



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

How to Friend / Week 3

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SERIES BOTTOM LINE

The work is worth it.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help teenagers process changes in their friendships and to give them healthy ways to step back from friends when needed.

WEEK 3 BOTTOM LINE

Being a friend means walking away friendly.

SCRIPTURE

- Acts 15:36-38 NIV
- Acts 15:39-41 NIV

TEACHING SLIDES

All scripture, bottom lines, and teaching points that are bolded in this script are also provided as slides in your weekly "Teaching" folder.

OPTIONAL MEDIA

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

- How to Friend Countdown (10 minutes)
- Bull's-eye Video Interactive
- Week 3 Podcast Video
- How to Friend Week 3 Teaching Video

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- *Tell a personal story: Tell a story about a friendship that grew apart in your life, especially one that drifted apart for reasons that were hard to identify.*
- See, in this series, we're talking about how to friend.
- But **what do we do when it's time to unfriend?**
- How do we handle it when friendships drift apart or move in different directions?

TENSION

- Sometimes change in a friendship isn't over reasons that were a big deal.
- **[INTERACTIVE]: See the Communicator Guide for detailed instructions.**
- Sometimes, however, the reasons aren't so cut and dry.
 - Maybe you and a friend had a difference of opinions about something you both feel strongly about.
 - Maybe you had a friend who hurt you with their words or actions, and it's something that you just can't move on from.
 - Maybe you had a friend who started walking a different path—one that you don't think is good for them or you.
- Wherever you find yourself right now, the reality is, **many friendships only last for a season.**
- **Friendships have the potential to change—for better or for worse.**
- So how do we friend through a transition? How do we walk away and handle it well? How do we carry ourselves in a mature way, even when our feelings are hurt and our emotions are involved?

TRUTH

- After Jesus no longer walked the Earth, the book of Acts tells the story about what happened next.
- With Jesus gone, Jesus' closest followers—His disciples— were wondering what to do with His incredible message and how to share it with the world. So, they began traveling to different places and sharing the life-changing message of Jesus.
- In the passage we're looking at today, we have three guys: Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark.
- These guys were getting things done!
- But it wasn't always easy for them. Check this out...
 - *"Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.' Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work" (Acts 15:36-38 NIV).*
- Paul and Barnabas were friends who were doing some pretty important work together.
- But when they decided to go back and check on some of those churches, problems started...
- The fact that this story is included in our Bible is so important. It would have been much easier if the writers had decided to make everyone look like a hero, or if they just told you the stuff you were supposed to do or believe when it comes to your faith.
- The Bible is a collection of stories about real people who had real disagreements and lived in real tensions and are doing their best to get it right when it comes to following Jesus.
- Check out what happens next...
 - *"They had such a sharp disagreement that they [Paul and Barnabas] parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches" (Acts 15:39-41 NIV).*
- Listen, Paul and Barnabas were two guys who understood the power of showing grace, overlooking offenses, and moving forward.
- If we can make peace, we need to try. But if we can't, we need to have boundaries.

- And that's what Paul and Barnabas did.
- When we read this story their disagreement may sound petty, or small, but it was a big deal to them.
- When you think about it, **any type of conflict is always a big deal when you're one of the people involved.**
- In fact, maybe you've experienced something similar.
- What I love most about this story is that it doesn't end in conflict.
- The writer of Acts, Luke, goes on to say that the two men, Paul and Barnabas, kept going in the important work they were doing.
- Think about it...
 - They could've let this conflict in their friendship stop them.
 - They could've let it impact the work they knew they needed to do.
 - They could've stopped talking about Jesus and started talking trash about each other.
- But they didn't.
- Their friendship changed and ended, but they didn't let it end the mission that they shared.
- And here's what I think that you and I can learn from them...
 - **[BOTTOM LINE]: BEING A FRIEND MEANS WALKING AWAY FRIENDLY.**
- You can, like Paul and Barnabas, have a friendship-ending disagreement while still going on with your life in a way that doesn't impact you or the other person for the worse.

APPLICATION

- So how do we walk away friendly, even in the moments when you don't feel like it or think it's fair. Let's start with one simple word...
 - **Forgive.**
- So, if we're going to choose to forgive, we can start this way:
 - **Identify why you're frustrated.**
 - **Cancel their offense.**
- Peter, another person who helped start the early church, said this...
 - *"Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing" (1 Peter 3:8-9 NLT).*
- **You don't have to continue to be friends. But that doesn't mean you have to become an enemy.**
- This will be challenging but the work is worth it.

LANDING

- **BEING A FRIEND MEANS WALKING AWAY FRIENDLY.**
- It won't be easy, but the person who will benefit the most is YOU.
- When you head to small groups, think about your response to this question:
 - **What feelings come up when you think about changes to your friendships?**



TEACHING SCRIPT

How to Friend / Week 3

PRELUDE SOCIAL WORSHIP STORY GROUPS HOME

WEEK 3 BOTTOM LINE

Being a friend means walking away friendly.

INTRODUCTION

3 MINUTES

(Communicator Note: *Tell a personal story about a friendship that grew apart in your life, especially one that drifted apart for reasons that were hard to identify.*)

When I was a sophomore in high school, I became friends with a guy named Tiny. No, that wasn't his real name. I don't actually remember what his real name was because NOBODY called him by anything but his nickname. I mean, how great of a nickname is that?

Well, I guess the nickname isn't that great if you're short or small for your age. But the thing about Tiny is that he was a big dude. He looked like a grown man among teenagers! His dad was in the military, and he moved to my town and started school after Christmas break our sophomore year. That's not an easy time to transition for anybody. But Tiny handled it great (I'm pretty sure he had been through it a few times before). He was so much fun to be around, and all of us underclassmen loved him because he was bigger than most of the upperclassmen.

As you can imagine, my friend group—which was pretty small—embraced Tiny immediately. And he embraced us! We all loved hanging out together. But over time, Tiny slowly started becoming friends with an older, more popular crowd. This made sense—he looked and acted older, and my friend group wasn't exactly the most popular or mature. Eventually, he was just an acquaintance that I said “hello” to when I passed him in the hall.

One day my mom asked me about him: “When's the last time you talked to your new friend? What's his name?” I'm thinking, *Mom, how could you possibly forget this guy's name?* I said, “Tiny. Yeah, I saw him in the hall today and said “hi.” But we don't really hang out anymore.”

My mom followed up with about 50 questions . . .

- “Did y'all get in a fight?”
- “Did he hurt your feelings?”
- “Did you hurt his feelings?”
- “Did you find out that he's a 30-year-old lumberjack?”
- “Did he find out that you have the same sense of humor as a middle schooler?”

“No, mom. We just went different directions. It happens sometimes.”

See, in this series, we're talking about how to friend. But **what do we do when it's time to unfriend?** How do we handle it when friendships drift apart or move in different directions?

TENSION

3 MINUTES

Sometimes change in a friendship isn't over reasons that were a big deal. Maybe it was something like . . .

- You changed schools, which made it more difficult to stay in touch.
- Schedules changed, and now you don't see each other as much.
- You've both changed interests, which means you have less in common.

Changes like this are difficult, but eventually they get easier to cope with because they make sense. You have a reason that you can explain to your mom when she asks, "How come you don't talk about or hang out with _____ as much anymore?" When it came to Tiny, I told my mom that he was too big of a deal and cool to hang out with my friend group anymore. Oddly enough, that made total sense to her! And it made sense to me too.



INTERACTIVE

[OPTIONAL MEDIA available for purchase through the XP3HS Media Package:](#)

[How to Friend – "Knot Video Interactive"](#)

(Communicator Note: *Bring a pair of tennis shoes. On one of them, have it tied in a basic, single knot—the way you've tied your shoes since childhood. For the other shoe, have it in a somewhat complicated knot—but not too complicated, because you have to get out of it).*

(Hold up first shoe with basic knot). See, sometimes the separation is easy. It's not a big deal. Everybody gets it and understands. The knot is untied in a simple way. (Untie the first shoe).

(Hold up second shoe with complicated knot. As you talk, work to untie the knot). Sometimes, it's not so simple. There are a lot of different emotions involved. There's a lot of history and memories. It's difficult to figure out how to separate and move on.

Sometimes, however, the reasons aren't so cut and dry. For example . . .

- Maybe you and a friend had a difference of opinions about something you both feel strongly about. You care about each other, but neither one of you is willing to change. So what happened? The friendship changed instead.
- Maybe you had a friend who hurt you with their words or actions, and it's something that you just can't move on from. Or maybe you're the one who hurt them with *your* words or actions. What happens then? The friendship changed.
- Maybe you had a friend who started walking a different path—one that you don't think is good for them or you. You can't be around them when they're making decisions like that. Or, it's too much temptation for you to make the same decisions they're making. So you have to make a change to the friendship until something changes in their life.

Maybe you've experienced this before. Maybe you were the one who initiated the change, and it was difficult. You were frustrated and mad at them, and they didn't understand why you drifted apart. Or maybe you were on the other end—someone quit making an effort with you. And maybe you understood the

reason, or maybe you had no clue why they stopped talking to you. You were hurt and felt like you didn't get closure or an explanation. It just felt like rejection. And maybe that's exactly what it was.

Wherever you find yourself right now, the reality is, **many friendships only last for a season**. If you talk to any adults, they can tell you how they've had many friendships that were simply for a season. Sure, some may last a lifetime. But that's rare. It's far more likely we will experience friendships that drift or break apart at some time. **Friendships have the potential to change—for better or for worse**. It's a realistic part of life that happens. And sometimes, it's the best thing that can happen for ourselves and our relationships.

So how do we friend through a transition? How do we walk away and handle it well? How do we carry ourselves in a mature way, even when our feelings are hurt and our emotions are involved?

Let's talk about it!

TRUTH

6 MINUTES

In the New Testament, the second part of the Bible, the first four books are accounts of Jesus' life when He lived on Earth. After Jesus no longer walked the Earth, the book of Acts tells the story about what happened next. It was the first page in the history of the Church. We are gathered in church today because of what ordinary men and women started back then—things that were recorded in the book of Acts.

With Jesus gone, Jesus' closest followers—His disciples— were wondering what to do with His incredible message and how to share it with the world. So, they began traveling to different places and sharing the life-changing message of Jesus.

In the passage we're looking at today, we have three guys: Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark. Paul is one of the greatest Christian influencers of all time. He ended up writing more than half of what makes up the New Testament. His friend Barnabas was a huge encouragement to those around him. In fact, that's why he was given the name *Barnabas*—it means “encourager.” Barnabas was also an important financial contributor to the biggest church of his day. And finally, there's John Mark, Barnabas' cousin and the eventual writer of the Gospel of Mark in the New Testament. These guys were getting things done!

But it wasn't always easy for them. Check this out . . .

“Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.’ Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work” (Acts 15:36-38 NIV).

Paul and Barnabas were friends who were doing some pretty important work together. They were revealing Jesus to people and establishing churches along the way. But when they decided to go back and check on some of those churches, problems started.

1. Barnabas wanted to bring John Mark, who apparently ditched them the last time they went out on this kind of trip together.
2. Because of that, Paul isn't so sure about bringing John Mark. He didn't like being stood up before, so why would he want to bring him along again?

The fact that this story is included in our Bible is so important. It would have been much easier if the writers had decided to make everyone look like a hero, or if they just told you the stuff you were supposed to do or believe when it comes to your faith. But that's not what the Bible is. The Bible is a collection of stories about real people who had real disagreements and lived in real tensions and are doing their best to get it right when it comes to following Jesus. Check out what happens next . . .

“They had such a sharp disagreement that they [Paul and Barnabas] parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches” (Acts 15:39-41 NIV).

Listen, Paul and Barnabas were two guys who understood the power of showing grace, overlooking offenses, and moving forward. They understood that things would be better if they could come to an agreement, so I'm assuming that they tried to work it out. If we can make peace, we need to try. But if we can't, we need to have boundaries. And that's what Paul and Barnabas did. They decided to go their separate ways. It was a disagreement between friends—a disagreement big enough that they decided that separating was the best thing to do. When we read this story their disagreement may sound petty, or small, but it was a big deal to them. When you think about it, any type of conflict is always a big deal when you're one of the people involved.

In fact, maybe you've experienced something similar. Maybe a friendship was strained, and people on the outside felt like it was an overreaction. But for you and the friend you disagreed with, it felt like a very big deal. You get it.

What I love most about this story is that it doesn't end in conflict. The writer of Acts, Luke, goes on to say that the two men, Paul and Barnabas, kept going in the important work they were doing. They kept telling others about Jesus, even though they weren't doing it together anymore. Think about it . . .

- They could've let this conflict in their friendship stop them.
- They could've let it impact the work they knew they needed to do.
- They could've stopped talking about Jesus and started talking trash about each other.

But they didn't.

Both Paul and Barnabas continued their work of spreading the message of Jesus with new people, leading to a doubling of their efforts. Their friendship changed and ended, but they didn't let it end the mission that they shared. And here's what I think that you and I can learn from them:

BEING A FRIEND MEANS WALKING AWAY FRIENDLY.

What that means is you can experience a change in your friendship and still have a positive attitude about the other person. You can, like Paul and Barnabas, have a friendship-ending disagreement while still going on with your life in a way that doesn't impact you or the other person for the worse. It's possible.

If you're faced with the end of a friendship, you have the choice to be friendly, even if you're no longer friends.

- You can still treat them with respect when you're in the same place.
- You can speak well of them when their name comes up.
- You can move forward with your life, just like they can move forward with their life.

The story of your friendship may end, but neither of your stories has to end. You can move on and not let it ruin you or ruin your reputation by handling it poorly. That's what Paul and Barnabas showed us.

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

So how do we walk away friendly, even in the moments when you don't feel like it or think it's fair. Let's start with one simple word:

Forgive.

This one word is a really big deal. So, if we're going to choose to forgive, we can start this way:

1. **Identify why you're frustrated.** Name your pain. Whether you're upset with them for making the choices they're making, or you're upset that they're no longer talking to you and there's no reasonable explanation, or things changed and it wasn't because of something anyone did, figure out why you're upset. Don't try to figure out who's right and who's wrong. Just identify why you're upset. Then...
2. **Cancel their offense.** That might look like letting go of what you think they owe you. Canceling the debt. Softening your bitterness toward them and the circumstances. It's okay to be hurt or feel hurt. But don't let your hurt get the final word. As God has forgiven you through Jesus, pass that on to them. Ask God to help you extend forgiveness to them. When God helps us forgive other people, we see more clearly how God has forgiven us. Forgiveness is a chance to see God at work. Forgive, then forgive again, then forgive again, then forgive again. Or if the friendship simply changed over time and no one was at "fault," it may be realizing there is no offense to forgive so much, as a change to come to terms with.

Peter, another person who helped start the early church, said this:

"Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing" (1 Peter 3:8-9 NLT).

You don't have to continue to be friends. But that doesn't mean you have to become an enemy. You can pray for them, forgive them, be kind to them, speak well of them, and assume the best in them. Choose to be the one who takes the high road, even when it's difficult. This will be challenging but the work is worth it.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Being a friend means walking away friendly.

It won't be easy, but the person who will benefit the most is YOU. Imagine the pain you'll spare yourself by not holding grudges, starting wars, or trying to get even. Seasons change, people change, and friendships change. Sometimes people simply go in separate directions. But YOU can do it in a way that doesn't devalue the friendship or the other person.

When you head to small groups, think about your response to this question:

What feelings come up when you think about changes to your friendships?



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
