

## **How to Be a Good Friend**

*By Bryant Forshee & Steph Williford*

### **One Question That Every Teenager Asks ... “Do I Matter?”**

Teenagers’ friends and peers help them answer this question. Friends are a vital and important piece of teen years. Their friends give them acceptance, a sense of belonging, a sense of identity. They also are a sounding board in how they are able to adapt to life’s ups and downs.

Friendships and peers are also the big things they deal with *daily*.

The current culture of hanging out with friends is different than when you were growing up. This happens virtually and in person. How many times have you been in the car with students and they are all focused on their cell phones? This might drive you insane, but they find community both in person and virtually.

Over the course of a year, our Student Ministry offices are filled with frustrated, defeated and worried students because of relationships with friends. This is the number-one thing we talk about.

**One of the most important lessons that life teaches is that if you want a good friend, then be a good friend.** Seems so simple, but it’s true.

So, here are some tips on how to help your students be a better friend. One important part of your job as a parent is to help your students navigate the relationships in their lives. One way you can do this is by making sure you are asking the right questions.

#### **● Watch the Walk**

Questions to ask:

- Are your students walking with Jesus?
- Is walking with Jesus being modeled in your own home? With your friendships?
- Are your students plugged in at church? Into a LifeGroup?

This is the most important thing you can help your students with! Their relationship with Jesus will overflow into every area of their lives. It will be reflected in everything they do. In the same way, it will be reflecting in your life as well. Check on your students and their faith.

Check on their community at church. Call their adult leaders and offer to host the group for a Bible study, game night or swim party. Encourage your students to make friends at church and to serve. A critical thing you can do as a parent is help your students love their church.

#### **● Watch the Talk**

Questions to ask:

- Are your students having godly conversations?
- Are your students tearing down their friends? Gossiping?
- How do your students feel about bullying? Peer pressure?
- Do your students know how to handle conflict biblically?

Ephesians 4:29 says, “*Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*” Words matter. The old adage “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” is a total lie. Nothing hurts more than hateful words.

One of the most powerful ways we can be a light in a dark place is by the words we speak. We love how Ephesians 4:29 says that our words should be used to build up others and to give others grace. So often we get caught up in wanting to make sure we are “right” when in the midst of conflict, but this verse is a beautiful reminder that the goal is to look like Jesus. That changes things! When we are walking with Jesus, we are capable of forgiveness, mercy and peace, and allowing those to be our responses.

### ● **Watch the Friends**

Questions to ask:

- Do you know who your students’ friends are?
- Are your students being intentional with their friends?
- Are your students modeling Colossians 3:12 in their friendships?

Do you know who your students are hanging out with both in person and virtually? They may have a best friend they hang out with in person, but they may also have a gamer best friend online that they communicate more with than the in-person best friend. To know about your students’ friends, you have to know who they are.

A great way to know whom your students are hanging out with is to be the “hangout house.” Don’t be afraid to order the pizza and bring your students’ friends into your home. This way, you not only can see who the friends are, but also see how your students are being a friend to their friends. Colossians 3:12 says, “*Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.*” Are your students modeling these verses in their friendships?

Lastly, concerning their friends, if you are *not* comfortable with the friends that your students have, end those relationships. As the main discipler in your home, if a friendship is not God-honoring and it is affecting your students in negative or sinful ways, it’s your duty to end the friendship.

### ● **Watch their Hearts**

Questions to ask:

- Do your students know they can *always* talk to you?
- Do your students know whom to ask for advice?
- Do your students know how to be a friend to everyone?

When your students’ hearts are tender and ready to listen, talk, or even vent, be the person they can talk to. That does not mean they will always choose you, but they know you are *there* for them, *there* to listen to them, and *there* to love them!

When watching their hearts, examine whether they are treating and seeing others the way Jesus did. He was kind to all. Are your students kind to all? This does not mean that every friend and

person in your students' lives has to be their best friend, but if Jesus was kind to all, we need to be kind to all.

Lastly, are your students being the greatest friend by pointing and talking to their friends about Jesus? The best thing that your students can do in their friendships is influence their friends positively for the Gospel.

● **Conclusion**

Your students have probably heard these things many times before, or maybe they haven't, but continue saying or start now saying these three things continuously:

- I love you!
- I am always a safe place!
- I support you and I'm cheering for you!

The words don't have to be verbatim, but the idea is what counts! Constantly remind your students that you love them, you are there for them, and you support them!