

# WEEK 1

## LESSON GUIDE



### **BIG IDEA**

God-centered Relationships begin with God-centered lives.

### **BIBLE**

1 Corinthians 13:1–13

## **ABOUT THIS WEEK**

Doing life on your own isn't the life that God designed you for. You were created to live and love in community. This week, we'll see how Paul describes godly love and community. Spoiler alert: It is centered around Jesus and His love for us. And the more we learn to center our relationships around Jesus, the healthier they will be.

*WHAT? What are we talking about today?*

### **Introduction**

Hey everyone! We're kicking off a brand-new series called "On Your Own." Now, I know the name might sound like we're here to talk about being independent, but that's not what this series is about. In fact, we're diving into the opposite idea—that life isn't meant to be done on your own.

God designed us for relationships—relationships that are rooted in Him and help us grow. Over the next four weeks, we're going to unpack what it means to have God-honoring relationships that truly make life better.

Here's where we're headed:

- In week one, we'll talk about how the healthiest relationships are centered on God—they're the kind that lift us up and draw us closer to Him.
- Next, we'll explore how our friends can have a powerful impact on our faith, helping us grow stronger in our walk with God.
- In week three, we'll see how God gives us wisdom to choose friends who will point us toward Him.
- And finally, we'll wrap up with the truth that God can help repair even the friendships that feel broken or lost.

This series is all about discovering how to build and nurture relationships that honor God and bring life, joy, and growth. So, let's dive in and see what God has in store for us over these next few weeks!

But before we get rolling, let's learn a little bit about some of you.

### **POLL | What Kind of Friend Are You?**

- There's so much to learn about being a good friend. All of us could use a little help growing and building solid friendships. So, let's take a poll and see what this group thinks it takes to be a good friend.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Poll your group's responses to the following questions. Designate a corner for answers A, B, C, and D. You may even want to write each letter on a poster board and have an adult leader holding it in the corner or use [the blank slide](#) included in the series' graphic materials. Ask the question, then have teenagers go to the corner of the room that indicates their answer. Use the examples below or write four questions that gauge your group's stance on friendships:

- Two of your friends got into a big argument, and now they're giving each other the silent treatment. Do you ...
  - A. Take one side.
  - B. Talk to them both together.
  - C. Ignore them.
  - D. Join in the falling out.
- What do you do when someone is gossiping about your best friend? Do you ...
  - A. Say nothing.
  - B. Speak up and confront the gossip.
  - C. Join in with the gossip.
  - D. Listen and tell the friend later.
- The most important thing about friendship is ...
  - A. Spending fun time together.
  - B. Always being there for each other.
  - C. Feeling like you belong.
  - D. Having friends admired by others.
- Your friend is having a difficult week. How would you cheer them up?
  - A. Suggest you do something fun together.
  - B. Tell them they'll get over it.
  - C. Offer them a shoulder to cry on.
  - D. Tell them about your bad week.
- This quick poll revealed a lot about the types of friends we are. We're all here to grow and learn together as we explore how we can be better friends. Let's look at a few passages from God's words that can help us start being great friends.

### SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

#### SCRIPTURE | 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

- One of the Early Church leaders, the apostle Paul, had a tough job. He wanted to help new Christians learn to live as friends in a community, even with diverse backgrounds.
- There was a brand new church in the vibrant ancient Greek city of Corinth. As people started following Jesus, they brought their old ways of worship into the new church.
- For example, people shared visions God was giving them in ways that didn't make sense to everyone. In their worship gatherings, people would be sharing, and suddenly, they would be interrupted by others trying to dominate the conversation.
- They disagreed on how to worship together. So, Paul wrote them a letter to help them see what their worship gatherings could look like.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.
- Can you see why people refer to this as the "love chapter"? When we read this, we think these words only apply to romantic relationships, but that's not what is really going on here.
- Corinth was a city on a major trade route, meaning there was lots of exposure to other influences and cultures. Unfortunately, this once tightly-knit group of Jesus followers fought each other and gave into temptation.
- They forgot about the importance of loving friendships built on kindness and patience. Paul reminded them what love can look and sound like.
- The Christians in Corinth allowed the words and norms of their city to guide their relationships instead of being guided by God's words. Paul called people to build each other up with Jesus-centered love.

#### OBJECT LESSON | Clanging Cymbal

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this object lesson, you'll need a cymbal from a drum kit or a pack of [finger cymbals](#), or use a cymbal sound effect from a sound board [like this one](#) to hand out to your volunteers before your program. As you teach this next section, play your cymbal several times.
- Paul pointed out the ways the people of Corinth were moving away from a loving path. He said their fancy words and unexplained spiritual activity drove people apart instead of bringing them together.

- When they worshipped, it sounded more like loud clanging cymbals rather than harmonious music. To mesh their worship styles, they needed to start loving like Jesus first.
- If their actions don't align with their words of worship, it is like they are all playing the cymbal at the same time as they shout out, "Jesus loves you!! Come follow him!" Their words are drowned out when they are not living the love and understanding they talk about. They're just a loud noise machine.
- A clanging cymbal distracts from everything happening and diverts attention away from what matters. That doesn't help us grow to love Jesus and others.
- Paul showed us that we start with our shared love of Jesus, and then our loving actions and words are aligned. This strengthens relationships and helps them endure through differences.
- In other words, Paul says, **"If you want God-centered relationships, you need to have God-centered lives."**
- Here's the truth: You know what every relationship requires? People! And you know what's true of people? We're all messed up. We all have sin in our lives. We're all broken, so when my brokenness meets someone else's brokenness, guess what happens? There's a chance for us to hurt one another.
- But what Paul is trying to teach the church in Corinth is that Jesus is a glue that heals lives. He repairs the broken. And when Jesus is the glue that ties me to you, then our relationships stand a much better chance of being healthy because we're both pursuing Jesus while we pursue friendship with each other.
- And this is true of EVERY relationship in your life, Imagine this...
  1. Imagine your relationship with your parents if you treated one another with Jesus in mind all the time.
  2. Imagine your relationship with your siblings if your number one priority every time you interacted with one another was showing the love of Jesus to one another.
  3. Think about your friends. What if instead of trying to show off and impress them with crude jokes or acting up in class, you decided to live and model Jesus' life to them, and they did the same for you?
- Can we get real for a second? Let's talk about dating!
  1. Some of you are far removed from this, and others may even be in a relationship now. Whether dating is somewhere down the road or it's your present reality, think about this:
    - Is it ok if Jesus followed us around and observed our relationship? Would He be honored and glorified in our relationship, or would He be disappointed in how we treated one another?
    - Would I be proud of my relationship if Jesus gave His opinion on our being together?
- Listen, because relationships take two people, we can't guarantee that both people are living the way God intended to the best of their ability, but we can take accountability for ourselves and devote ourselves to living God's way. Because when we do that, our relationships stand the best chance of being truly healthy and God-honoring.
- And we start to do this as we learn to hear God's voice and we allow Him to change us from the inside out.

### NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

#### VIDEO | Jimmy Fallon's Wheel of Impressions

- Learning to recognize God's voice is challenging. The cool thing is that God wants to meet us right where we are and talk like a loving friend.
- **God's words can help your friendships grow**, but it may take some time for us to become familiar with or feel comfortable hearing from God. Over time, the sound of God's voice will become as routine as hearing the voice of a singer we like.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show a clip from [this video \(1:59–3:22\)](#). We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context! For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- Ariana and Jimmy hang out with a lot of singers. Ariana listened to Christina Aguilera's music so much that it was practically a part of her.
- Her ability to do impressions is similar to when you spend a lot of time with your friends. You may start talking like each other, saying the exact phrases, and using similar mannerisms. Has that ever happened to you?

- That doesn't happen because you take notes and study your friends like you study a history book. It happens because you spend time together.
- The same is true of how we get to hear from God. The more we spend time with Him, the more we begin to recognize His voice.
- But what does this have to do with relationships? Well, I think there are two steps that we can all take that will lead us to healthier relationships:
  1. **SPEND TIME WITH GOD**
    - Just like we recognize a close friend's voice by spending time with them, we learn to hear God's voice through prayer and scripture. Try reading the Bible in new ways—alone, in groups, or in different settings.
  2. **EXAMINE YOUR FRIENDSHIPS**
    - Who in your life helps you grow closer to God? Are there relationships that need repair or wisdom? Ask God to help you choose friends who point you to Him and show His love. We're going to talk more about this over the next couple of weeks.
- But right now, I want to give you a chance to practice this before we head to small groups.

### PRAYER | Listening To God

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this prayer, you'll need paper and pens for every person. If you decide to do the "Survey Says" reflection, have them use the blank side of their handout. One at a time, ask the following questions, then allow a few moments for teenagers to write down their responses.*
- Right now, we will close our eyes and listen to God. It's so important to learn to stop in our everyday lives to listen. We're open to God's words speaking to us. After each question I ask, you can open your eyes and write your responses on your sheet if you'd like to.
  - Who in my life is helping me grow?
  - What is keeping me from growing?
  - What's one way I can grow closer to God?
- When we spend time with God and create space to listen, there are so many ways we can grow and see God's words show up in our lives. And the more we learn to listen to God, the healthier we become. And the healthier we become, the healthier our relationships become. When you learn to listen, you can become better followers of Jesus and better friends because **God-centered Relationships begin with God-centered lives.**