

FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

Welcome to **PRACTICE!** This is the beginning of the final section of Disciple Trek. This final section is dedicated to helping you be able to take God's message to the world, and I'm praying that you will be equipped to do just that! Over the next several lessons, you will discover methods and ways to connect with others to share Jesus' love with them.

One of the greatest gifts that God gave humans was the gift of friendship. It is a vital part of life! It's what makes living a fun experience where you can share your journey with someone else. In a way, the friendship relationship is one of the reasons that God created us...to be friends with Him. In fact, Jesus even calls us His friends!

John 15:15: "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you _____, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

It's almost like Jesus wants to do life with us, journey with us, be friends with us so that we can enjoy life with Him. He's the greatest Friend you could ever ask for! He'll always be there for you. He'll always be a shoulder to cry on. He'll always be the Person to share the joy that you experience. He's the best Friend anyone could ever have! God created friendship!

But although friendship is a powerful picture of how God relates to human beings, it is also a God-given tool to help take God's message of love to the entire world. Some might call it Friendship Evangelism. Others might just call it, Evangel-living, living a life that is dedicated to helping others find a friend in Jesus.

One of my favorite authors, Ellen White, writes in her book, *Ministry of Healing*,

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'" (p. 143)

I love this quote for so many reasons, but the best part about it is that it centers around friendship. It's Jesus' method of reaching people and telling them a life-changing message! It's the method that will give you and me success in sharing the Gospel with others!

Take a moment to go through the different pieces of Christ's method and think about what that looks like in your life as you endeavor to follow your calling of bringing others into a friendship with Jesus.

The Savior mingled with them as one who desired their good...

He showed His sympathy for them,

[He] ministered to their needs

[He] won their confidence

Then He bade them, 'Follow me.'

Jesus' first steps at helping someone know the Gospel truth was simply.....Being A Friend! He hung out with them. He spent time with them. He hurt for them when they were hurting. He celebrated when they celebrated. He cried when they cried. He was with them so much, that they began to trust Him. They were friends! And because they were friends, He was able to share the unbelievable message that their trust in Him was the key to eternal life. But it all started with friendship!

THE KEY TO EVANGELISM IS FRIENDSHIP!

The thing about friendship is that it takes time to build. It's not something that comes instantly. It's not something that can be built overnight. It's something that takes effort and commitment so that someone trusts you and can trust what you tell them.

The Bible talks a lot about friendship. See if some of these verses speak to you about how to live as a friend.

Proverbs 18:24: "One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a _____."

Ecclesiasties 4:9-10: "_____ are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up."

Proverbs 17:17: "A friend loves at _____ times..."

BASIC POINT

The key to evangelism is:
FRIENDSHIP!

Writing Activity:

Being a friend to someone isn't very difficult, but it needs to be intentional. In one minute, jot down as many ways to be a friend to someone else where you will build a strong and better friendship. Ready? Go!

Being a friend isn't as hard as it sounds. It's through the every day things of life. It's with your coworkers. It's with your neighbors. It's with the people you see at the gym, or the bank, or the grocery store. It's with the mailman. It's with fellow students. It's with colleagues. It's with everyone you meet! Your role in the plan discipleship starts with making friends with others!

I have a neighbor. He's a great guy. In fact, I met him the first day that I looked at my house. He was out in his yard when I showed up with a realtor, and as I walked to the front door he said, "You gonna buy that house?" Well, I went over and talked with him, and it was the first conversation of many. We talked over the fence. We talked on the sidewalk. We talked about cars and dogs and how to get our grass to grow better. We talked about everything! Pretty soon, we had exchanged phone numbers. Then there were text messages and phone calls back and forth. Pretty soon, we weren't just neighbors, we were friends! We would text each other to wish each other a Happy Monday. If one of us needed help moving something, we knew who to call. We were friends! We were close enough that we talked about God. He wasn't really religious. He didn't care much for church, but that didn't stop us from being friends. He knew that I was a pastor, and he had a lot of respect for me. So while we differed in our approach to God, we still remained friends. One night, I got a text from my neighbor, and it said, "Hey! I'm really having a hard time right now." I texted back and asked if he wanted me to come over. He said, "Yes!," so off I went, across the street, in the rain and freezing temperature. He opened the garage door for me, and I walked in and gave him a hug. I'd never been in his house before, but he walked me in and out the back door where we sat down on the back porch. It was cold! It was wet. But there we sat and talked for an hour! He was having deep anxiety. He said that he wanted a blessing, and that I was the only pastor he knew. He said, "Matt, I just want someone to help me know that God is real!" Well, you better believe I helped him! I told him Bible promises. I told him Bible stories. We talked back and forth for an hour until I had a special prayer for him and his family. The next day, he went to church, and he hasn't stopped coming!

That's a special story to me, because it's the story of a friend. And it all started because of a friendship! Without all those hours getting to know him, or talking across the street, or helping him move things, we wouldn't have a friendship. And without that friendship, he might not have a close relationship with Jesus right now!

St. Francis of Assisi once said:

"Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words."

Sometimes we think that only pastors or evangelists can lead someone else to Jesus. But the fact is, we are all called to do it, and it's done through every day life being friends with others. It's through building relationships and trust of others that allows you to speak into their lives with the sweet truth about the Savior.

1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen people, a royal _____, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

We are all evangelists, and we are all called to share the good news about Jesus. And the best part about it is that we get to do it...through friendship!

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

1. Who do you know that doesn't know Jesus?
2. How can you become their friend?
3. How have you seen Friendship Evangelism work?

LESSON 1: FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM

