

A FRIEND INDEED

A LIFE NIGHT ON CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP

A FRIEND INDEED

Christian Friendship LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

CATECHISM REFERENCE

- # 142
- # 609
- # 2347

SCRIPTURE

- Proverbs 18:24
- Sirach 6:5-17
- Mark 11:25
- John 21:15-19
- John 15:12-17

KEY CONCEPTS

- God did not create us to be alone.
- Friendship is a gift from God to us.
- Friendship should model Christ's sacrificial love.

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to help the teens understand the need for friendships. This Life Night will also give the teens an opportunity to evaluate how good a friend they are to those they call friends. Finally, this Life Night will help the teens understand the need for solid, Christ-centered friendships.

ABOUT THIS NIGHT

Some of the most important and most influential people in a teen's life are his or her friends. This night seeks to help the teens understand the necessity of Christian friendship. The Life Night begins with a competition to see who can remember the most phone numbers of their friends. The teaching for this night stresses the importance of Christ-centered friendships and offers suggestions on how to be a better friend. After a short time of small group discussion, the teens will read Sirach 6:5-17 and discuss the specific ways they can be a better friend. The night closes with a time of prayer offering up those friends by name who are in need of God's blessing and help.

PARENTAL NOTICE

If you haven't already noticed, the friends in your teen's life are some of the most important and most influential people they have around them. As parents, it is important that you stay informed about who your teens are spending time with and the kind of influences they are on your teen's life. This week's Life Night is on Christian friendship. The goal of the night is to help teens understand the need for Christ-centered friendships. The night will also help the teens evaluate their friendships with others. Spend some time this week talking to your teen about their friends. Here are a few questions to use to start the discussion:

1. Who would you say is your best friend? Why are they your best friend?
2. To you, what makes someone a good friend?
3. Have any of your friends ever hurt your feelings? What happened?

ENVIRONMENT

The environment for this night will require lots of pictures of the teens over the last several years. The pictures can be from Life Nights, retreats, summer trips, or other events. The pictures should be of teens together in groups. If pictures of the teens are lacking, be mindful in the weeks before to take pictures at Life Nights and other events. Take the best of these pictures and enlarge them to hang around the meeting room. Create a slideshow with the other pictures and have it playing throughout the Life Night. Along with the pictures of the teens, have pictures of popular best friends, like:

Bert and Ernie (*Sesame Street*)
Buzz and Woody (*Toy Story*)
Mater and Lightning McQueen (*Cars*)
Tigger and Roo (*Winnie the Pooh*)
Peter Pan and Tinkerbell (*Peter Pan*)
Miley and Liley (*Hannah Montana*)
Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble (*The Flintstones*)
Harry Potter and Ron Weasley (*Harry Potter*)
Bella Swan and Jacob Black (*Twilight*)

MEDIA

Song: "What A Friend I've Found" by Delirious? (*King of Fools*)

NOTES

GATHER *15 Minutes*

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (5 min)

The youth minister should gather all the teens together, welcome them to Life Night, and lead an opening prayer. He or she should introduce any teens at Life Night for the first time.

WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER? (10 min)

Give each teen a copy of the "Dial a Friend" activity handout, found on page 24. Have the teens write down the name and the phone number of a friend who they would call for a particular issue. The only rule is that the teen cannot look at their cell phone or ask another person for the number of that friend. The goal is to have the most correct phone numbers on the handout. The teens with the most numbers should come forward and receive a prize like friendship bracelets.

PROCLAIM *15 Minutes*

"A FRIEND INDEED" TEACHING (15 min)

Begin the Proclaim by asking the teens to define the meaning of "friend." Then ask them to define the difference between a best friend and a normal friend.

Over the last several years, the word "friend" has taken on many different meanings. We have best friends (besties or BFFs), school friends, sports team friends, church friends, and Facebook friends. How many of you have ever said that you were friends with someone and that your friendship was finally real because it was "Facebook official"?

Regardless of how people categorize their friends, you'll be hard pressed to find a person who does not want friends. Having a community and having friends is part of who we are. We were not made to be alone. We are called to be in friendship with people.

For many of us in this room, our friends are some of the most important people in our lives. We'd do anything for a friend who is in need. All of us desire to be a good friend. Luckily for us, we have a source we can go to for advice on all things friends: the Bible.

What does the Bible have to say about friendship? Well, let's take a look:

TRUE FRIENDSHIP IS LOYAL

“Some friends bring ruin on us, but a true friend is more loyal than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).

True friendship can stand the test of time. It can handle the occasional argument and misunderstanding. It can handle calling each other out when necessary. It can handle these things because true friendship is based on authenticity. It is dependent upon genuine care for one another’s well-being. It is NOT dependent on popularity, status, image, money, achievements, ability, access or talent. True friends are loyal because they care.

TRUE FRIENDSHIP IS PRICELESS

“Barter not a friend for money...” (Sirach 7:18).

There are not many things in this world that are more valuable than true friendship. It can enrich our lives in ways we never imagined and bring us more joy on this earth than we could hope for. It is the foundation for healthy marriages and happy families. And you can’t put a price on that.

TRUE FRIENDSHIP IS SACRIFICIAL

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13).

The temptation is always there to see people in light of how they make us feel, or how we can benefit from being their friend (like becoming more popular). But, as followers of Christ, we are called to be mindful of treating others with respect and being a witness of true and authentic friendship. True friendship drives us to think of others first, just as Christ thought of us first. As true friends we are called to lay down our lives for one another in little ways every single day. True friendship presents us with opportunities to love. It is up to us whether we choose to take advantage of those opportunities.

CHRIST-LIKE FRIENDSHIPS

As Christians, we are not discouraged from entering into friendships with “non Catholics” – that would be completely contrary to the mission of the Church! Yet there are some key considerations as to why having faith-based friendships is important:

- Accountability for staying the course – We’ve all experienced the challenges of living Gospel values in a culture that does not reflect Christ. Surrounding ourselves with friends who are active in their Christian faith helps us reach our ultimate goal: holiness and heaven. Having faith-based friendships allows for accountability for our actions and choices. Asking those friends to call us out when we start to slide helps us recognize that we have like-minded, like-valued people around us who can keep our feet on the ground so that we don’t lose our Christian roots in potentially morally “grey” areas.

- Deeper relationships – Assuming that our desire is to have meaningful and deep friendships, why would we want to deny ourselves people who can understand, empathize, and challenge us in living a Catholic spirituality? When a person allows Jesus Christ to become a significant part of his or her life, it does not make sense that such a person would not strive to be around people who feel the same. How often are the relationships we have based only on a common interest in sports, music, television shows, or movies? Although these interests are not bad, they can only connect two people so deeply. As Christians, it is important that we have friendships that allow us to share our hearts and prayers with others. These kinds of connections allow for long-lasting friendships.
- Witnessing community life – In the eyes of people who do not know Jesus like we strive to, there can be misinterpretations and misunderstandings about how Catholics live. By ensuring that we have relationships with people who are also active Catholic-Christians, we help send the message that the faith we share is an integral part of our lives. Jesus went beyond calling the followers around him disciples, or even apostles. He noted them as friends: “I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father” (John 15:15). This depicts an intimacy that is more than just a reward for being a faithful follower. It is important that we model this and live in authentic love and compassion for the people around us, never falling into the temptation to have them in our lives just because of convenience, or because they serve a purpose for our own means.

FRIENDSHIP WITNESS

Close the teaching by inviting two friends (former teens, Core Members, two adults) to come and share the story of their friendship. Have them focus on why keeping Christ at the center has helped them stay friends and how their faith has helped keep each other accountable to holiness over the years.

BREAK *30 Minutes*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (30 min)

The Break for this night will be in two parts. The first part is a time of discussion in small group, and the second part is a reflection on Sirach 6:5-17. Break the teens up into small groups. For this night, encourage teens to be in small groups with their friends. Open the small group with prayer and use the following questions as a guide for a discussion:

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS (15 minutes)

- Until this night, have you consciously thought about whether it was important to have strong Catholic-Christian friends? Why or why not?
- What are two characteristics that you would consider unique among friends sharing a Catholic-Christian friendship?
- What are two strong Catholic morals or values that are important for you to share with friends regardless of their faith background or value system?
- Could you ask the friends you have now to help hold you accountable in living a daily Catholic-Christian lifestyle?
- What sort of areas in teenage life today would challenge Catholics in living a virtuous and holy life? How could you help your friends in standing up to these challenges?

CHARACTERISTICS OF A FRIEND (15 minutes)

Scripture is always a great source for us when we are looking for guidance or inspiration. The small group leader should give each teen a Bible and ask them to look up Sirach 6:5-17. Read through each verse and challenge the teens in your small group to consider how many of these characteristics ring true in their existing friendships. Have the teens go through the Scripture reading and share one part of the list from Sirach that they really feel drawn to take as sound advice.

Close the small group by praying for the grace to be a better friend.

SEND *15 Minutes*

RECAP OF LIFE NIGHT (5 min)

Gather the teens back together in the church and encourage them to sit close together. Set a tone of prayer by having soft music playing in the background. The youth minister should transition into prayer by recapping the Life Night and reading Sirach 6:5-17.

Reiterate that each of us has the responsibility to be the best kind of friend we can. We must honor and love as Christ has called us to. We must look to Christ as our model of friendship. We are called to love our friends for who they are and not what they can offer us. We should always remain open to accountability from our friends and be willing to forgive and ask for forgiveness when needed.

PRAY FOR MY FRIEND (10 min)

To end the Life Night, begin a time of prayer by thanking God for the gift of friendship. With soft music playing in the background, invite the teens and Core Members to share the first name of friends they want to pray for. After the teens and Core Members have had a chance to share those names, conclude the time of prayer by singing together "What a Friend I've Found." Close the time of prayer with the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

GOING DEEPER

- If time allows during the Send, invite teens to pray over each other and ask God to strengthen them in their commitment to be better friends by their example in loving their friends more deeply as Christ would love them.
- Challenge the teens to think of one friend they could invite to the next Life Night.

ADAPTING THE LIFE NIGHT

- If the teens do not have any phone numbers memorized, have them write down a one-word description of why they thought of that particular friend for that category.
- During the Send, have the teens write down the names of their friends and bring them before a Cross or place their names on the altar.
- If time runs short, hold a Bible Study the next week to continue the discussion on friendship.

A FRIEND INDEED DIAL A FRIEND

INSTRUCTIONS:

Without looking at your phone, fill in the name and phone number of the person you would call for each need below.

WHO WOULD YOU CALL IF...

1. You needed to talk with someone about a family problem.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

2. You needed money.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

3. You needed to share a secret.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

4. You needed someone to pray with you.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

5. You had good news to share.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

6. You needed someone to hold you accountable to a commitment.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

7. You needed spiritual advice.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____