

ZION'S FAITH AT HOME MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER

theParentLinkSM



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Help Kids Grow Their Friendships

Friends are vital to children's emotional and social development. Through friendships, kids learn to share, set boundaries, make decisions, and respect others. Having friends also makes children feel supported, which boosts their self-esteem.

With a new school year right around the corner, many children are thinking about reuniting with classmates and friends. But fears about bullies may also exist. No child is immune to mistreatment by peers. Here are some ways to help kids develop love, respect, and kindness toward one another while maintaining a healthy sense of self:

Love each other. Help children make the connection between how Jesus loves and cares for us and how he wants us to love and care for one another. Make the Golden Rule a top priority in your home ("Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you," Matthew 7:12).



Agree to disagree. Children need to hear and learn that it's okay to disagree with others because God made us all different. But it's never okay to hurt someone with our words or actions.

Everyone's important. Help children find the acceptance and recognition they seek by focusing on activities and behavior standards that are positive, fun, and rewarding. Guiding kids toward loving themselves is key to helping them love other people.

When Social Interaction Goes Awry

- A staggering 160,000 children miss school each day because they're afraid of attack, intimidation, or bullying. (NEA)
- 33% of special-needs kids have been targets of bullying. (aboutourkids.org)
- Children whose parents share ideas and talk often with them are 40% less likely to bully other kids, compared to children of parents who don't do those things regularly. (health.com)
- 56% of mothers say they've ended a friendship because they thought someone's child was a bad influence. (cafemom.com)

PowerSource



Ask God:

1. To help your children make positive, lasting friendships.
2. To give your children the confidence to speak up about bullying.
3. To show your family members how to befriend one another.

Parenting Insights

These developmental tips from *Children's Ministry Magazine* show how friendships grow along with children:

Ages 2 to 4

Young children depend on others to help them develop social skills. Use praise to reinforce good behavior, such as sharing. Help children refine their negotiation skills to resolve conflicts. Give them ideas of what to say.

Ages 5 to 8

Kids this age are learning to choose their friends. Their self-image is strongly related to others' opinions of them. To help a bully, emphasize respect and model how to handle conflict without anger.

Ages 9 to 12

Parental authority diminishes, and kids want to be with their friends more. Discuss the qualities of a good friend and the down side of cliques and gangs.

OpenTheBook

**"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command."
John 15:13-14**

Jesus, our ultimate Friend, sacrificed his life for us. We can follow his example by showing love and devotion to our friends and family members.

Teachable Moments

- 1. Stick With Love**—Buy some stickers that have messages about friendship, and let children pass them out to friends. Read 2 John 5-6 and talk about what it means to love our friends.
- 2. Everyone's Invited**—When children feel left out or are excluded from a party, talk about how life isn't always fair or equal. Read Luke 14:7-14 together and discuss ways to include people and not discriminate.



- 3. Time to Reflect**—Let babies and toddlers see themselves and their playmates in mirrors. Say names aloud as children see the reflections so they can begin to attach names to other people.

Keep in Touch—During summer, help children send postcards to their friends. Even if postcards aren't from a trip, correspondence will teach kids about nurturing their special relationships.

Elementary Youth



Godly Play is in need of a few loving adults or teens to help during the Sunday school hour.

Available positions include The Light & Hollywood teachers, Shepherds for all grade levels and a video camera operator for Hollywood.

Please contact Danielle Acay at dacay.zionkent@comcast.net or 253-631-0100 if you can help.

Family Experience: Friends First

Discover the meaning of true friendship with these activities from Group's Hands-On Bible:

- After You**—Challenge family members to put other people first for a whole day. Say: "See what it's like to open doors for others, let everyone go in front of you in line, let others be served first, let others choose what to watch or play, and so on."

At the end of the day, give each family member a piece of paper and a pencil. Say: "Draw a giant number one. Inside it, write what it was like to be last at things." Read aloud Mark 9:35b. Ask: "What happens when we put others first? Why do you think Jesus wants us to act that way?" Say: "Living like this may have felt a little weird, but that's what Jesus did for us!" Pray together, and have each person pray for someone else in the family.

- Tied Together**—As a family, make friendship bracelets. (Easy instructions are available on the Internet.) During the craft time, talk about your friends and what you would or wouldn't do for them. Read Ruth 1:16 and discuss the friendship between Naomi and Ruth, her daughter-in-law. Ask: "How do you think Naomi felt about Ruth's loyalty? How can we be loyal to our friends and each other?"

Say: "Knots can remind us of bonds that can't be broken, like the bond between Ruth and Naomi. Give away your bracelet to thank a friend for always being there for you."

Hang an extra bracelet on a doorknob at home as a reminder that family members are good friends, too.



Emphasize the value of strong friendships

A teenager's world often seems to revolve around his or her friends. For young people learning to be independent, peers become more important than parents. In our digital age, some kids claim hundreds of "friends." But in the area of friendships, quality is more important than quantity.

When *Group Magazine* conducted a "State of Youth Ministry" survey last year, a clear thread running through the responses of almost 700 youth pastors was their admiration for kids' strong friendships. In fact, many youth pastors said they envied the devoted relationships that so many of their kids have. "Adults have more 'acquaintances' than real friendships," one respondent noted.



Friendship isn't all smooth sailing for teenagers, however. Cliques and bullying can lead to exclusion, hurt feelings, and even violence. Without enough self-confidence, kids may try to seek approval by joining the wrong crowd or acting out against others. Some kids don't yet have the skills to make and keep friends. So it's important to teach (and model) active listening, affirming other people, selflessness, and servanthood. Conflict-resolution skills are also vital for the inevitable problems that arise among friends and peers.

Read on to learn more about how you can encourage your teenagers to make good friends—and to be a good friend.

The small-group resource **Guy Talk, Girl Talk** offers valuable tips for making friendships that last:

1. **Be wise in choosing friends.** Friendship can't be rushed. We sometimes latch onto someone who may not be a good fit for us. So take your time and pick a friend who's someone you know you can trust—and who will build you up, not tear you down.
2. **Be authentic in your friendships.** You can only be as close to your friends as you're willing to allow them. Sometimes it's important to ask if you're the reason you don't have close friends. Are you afraid to let anyone really know you? How can you open up in order to move from shallow to authentic relationships?
3. **Be willing to be held accountable.** When you trust others to tell you the truth, allow them to speak into your life. Another person is often better able to provide perspective to help us grow and develop. Truth can hurt, but it can also help us grow. Christian friends become closer to each other and to God when they encourage one another toward godly living.

Living Word Sixth-Eighth Graders

Lutherhaven 2011

The Zion youth had an amazing time at Camp Lutherhaven! Thank you for supporting our campers with your prayers and for supporting their fundraisers.



Living Word Registration: Please check your mail box for your Living Word Registration. If you did not receive a form please pick up one in the narthex. We are also looking for a few more volunteers to help each Sunday, please consider how you can volunteer.

Senior High Mission Trip

Please pray for our Senior High youth and their leaders while they are in Igo, California.

Fifteen attendees.

Heavenly Father,

Guide us to teach everyone we meet about your amazing love and grace- and help us to live a life that will point others to You. Bless our youth with Christian friends, a heart of a servant and with hands to serve others in your name.

In your name we pray, Amen.



Beach Day!

Middle School & Senior High Youth!

Where: We will meet at Zion and carpool to a Lake Meridian Private Beach

When: August 10th 11:00AM-1:30PM

What: Bring swimsuits, towels, permission forms and \$5

We will have lunch & fun in the sun!

Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Find out more about your teenagers and their friendships by asking them these questions:

1. What qualities are most important to you in a friend? What compromises are you willing and unwilling to make when choosing a friend?
2. How good of a friend are you, and why? What could you do to be a better friend?
3. How have your friendships changed as you've grown up?
4. How do you handle conflicts with friends? Have conflicts ever made your friendships stronger? Explain.

Verse of the Month

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

The support of friends, especially other Christians, is a God-given gift. Through our fellowship and relationships with believers, we share life's joys and struggles. We also encourage one another in the Christian walk, reminding our friends that Jesus is our best friend and Savior.



July 30th - August 6th : Mission Trip for Senior High students.

August 10th: Beach Day for Middle School & Senior High Youth.

August 28th Retirement Celebration Pastor and Angie Strand

September 11th: Rally Day 2011!

