

loving Jesus and loving my friends...
THE ESSENTIALS

Relationships

*becoming more connected
to our wandering friends*

*How do we reach our friends naturally,
through relationship, like Jesus did?*

Relationships

Scripture Verses

“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”

1 Thessalonians 2:8 (NIV)

“Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whatever. I didn’t take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I’ve become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn’t just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!”

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (MSG)

“Laugh with your happy friends when they’re happy; share tears when they’re down. Get along with each other; don’t be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don’t be the great somebody.”

Romans 12:15-16 (MSG)

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

1 John 3:16-18 (NIV)

“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.”

John 15:12-13 (MSG)

Short Thoughts

Relationships are possibly the most fundamental and important thing in the universe. God’s love for us and desire to be in relationship with us are why He created us, why He wanted to redeem us, why Jesus died on the cross for us, why He tells us to share His love with others, and why God still loves us no matter how messed up we are. Relationships are fundamentally important!

Relationships are not only one of the greatest motivations behind the love of God, but it’s also the WAY He desires for us to share His love with others! As you desire to share Jesus with your peers on campus, it’s important you understand the importance of building a relationship with them, learning their story, understanding who they are, their needs, sharing with them who you are, and being a TRUE friend to them. Nothing will communicate the love of Jesus more than authentic relationship.

And keep this in mind, **Jesus is ALWAYS the first person in any relationship!** Jesus was in your friend’s life before you were. Jesus is there while you are, and He will be there long after. So, in any real relationship, there are always three different people involved—you, your friend, and Jesus.

Sharing Jesus is about sharing life with people. Start thinking of different friends God has placed in your life as you begin to work through this section.

Relationships

Solo Exercise... *this solo exercise is an opportunity for you to work alone through some questions about the relationships God is calling you to in your life.*

Ask God to give you the names of 3-5 people that He wants you to care for, to build a friendship with and to share Jesus with. Who is He trying to connect you to? It may be someone you already know or someone you've never met. Think about everyone you interact with on a daily basis...at school, work, on the bus, in class, in sports, etc.

How do you know these people? What is your relationship with them like? Is there anything holding you back from loving them?

Where do you see Jesus at work in these relationships? In their lives?

Ask God to show you some needs these people have in their lives. Maybe they don't have many friends and often eat alone at school, or perhaps they are from a divorced family and fear people walking out of their life.

How can you specifically serve and show Jesus' love to these people in these areas? Maybe eat lunch with them, give them a ride home, get to know their story? Maybe invite them to coffee or the movies, invite them to hang out with your friends, invite them to youth group, write them an encouraging note? **Ask Jesus for some ideas.**

Solo Challenge...

Start praying for these friends and keep them in mind for the solo exercise in the next two sections.

Relationships

Team Exercise... *this team exercise is an opportunity for you and your community or campus team to investigate the relationships God is calling you to as a team.*

As a team, reread the verses listed at the beginning of this section (on page 24). What do these verses tell you about relationships and loving others? List your answers below.

- Ask God to lead you...then **list 3-5 groups of people** God is calling your team to reach. Ask Him to help you understand their needs and how He wants you to reach out. You may know them or not, you may like them or not. Maybe new freshman, students typically seen as outcasts, new or hard-to-like students in youth group, the less fortunate in your community, or other clubs on campus you may or not agree with.

Now, ask God to help you answer the following questions for each of these groups on your campus:

- How do you know these groups? What is your relationship with them like? Are they easy or hard for you to love? Is there anything holding you back from loving them (e.g. you're afraid they might think you're a stereotypical, judgmental Christian)?

- Where do you already see Jesus at work in these relationships?

- Ask God to show you some needs these groups of people have in their lives. How can your team specifically serve and show Jesus' love to these people in these areas. Maybe arrange a joint club hangout, make food for their club meeting, hang out with them and ask them questions about why their club is important to them.

What are some ways your team can each invest in the lives of individuals in these groups?

Team Challenge...

Start praying for these groups and the individuals in them as a team! Make sure you complete the exercises in the next sections while keeping these groups in mind.