

Lesson 1: Life Together: Living in Community

LUKE PROFILE



Genre: Gospel

Author: Luke

Passage: Luke 6:12-16; John 15:12-17

Where Is It: The third book of the New Testament: Mark, **Luke**, John

Key Characters: Jesus, his disciples, and a crowd

Main Plot: Jesus chooses his twelve disciples, and he heals people who are afflicted with diseases and evil spirits.



THE WORD

Luke 6:12-16; John 15:12-17



ENGAGE THE WORD

Lesson Overview: Relational Dimension

While there are times in our lives when it is good to get away, there is no doubt about it: God created his people to live in community with one another. Jesus makes it a point to get away and pray several times throughout the Gospels. However, he is also intentional about surrounding himself with close friends.

In the first lesson of our unit, we will take a broad look at the life and teachings of Jesus regarding our relationships with others. Students will be challenged to understand the importance of surrounding themselves with people who will encourage them to live out their faith while not excluding or isolating themselves from the rest of the world. In the remainder of the lessons in this unit, we will look at specific traits we should seek to embody in our relationships with others.

Biblical Commentary

While the Gospels do not go into great detail about the lives of some of the disciples, one thing we can conclude is that Jesus calls some pretty ordinary people to follow him. In John's Gospel, Jesus tells the disciples that they are to love others just as Jesus has loved them. Jesus goes on to demonstrate the fullness of his love by laying down his life for them. Sacrificing one's life for another is the highest form of love that one can show.

Jesus tells the disciples that he no longer calls them servants even though he has the right to refer to them as such. Christian friendship is more than just casual association; it is a partnership of mutual respect and affection. The disciples are not simply slaves whom Jesus calls to live out God's mission. A slave is never given a reason for the work that is assigned. A friend is a confidant who shares in the knowledge and mission of their superior's purpose and voluntarily decides to live in accordance with that mission.



THE MAIN IDEA

JESUS MODELS FOR US THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING IN A COMMUNITY IN WHICH WE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER.



Bible Background

The disciples do little to prove they are deserving of love. Through his interactions with them, Jesus illustrates that we are called to love not only those who are “deserving” of love, but also those who are seemingly undeserving. Jesus calls us to bear with one another in love.

These two passages (Luke 6:12-16; John 15:12-17) offer two small glimpses of a larger picture that we see throughout the Gospels. Jesus chooses to live in community, not only with the disciples but with other people we read about in Scripture. Jesus’ life and teachings point to a greater truth that we as believers are created to encourage one another, support each other, pray for one another, rebuke one another, and teach each other. The book of Acts also gives witness to this truth: after the ascension of our Lord, the disciples continue to gather together for the greater purpose of living out God’s mission in the world.

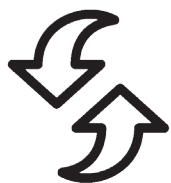
Jesus’ words must not be lost on us. To remain in Jesus (John 15:9), and for him to remain in us, is the essential of fruit bearing. We must remain in relationship with God, to cultivate that relationship above all other things. In response to a healthy and growing relationship of trusting obedience to God, fruit is produced, and communion with God and his people is assured.

ENCOURAGEMENT

The action of giving someone support, confidence, or hope

REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:

Are you faithfully connected to the body of Christ? Do you allow yourself to pour into other people’s lives and be poured into by others?



In your closest friendships, are you encouraging one another toward Christlikeness?

REFLECT ON YOUR STUDENTS:

Do your students surround themselves with people who encourage them in the faith?

Do your students see the importance of being connected to the body of Christ?

“This Inward relationship—living in love with one another—is the only identifying mark Jesus said Christians were to have: ‘By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another’” (John 13:35). —Mike Breen

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

LESSON OUTLINE



Main Idea: Jesus models for us the importance of living in a community in which we encourage one another.

Resources: Bibles, copies of handout, writing utensils, poster board or whiteboard/markers, highlighters, lined/primer paper, envelopes

Connect to My Experience:

Welcome and Prayer

Who's in Your Circle?

Connect to the Word: Jesus Is Our Example

Connect to My Life and the World: Thank You Letter

Closing: Affirmation and Prayer



CONNECT TO MY EXPERIENCE

Student Goal: Youth will reflect on who their closest friends are.

Welcome your students and allow them to share highlights from their week. Also give them the opportunity to share some praises and prayer requests. Open in prayer.

WHO'S IN YOUR CIRCLE?

Using a whiteboard or poster board, draw a dot in the center and then draw four or five circles that get gradually larger around the dot (so it looks like a bullseye).

SAY: The dot in the middle of the board represents you, and the circles surrounding the dot represent your relationships and friendships. The people in the smallest circle are the friends and people you spend the most time with. These are the people who have the greatest influence on you. The largest circle represents the people in your life who are more like acquaintances. You spend less time with these people, and they don't have a significant influence on you.

ASK: What would your friend chart look like?

Do the people in your closest circle build you up and encourage you, or do they bring you down and tempt you to make poor choices?

As people trying to follow in the footsteps of Christ, are there any changes you may need to make to your circles?

SAY: Take a few minutes to fill in the circles, starting with your closest friends and moving to acquaintances or strangers.

SAY: This week's passages tell us that Jesus had twelve disciples who were his close friends. Parts of the Bible suggest that out of the twelve, he was especially close with John, Peter, and James. Jesus taught and encouraged them, but these three were also good friends to Jesus in return. These three disciples Jesus was especially close to were in Jesus' inner circle.

The people in Jesus' outer circle were the people Jesus spent time with who were far from God. These were the people who took extra energy for Jesus to be around because they either tried to bring

Jesus down or they required a lot of attention. When Jesus needed to recharge his battery, he prayed and spent time with his closest friends, who loved him.

CREATIVE OPTION: SHARING YOUR CIRCLE

Share your own circle with your students. This activity is meant to encourage students to think about their relationships—both those who are Christians and those who are not yet. Students can most certainly have non-Christians in their closest rings, but the hope would be that they are people who encourage them in life.

In Jesus' day, disciples of a rabbi were regarded as his servants. Jesus changed that relation to friendship.



CONNECT TO THE WORD

Student Goal: Youth will begin to understand how Jesus modeled relationships and how he encourages us to have friends who support us.

JESUS IS OUR EXAMPLE

Divide your students into two groups. Ask one group to discuss Luke 6:12-16 and the other group to discuss John 15:12-17. Encourage them to read their respective passages using different translations. Consider printing off a few translations for each group to highlight and take notes.

Have each group come up with a few points to present, considering the following questions:

- What is Jesus modeling for us?
- What is Jesus trying to teach us?

Ask a volunteer from each group to read Luke 6:12-16 and another one to read John 15:12-17. Ask another volunteer to share the main points they discussed within their group.

Distribute this week's student handout. If you have time, ask the students to spend some time reflecting on the lesson. Give them five to ten minutes to fill in their answers. Discuss as a group.

ASK: Why do you think Jesus calls these twelve to be his disciples in Luke 6:12-16? Why doesn't Jesus go through life and ministry alone?

What is the difference between a servant and a friend?

What does it look like for us to love one another as Jesus has loved us?

Think about the people you surround yourself with. Who are the friends who encourage you as a follower of Jesus? Are there people who discourage you from following Jesus?

**JOHN 15:12-15,
THE MESSAGE**

"I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father."

**FURTHER
EXPLANATION**

Students are encouraged to have close friendships with people who do not yet know Jesus. Jesus invited people into his life who didn't know him yet, and many came to know the love of God because of it.

Jesus said in John 15:15b: "Everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." Jesus elevated the disciples to confidants and revealed to them the mind and heart of God, showing them the purpose of his coming, and assuring them that they were engaged in a saving work that God would bring to a fruitful conclusion.

As Christians, do you think we should spend time with people who are not Christians?

SAY: Jesus loved all people, but his primary friendships were with people who encouraged and supported him. Think about how much more difficult Jesus' mission on Earth would have been if he had surrounded himself with people who tried to drag him down.

ASK: Do the people you spend most of your time with encourage and support you?

Do your friends challenge you to be a better Christian?

Do you find it difficult to be a Christian around your friends?



**CONNECT TO MY LIFE AND THE
WORLD**

Student Goal: Youth will write thank you letters to friends who have been encouraging, Christlike examples to them.

THANK YOU LETTERS

Distribute to each student a sheet of lined paper, a pen, and an envelope. Ask them to think about someone in their life who has been a great friend to them and a positive influence in their faith.

Give the students several minutes to write a letter expressing gratitude for that friendship and have them name how that person has encouraged them in their faith. Encourage the students to write down some verses from today's reading as a reference to what has inspired them to write these notes.



CLOSING

Reaffirm the following truths to your students:

1. Jesus surrounded himself with people who loved and encouraged him.
2. God created us to live in community with one another.
3. We as Christians need to surround ourselves with people who encourage us and challenge us to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Invite your students to take a few minutes to pray over their circle of friends.

SAY: In a moment, you will have a chance to pray individually over your circle of relationships. Thank God for those who have been an encouragement to you in your faith and ask God to help you discern if those discouraging relationships are healthy for you to keep in your circle. Allow Jesus to be your example.

Remind students to give their thank you letters to the individuals who have encouraged them.

SAY: We must, with God's Spirit working in and through us, develop a godly love for others.

Close in prayer.



Facilitator Note:

Consider sharing with your students that writing letters can become a regular practice to encourage one another in faith. Many people may not even be aware of the impact they make as they live out their daily faith. This is a simple way to encourage those who have encouraged us.