



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Real Friends / Week 1

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SERIES SUMMARY

A three-week series about friendship.

WEEK 1: Be the friend you want to have.

WEEK 2: Be wise about the friends you choose.

WEEK 3: Friends change, and that's okay.

SCRIPTURE

"Do to others as you would like them to do to you" (Luke 6:31 NLT).

So he [Jesus] got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him (John 13:4-5 NIV).

OPTIONAL MEDIA

OPTIONAL MEDIA for this week available for purchase through the XP3 MS Media Package:

- Real Friends Countdown (10 minutes)
- Real Friends Teaching Video – Week 1
- Real Friends Integrated Teaching Videos

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- Sometimes knowing the difference between what's real and fake is difficult.
- When it comes to friendships, we'd all choose real friends over fake friends.

- Some of us have a lot of friends, some just a few friends, and others wish we had just one good friend. Regardless of how many friends we have, it's important to know how to find and be real friends, because friends play a big role in our lives.

TENSION

- When we're younger, making friends is simple.
- As we get older, friendships get more complicated. Our friend groups change because of things like the different classes, interests, teams, and activities we have.
- In middle school, it can be hard to find the kind of real friends we want, which can lead us to believe that we'll never have any real friends at all.
- How do we find the real friends we're looking for?

TRUTH

- Jesus set a great example for how to find and be a real friend.
- *[Give some background information about Luke.]*
- In the book of Luke, Luke shared something Jesus said about faith and having a relationship with God. Jesus said, "Do to others as you would like them to do to you" (Luke 6:31 NLT).
- While Jesus was talking about loving enemies, the idea He shared can be applied to our friendships. We should treat other people the way we want to be treated. The way we communicate with, include, view, and interact on social media with others can be put through this filter.
- In our friendships, we all want to be valued, noticed, included, and feel important.
- Instead of focusing on what we are or aren't getting from our friendships, we can focus on what we're doing to be a good friend.
- We can choose to be the friend we want to have.
- Jesus demonstrated what it was like to be a real friend when He washed the feet of His disciples.
- *[Give background on the custom of foot washing from Jesus' time.]*
- *So he [Jesus] got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him (John 13:4-5 NIV).*
- In Jesus' time, it was customary for servants to wash the feet of guests and owners of a home. But Jesus chose to serve His closest friends and show them what love and real friendship looked like.
- We can treat our friends the same way by showing that we care, love, and value them before they do the same for us.
- We can be the friend we want to have.

APPLICATION

- You can follow Jesus' example when it comes to friendship by . . .
 1. Thinking about the kind of friend you want to have. Think about the qualities you appreciate in a friend and what a real friendship looks like to you.
 2. Being that kind of friend to others. You can take the first step to be a friend to others.

LANDING

- We all want to know how to find and be a real friend. We can start by being the friend we want to have.
- Your small group is a great place to find and be a real friend. Building friendships can take a while, so spend time with your group and choose to be real.
- What kind of friend are you?

THINK ABOUT THIS

In this phase, being authentic is a big deal. Students can spot fake from a mile away, and they want to avoid it in relationships. To be seen as a “fake friend” may be one of the biggest insults a middle schooler can get! The good news is that they’re likely going to lean in more to a conversation about what it means to be a real friend—the kind of friend they want to have. Remember that self-awareness is still developing. Knowing that they’re being a real friend may be challenging for middle schoolers at first. While they’ll be quick to identify the way others aren’t being real friends to them, seeing the same in themselves may take more time and thought. You’re simply laying the groundwork for reflection about who they are as a friend to others. Finally, in a conversation about friends, remind students not to use names when they share. A great principle for students in any conversation is to avoid talking about people as if they’re not in the room.

INTERACTIVE 1: FOOD BESTIES

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you’ll show images of food pairs and ask students to vote on who they think are the “real friends” by moving to the area of the room that represents their answer.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- 4 images of food pairs. These should be foods that go perfectly together. We’ve provided some ideas below!
- A way to show the images to your audience.
- Space in your environment for all of your students to move around.

PREP

- Prepare a slide that has 4 food pairs. Place a pair in each corner of the slide.
- Designate areas in your environment that will represent students’ answers.

FOOD PREP IDEAS

- Eggs and bacon
 - Chips and salsa
 - Peanut butter and jelly
 - Sushi and chopsticks
 - Popcorn and soda
 - Hamburger and fries
 - Salt and pepper
 - Chicken nuggets and dipping sauce
 - Cake and ice cream
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TEACHING SCRIPT

Real Friends / Week 1

PRELUDE SOCIAL WORSHIP STORY GROUPS HOME

BOTTOM LINE

BE THE FRIEND YOU WANT TO HAVE.

INTRODUCTION

5 MINUTES

Hi friends! My name is _____, and I'm so excited to be hanging out with you today. If it's your first time here, I want to give you a special shout out. You picked a great time to visit us, because we're about to jump into talking all about friendship!

Think about your best friend for a minute. If you're anything like my best friend and me, you are a perfect match. You just go together. You support each other, trust each other, share interests, and really *get* each other. You're *real* friends! Kind of like peanut butter and jelly, or burgers and fries! These pairs are perfect together. If foods could be friends, these would be the real deal!

So right now, I want to know who you think the ultimate "real friends" are!

INTERACTIVE: Food Besties

This is where you'll show images of food pairs and ask students to vote on who they think the "real friends" are by moving to the area of the room that represents their answer.

I think we'd all probably agree that when it comes to friendships, we all want friends who we match up with perfectly. We want **real friends!**

Some of you would probably say you have a million real friends. Others of you may have only a few people you consider real friends. And some of you would love to have even one real friend who has your back. But no matter what your friendship situation is, it's important to take a look at the people you keep close to you. It's important to know how to find real friends and be real friends. Because real friends can play a pretty big role in your life!

TENSION

2 MINUTES

Think back to the way most of your friendships started. A time when someone tossed you the foursquare ball and invited you to play. A time when the only drama surrounding your birthday celebration was if it would be at a trampoline park or a bowling alley. A time when agreeing on your favorite YouTuber was all you needed for a solid friendship. Maybe you can even remember way back when friendship looked like a grown up setting up play dates for you with juice boxes and snacks. Back then, friendship was pretty simple.

Fast forward to now, and my guess is that friendship has become a bit more complicated since hitting middle school. Now, your friend group seems to be changing all the time. And if it isn't already changing, you're probably worried that it will. Maybe the friends you've had since second grade don't really talk to you anymore. You have different classes, different interests, or different activities going on, and your friendships have changed as a result. Or maybe your friendships seem to be changing simply because life is changing. Things are different as you switch schools, or classes, or start on new teams. And that makes finding consistent friends who really know you a little bit harder. Maybe over the years, your ideas of friendship have changed. You need more than just a parent-arranged play date and fruit snacks to feel like you have a real friend, but you're not sure where to even begin finding the kind of friendship you want now.

My point is this: In middle school, it can feel like you don't have the kind of real friends you really want. Maybe you don't feel like you have any real friends at all! And if we're being honest, I think we'd all admit that can be really difficult. When you can't find the real friends you're looking for right now, it's easy to believe that you'll never have any real friends at all.

So, what do we do when we find ourselves feeling this way? How do we actually find the real friends we're looking for?

TRUTH

4 MINUTES

When it comes to both finding the friends and being the friends we want to have, I can think of no better example than **Jesus!** So today, we're going to look at some solid advice that Jesus gave on friendship.

There was this guy named **Luke** who was one of Jesus' early followers. Luke was a doctor who documented the life and ministry of Jesus. In his writings, Luke told us about something Jesus did a lot. He was teaching people about God's ways. Jesus was speaking to His disciples—His closest followers at that time—and crowds of people were listening in, because they wanted to hear what Jesus had to say about God. For hundreds and hundreds of years, these people had been focused on following rules and laws as the most important part of their faith. But Jesus was teaching that faith is about more than following rules; it's about following and having a relationship with God.

And in teaching them about that, Jesus said this:

“Do to others as you would like them to do to you” (Luke 6:31 NLT).

While Jesus was talking specifically about what it looked like to love your enemies here, I think we can take this same idea and apply it to our friendships. It basically means we should treat other people the way we want to be treated. Makes sense, right? In theory, this sounds like an amazing way to live, but in reality, it's not always the easiest thing to do.

Think about what that would mean when it comes to real friendships:

- Text others as you would want to be texted.
- Invite others as you would want to be invited.

- Include others as you would want to be included.
- See others as you would want to be seen.
- Talk to others as you would want to be talked to.
- Post on social media about others in the way you'd want to be posted about.

When you put it that way, it's suddenly not as easy to do, is it?

I think all of this really boils down to one thing: value. In your friendships, you want to be valued. You want to be noticed, included, or missed when you're not there. You want to feel important to the people closest to you. Based on the truth Jesus shared, you can look at it like this: One of the best ways you can increase the value of your friendships is to be the one who starts valuing others first. Instead of focusing only on what you are or aren't getting from your friendships, you can focus on what you're doing to be a real friend. In other words, you can choose to **be the friend you want to have**.

What's awesome is that Jesus didn't just talk the talk when it came to this. He walked the walk, too! His disciples were the closest people to Him. They were His real friends. And later, Jesus actually demonstrated what it meant to value others by doing something really cool for His friends.

So he [Jesus] got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him (John 13:4-5 NIV).

Okay, so this might seem a bit awkward to us today. But this whole washing of feet thing was very common back in Jesus' day. Back then, people walked around in their sandals through dust, mud, water, and even animal waste. Sounds lovely, right? Because of that, people spent a lot of time with super dirty feet. Now the custom was for *servants* to wash the feet of the owners or guests of a home as they entered. So, when Jesus started to wash the feet of His friends, they freaked out, because that was the job of a servant, not a Savior!

But Jesus didn't care. He chose to kneel down and wash their feet. Jesus chose to serve His closest friends. He took the first step to show them what friendship looks like. What I love about this story is that Jesus took action. He didn't wait for His friends to treat Him the way He knew was right. Instead, Jesus went first to treat them with value, love, and significance. He showed them what it looks like to be a real friend.

And it's something I think we can do, too! Do I mean you need to start washing the feet of all your friends? No! In fact, please don't do that. It would be weird. What I do mean is that you can start finding real friends by being a real friend first. You can love, value, and show up for your friends in real, important ways. You can **be the friend you want to have**.

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

So, how do we do this? As people who want to have real friends, what can we do? Well, like we said, we can follow Jesus' example and start by being the kind of friend we want to have. We can be a real friend to others. It may not change anything overnight, but I believe you'll eventually find yourself in the kind of real friendships you've been looking for. And to help you get started, I want you to try two things:

1. **Think about the kind of friend you want to have.** Part of making a new friend or strengthening the friendships you already have is thinking about the qualities you appreciate in a friend. Are they interested in the same things you are? Do they invite you to do things? Do they save a seat for you at lunch? Are they easy to be around? Nice to your siblings? Patient? A good listener? Dependable? Kind? Have your back? It's hard to have real friends

if you have no idea what kind of friends you want to have, so think today about what a real friendship looks like to you.

2. **Be that kind of friend.** Jesus set the tone with His friends by first being a friend to them. He didn't wait for them to treat Him the way He wanted. He set the example by being a real friend right away. And you can do the same! I know the natural response in friendship is to wait for someone else to be nice to you, or include you, or invite you to that thing. But today, I encourage you to be the one to take the first step. Be a friend first. Invite them to sit by you. Invite them to hang out after school. Ask them to play video games with you. Let them join your pickup basketball game. Offer a kind word first. Think about the way you want people to treat you, and then find a way to treat your people that way first. I think over time, you'll see a change—not just in your friendships, but in yourself, too!

LANDING

1 MINUTE

I know real friends can be hard to come by. In fact, when it comes to real friends, I think we all want to know how to find them and how to be them. Well, it starts with you! So, remember, **be the friend you want to have.**

One place you can start is in your small group. Your small group is a place where you can talk about things that really matter with people who really care. It's a great space to start showing others what it looks like to be a real friend! And if you don't feel like the people in your small group are your real friends yet, don't worry! Maybe that's because you just haven't spent enough time with them or haven't gotten to know them well enough. That can take a while! We have small groups every week, so you can spend time becoming real friends who talk about real things with each other. So today, take a step toward that by choosing to be real with your group about this whole friendship thing.

So, as you get ready to head to small group, I want you to think about this question: **What kind of friend are you?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
