

WEEK 2

LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

Your friends can help your faith grow.

BIBLE

Luke 5:1–11; Proverbs 13:20;
Psalm 145:8–9

ABOUT THIS WEEK

In many game shows, having a team with unique skills and abilities can make a difference. This week, we'll hear a story of when Jesus started building his dream team by inviting his first followers to join him. Jesus' invitation changed the lives of these men and helped them grow closer to God, a reminder of how **your friends can help your faith grow**.

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

PERSONAL STORY OPTION 1 | Friend Shenanigans

I had incredible friends growing up. We found ourselves in pretty wild and sketchy moments, but we also made memories and grew closer in the process.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Share a story about something wild that you and a friend or group of friends did when you were growing up that is appropriate for your group. What happened? Was it spontaneous? When you see each other now, how often does this story come up? How did your friendships change because of it? Did you know at the time it was something you would remember for the rest of your life?*
- If you're anything like me, you probably have stories with your friends or inside jokes where when you think about them, you can laugh for hours, even if you two are the only ones who understand the joke. But what if friendships are meant to be more than that?
- Let me ask you, do you have any friendships where you feel comfortable reaching out when things are difficult and we need someone to help carry the load? What does it look like to be the type of friends who have fun together and share moments and conversations that help us grow into what God has always hoped for us?

PERSONAL STORY OPTION 2 | Why It was Tough Growing Up Without Friends

Growing up, I found it challenging to make friends...

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Share a story about a time in your life where you struggled to make friends. How did you feel? Did you desire to have friendships, or were you a bit of a "lone wolf". What are some situations where having a friend in your life would've been helpful? Did you feel lonely or left out? As much as you're comfortable, feel free to be vulnerable in an appropriate way.*
- Can I be honest? That time of my life was really difficult.
- Because I never really knew where to turn when I needed someone to feel comfortable reaching out to when things were difficult and I needed someone to help carry the load.

- What does it look like to be friends who have fun together and share moments and conversations that help us grow into what God has always hoped for us?
- Well, if you've been with us for a while, hopefully by now you've come to notice that Jesus is our perfect model of how to live, and that includes how we are supposed to live out our relationships.

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

SCRIPTURE | Luke 5:1–11

- The Gospel of Luke is a collection of stories about Jesus and his life on Earth. Luke wanted everyone to know all the incredible ways God changed the world through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
- Luke knew Jesus was remarkable, and Luke's book shows us how often Jesus hung out with people, made friends, and invested in relationships. Jesus always saw the potential in others, even when they couldn't see how much God loved them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 5:1–11.*
- In this passage, we meet a man named Simon. Have any of you ever heard of Jesus' disciple named Peter? This is the same guy, but Jesus changed his name later on during their time together. And he eventually went on to become one of the prominent leaders of the Early Church, but before all that, Simon was a fisherman. It was how he made money and a way he stayed connected to his community.
- Simon didn't fish alone. He had others help with big fishing jobs. When Simon and the other fishermen met Jesus, Simon spoke for the group. There are a few stories of Simon speaking up when others wouldn't and staying silent when maybe he should've said something.
- Jesus hopped into Simon's boat and told the fishermen to put their nets out for another catch. Simon made it clear that they hadn't had any luck and that trying again was worthless. Jesus continued encouraging them to go for it, and when they did, they brought in a massive haul of fish!
- Simon would have given up if not for Jesus' encouragement. Because Jesus saw potential, Simon could experience that kind of love. Instead of this being a moment of celebration, Simon was uncomfortable with this experience. He felt ashamed.

QUESTION | "Have You Ever Downplayed a Compliment?"

- Have you ever downplayed a compliment that you received? Why did you respond that way?
- Sometimes, we don't receive compliments or encouragement well because we don't feel like we deserve them. I think this is similar to how Simon felt.
 - Simon didn't think he was worthy of being in a friendship with someone who could bring such a massive blessing like Jesus did. Maybe he was thinking, "If Jesus knew the real me, would he have done this for me?" Or, "Jesus doesn't know about my habits, character flaws, and messy relationships. I don't deserve this. He should be showing up for someone else."
 - The blessing from Jesus made Simon want to create distance in the friendship. Shame told Simon he didn't have what it took to receive friendship and didn't deserve to be close to Jesus.
- Sometimes, when we experience shame like this, we get an urge to pull away from the people closest to us. Sometimes, being alone feels easier than telling people how we feel or trusting our friends to see and care for us just as we are.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 5:9–10

- Did you catch what Jesus said when Simon expressed these doubts? Let's re-read it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Re-read Luke 5:9–10.*
- Jesus wanted Simon to know that it was okay. He didn't need to have it all together to receive this fish blessing or any blessing. Simon's faith didn't have to be perfect. Jesus was compassionate when Simon was exhausted, and his belief was shriveling.
 - Even after Simon trusted Jesus, he felt unworthy of being in a relationship with Jesus. But Jesus didn't think that. Jesus challenged Simon and called him into a close friendship.
 - Even though Simon was far from perfect, Jesus had in mind a different future for him. Simon could only see his limitations, but Jesus knew that limitations were invitations for Simon to trust Jesus. Simon could become the leader Jesus knew he could be.

- Jesus showed us what being an incredible friend might look like. Simon let Jesus on his boat and eventually gave up everything to follow Jesus.
- Because of what Jesus did, Simon was challenged to experience an entirely new way of living. Jesus changed him. **When we learn to trust Jesus and allow him to transform us, we become friends like Jesus.**

SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 13:20

- There's another character in the Bible who didn't always trust God fully but went on to do amazing things. Solomon was the son of King David, and he's considered one of the wisest people to have ever lived. Let's take a look at what he had to say about friendship.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Proverbs 13:20.*
- This wise proverb was true thousands of years ago, and it's true today — we become who we spend time with. This is precisely what Simon and the early disciples recognized when they encountered Jesus on their boat. Jesus called out their potential for who they could be, and they began to trust him.
- This means that the opposite is true. If we spend time with people who grumble about everything, always complaining and seeing their limitations, we will also begin to pick up those patterns.
- This is good wisdom for anyone. Whether you follow Jesus or not, everyone becomes more like the people they spend time with. **If you want to grow in your faith, spend time with people who encourage and kindly challenge you to follow Jesus.**

PERSONAL STORY | Friend Shenanigans (Part Two)

- This is something that I have experienced in my life. Remember those friends I told you about earlier? They also helped me through some tough times.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Share another story about the same friend or group of friends from above. You told a story about how you had fun together earlier. Now, tell a story about how those friends helped when you needed it. Tell about a time when you chose to be vulnerable and connect with a friend who greatly encouraged you. What were you going through? How did they encourage you to draw close to Jesus? How did they help? Was it hard to open up to them? How did you feel after you talked to your friends?*
- Because of my friends, I was able to experience something similar to Simon. Good friends encourage each other to seek Jesus' presence in our lives. **Your friends can help your faith grow.**

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?**VIDEO | A Clip from Survivor**

- As I read stories that remind me **friends can help your faith grow**, I am reminded of the game show *Survivor*. The show is full of deceptive, untrustworthy friendships that don't last. It is basically the opposite of what we are talking about today.
- The relationships on the show are contrasted by their relationships back home. Each season, players receive letters from the people they love at home, and that's when we see the actual person.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this](#) (0:20–1:11) of Survivor contestants receiving an encouraging letter from home. 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!](#)*
- Even if you're in a stressful situation, friends and family can help. This doesn't mean they always have the right answers, or it'll be easy to hear what they have to say. Sometimes, that is how friendship helps us grow the most.

So how can we set ourselves up for success? What are some practical steps to ensure we are in Godly relationships that can help grow our faith?

1. **Choose Friends Who Encourage Your Walk with Jesus**
 - Proverbs 13:20 teaches that we become like the people we spend time with. Surround yourself with friends who inspire and encourage you to follow Jesus. Look for relationships where you can share struggles, seek prayer, and hold each other accountable to God's Word.
2. **Be Vulnerable and Let Friends Help You Carry Life's Burdens**
 - Like Simon trusted Jesus despite his doubts, allow trusted friends into your life when things get tough. Share your struggles, and let them support and challenge you to grow spiritually. Vulnerability is key to building deeper, God-honoring relationships.
3. **Model Jesus in Your Relationships**
 - Just as Jesus called Simon into a relationship that transformed him, be the type of friend who reflects Christ's love. Show patience, kindness, and grace. Encourage your friends to see their potential in God and draw closer to Him.

NOTE TO THE SPEAKER: Use this as an opportunity to communicate any "felt needs". If you feel like addressing dating relationships or peer pressure, this would be a good place for some reflective questions such as:

1. If you're dating someone, are you modeling Jesus in that relationship? Maybe you're not there yet. Can I give you some advice, don't get into a relationship until you are in a place of spiritual maturity where you can honestly say that your life reflects Jesus'.

Or you can say something like...

2. Look at this list and ask yourself, do I have any relationships like this? Or how about this question... do I have relationships in my life that are the OPPOSITE of this? Because that may be really telling about a relationship where you need to seek God's guidance and direction.

God designed us to grow in our faith through relationships. When we surround ourselves with friends who encourage us to follow Jesus, share our burdens with trusted people, and reflect Christ in our own friendships, we experience the kind of love and community God intended.

As we move into our small groups, let's take some time to reflect on the friendships in our lives. Who is helping you grow closer to God? How can you be the kind of friend that points others to Jesus? These are the kinds of questions that can help us build God-honoring relationships that strengthen our faith.

Take this opportunity to share, listen, and encourage one another. Let's talk about how we can live out these truths in our own lives this week.