family this week? How will you show kindness to your friends? We want to remember that every action of kindness that we do is not done for our own glory. We do these acts of love to bring glory to God – to show our love for Him and His Son.

Closing Prayer: Dear Father, please help us to love You and those around us. Help us keep the command of Christ to love each other. We thank You for this time together and for this time to learn about You. Please be with us in everything we do this week. In Jesus' name, amen.



Butterfinger Popcorn Balls

Ingredients: 6 c. popped popcorn, 3 (2.1 oz.) chopped Butterfinger candy bars, 1/4 c. (1/2 stick) butter or margarine, 3 1/2 c. miniature marshmallows

Serving size: 7

Items needed: large bowl, nonstick cooking spray, medium saucepan, spoon, wax paper

Estimated times

Preparation: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 5 minutes

Cooling time: 10 minutes

To make:

Combine popcorn and chopped Butterfingers in large bowl.

Melt butter in medium saucepan over low heat. Stir in marshmallows. Heat, stirring constantly, until marshmallows are melted and mixture is smooth. Pour over popcorn mixture; quickly toss to coat well. Spray students' hands with nonstick cooking spray. Form popcorn mixture into 2-inch balls. Place on wax paper to cool.

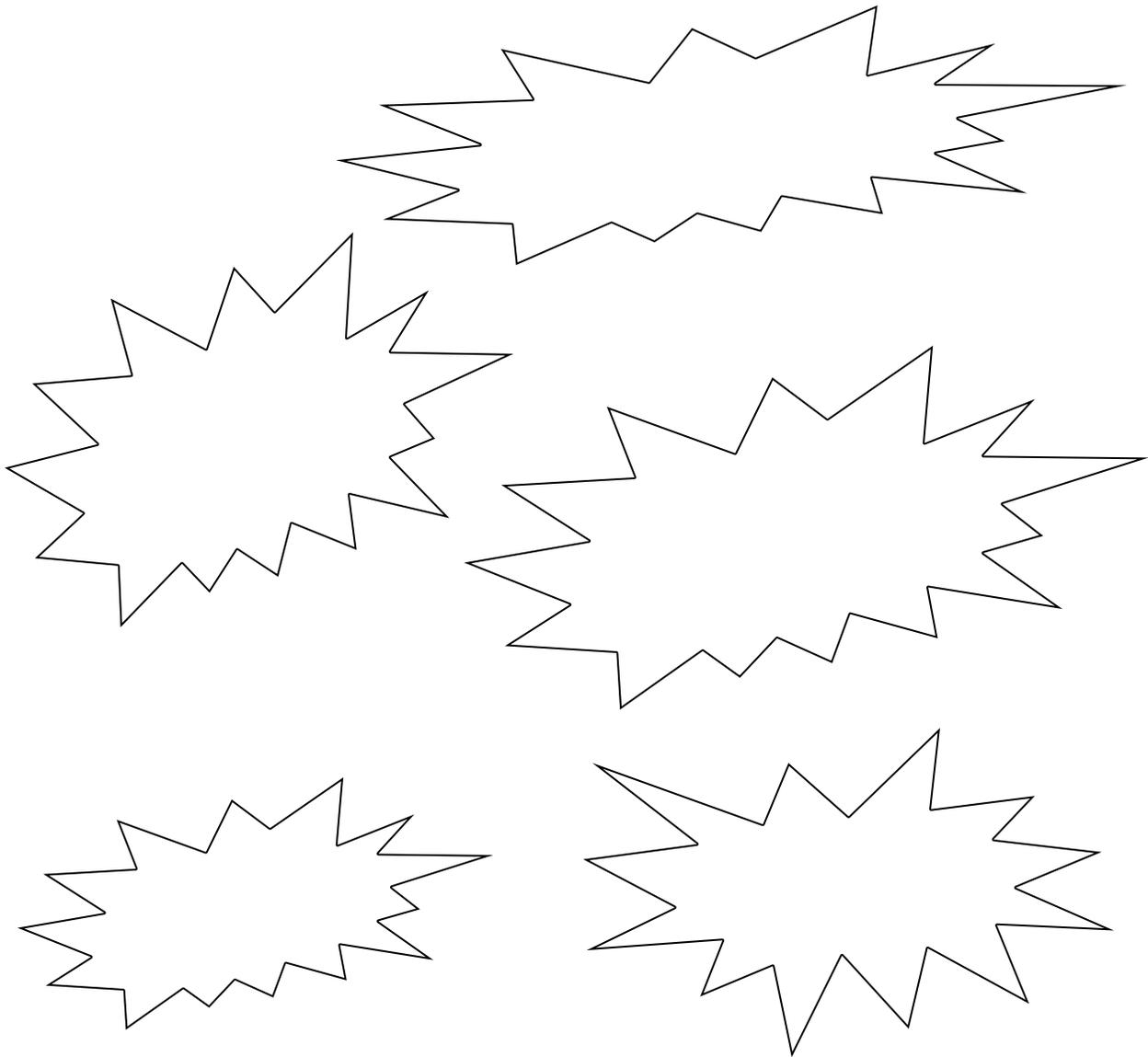
READ PROVERBS 18:24

How does this verse remind you of the recipe above?

Faithful Friends

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NIV).

Sometimes your friends might feel like their lives are about to explode! What are some things that you might do to help your friends deal with these things? Write them in the shapes below.



Journal Page

How can we show love to the members of our congregation?
Write your answers below.



Write specific names of members of your congregation
and pray for those individuals this week:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Journal Page

Find an ad slogan that defines who you are. Also, find an ad slogan that defines who your friends are. Then write about why you chose that slogan. Write about this topic below.

Ad Slogans



"You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:14).