Lesson 11: Jesus Is My Friend

Overview:

Key Focus: Jesus is my best friend because He paid for my sins.

Bible Story: Zacchaeus

Scriptures: Luke 19:1–10, John 15:12–15, Romans 5:7–8

Memory Verse: John 15:14 (NKJV) You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

Prep:

Materials Needed:

- A timer and index cards

Classroom Prep:

- Write each word of the memory verse on an index card.

Engage:

Today we are going to talk about what makes a good friend. I hope we all have a really good friend. Sometimes we call someone a friend, but they don't act like a good friend. Let's list what you look for in a good friend and how you want a good friend to act toward you. On the board, create a list of characteristics of a good friend. Afterward, read through the list one at a time and have the children stand if they have shown that characteristic toward someone. **It is difficult for someone to be the perfect friend and fulfill all of these characteristics of a friend. Our Bible lesson will tell us how Jesus showed His friendship to us.**

Memory Verse Activity:
Hand out the memory verse word cards to children. Set a timer and have them take their word card and quickly get in the correct order and say the memory verse. Collect the cards, mix them up, redistribute them, and time this new group. Continue so that all children can participate at least once.

Memory Verse: John 15:14 (NKJV) You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

Bible Story:

Sometimes people only want to be friends with people who are popular. Jesus surprised the religious leaders with who He chose to be His friend. Read Luke 19:1–2. **One detail that you need to know is that Zacchaeus was a Jewish man and he worked for the Romans who had taken over and controlled the Jewish land and people. Zacchaeus collected the taxes for the Roman people. The Romans wanted a certain amount of money, but they let the Jewish tax collector keep anything they charged above that Roman amount. Do you think the Jewish people liked to have one of their own Jewish people charging high amounts and taking their money?** (No.) **Do you think Zacchaeus has a lot of Jewish friends?** (No.)

Read Luke 19:3–4. **When have you been in a situation where you were too small to see something, and did something happen so you could see?** Allow time for a couple of responses. **Who do you think the crowd was gathering to see?** (Jesus) **Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus?** (Possible answers: Zacchaeus probably heard about Jesus' miracles and wanted to see a miracle; he might have wanted to hear Jesus preach; maybe he wanted a miracle in his own life.)

Read Luke 19:5–7. **Do you think it was just a coincidence that Jesus stopped and saw Zacchaeus? Why or why not?** Let children respond. **Jesus called Zacchaeus by name, so we see that Jesus knows us. He created us, so it makes perfect sense that Jesus knows our names. How do you think Zacchaeus felt when Jesus called out his name?** (Possible answers: nervous, scared, super excited) **Zacchaeus showed excitement because he quickly came down from the tree and joyfully welcomed Jesus to his house. Was the crowd excited for Zacchaeus?** (No, they complained.) **Why do you think they called Zacchaeus a sinner?** (They called him a sinner because he took their money and worked for the Romans.)

Read Luke 19:8. **Zacchaeus was so excited that Jesus showed friendship and wanted to come to his house that he suddenly changed inside. Instead of taking people's money, he now wanted to give money to the poor, and he promised to pay back four times the amount.**

Read Luke 19:9–10. **Jesus said that salvation had come to Zacchaeus' house because Zacchaeus was repentant or sorry about what he had done and changed how he acted. What**

other Bible lesson did we learn that Jesus came to seek and save the lost? (Jesus is the Good Shepherd) **Jesus' friendship with Zacchaeus showed that He saved the lost and changed the sinner Zacchaeus. Jesus made an interesting comment that Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham. The Bible tells us that Abraham was the friend of God, and now this son of Abraham was the friend of the Son of God!** Lead a cheer for Jesus' new friendship with Zacchaeus.

Read John 15:12–13. **Jesus pointed out that He loves people and wants His followers to do the same. What are some ways Jesus showed that He loved people?** (Jesus healed people, fed them, and taught them.) **What did Jesus say is the greatest way to love someone?** (Jesus said the greatest love was to lay down your life for your friend.) **How did Jesus show the greatest love for His friends?** (Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins.)

Let's look at another place in the Bible that also talks about Jesus showing love. Read Romans 5:7–8. **Jesus pointed out that sometimes in history people have heroically died so that people would live. Jesus knew that you and I were sinners, just like Zacchaeus, but Jesus wanted us to have eternal life and a relationship with God. Notice that Jesus was talking about something that hadn't happened yet. He was letting people know ahead of time. How did Jesus choose to show love so that you could live?** (He chose to die and pay for our sins.)

Jesus talked about how He showed love and friendship to us, now He tells us the characteristic He wants in His friends. Read John 15:14–15. **Jesus could have demanded that people be His servants and have no choice but to serve Him. Instead, Jesus calls us His friends and shares with us all that God says.** Lead a cheer for Jesus calling us His friends. **What are some of the things that Jesus shares with us about God?** (Possible answers: God loves us; God has a good plan for our lives; God created all things.) **What are some things you will share with your friends about Jesus?** (Answers will vary.)

Bible Story Questions:

- **What problem did Zacchaeus have?** (He wanted to see Jesus, but he was too short.)
- **How did Zacchaeus solve the problem?** (He climbed a tree so he could see.)
- **What surprised everyone about Jesus?** (Jesus called Zacchaeus by name and said that He was going to his house.)
- **What surprised everyone about Zacchaeus?** (He changed and wanted to give money to the poor and pay back four times what he took from the Jewish people.)
- **How did Jesus show the greatest kind of love?** (Jesus died for everyone's sins so they could have eternal life.)
- **What commandment did Jesus give?** (Jesus commanded His friends to love one another.)
- **How will you show this week that you are following Jesus' commandment to love?** (Answers will vary.)

Bible Story Activities:

Games:

- Divide the group into pairs. Reinforce the importance of having a good friend by setting up an obstacle course for one partner to lead the other partner through the course. Have one partner close their eyes and the other partner give directions of how many steps to take to the left/right or forward. After all pairs have gone through the obstacle course, switch roles so all the children experience leading and being led.

Craft Idea:

- Ideas for Working with Younger Kids:
  Use craft materials such as pipe cleaners and beads, or construction paper to make two matching friendship bracelets. Explain that one is to give to their friend, and one is for them to keep.

Discussion:

- Ideas for Working with Older Kids:
  Have small groups look up each Bible verse and make a list of the friendships in the Bible: God and Abraham (James 2:23), God and Moses (Exodus 33:11), David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:41–42), Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:16–19), Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:2), Jesus and everyone (John 15:13).

Worksheet:

Read through the characteristics of friends and talk about how Jesus shows friendship to us. Help the children find the words in bold in the word search. If you have extra time, have the children find the verses in their Bibles. On the back of their papers, have them draw a picture of themselves and their best friend.

Affirmation/Declaration:

Jesus loves me.
Jesus is my best friend and wants to be everyone's friend.
I will tell people about my friend, Jesus.

Make Connections:

Biblical Worldview Connection:

Friends are important and good friends are vital. Bad friends can lead someone into a destructive lifestyle. Every quality of a good friend is found in Jesus. As we get to know our

friend Jesus, we become more like Him. Remind the children that looking like their best friend Jesus will help others want to be His friend also.

Missions Connection:
All people are designed by God to be relational. Friendship is the best way to reach people because they watch and see Christ through the Christian and can ask their questions about God. Pray for missionaries to create friendships that will open up opportunities to talk about Jesus. Remind the children that when they accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, they are real missionaries only smaller.

Family Connection:
Encourage each family member to take the "Make a New Friend Challenge." Make a list of people who might need a friend and why. Then list things that could be done to encourage the friendship. Each night report on the progress. Set a time for getting together with the new friend and also, invite the new friend to church with you!

Prayer Points:
Lead a prayer for the children to pray for their unsaved friends. End with commissioning them to share boldly about Jesus with their friends.

Dear God,
Thank You for loving us and sending Jesus to die for our sins. Please help me tell my friends about Jesus. I want them to know that Jesus is their friend, too.
In Jesus' name, amen.

Name _____

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Read about friendship and why Jesus is your friend. Find the 18 ***bold*** *words in the puzzle.*

1. Friends **share** – Jesus shares His **power** and says we will do even **greater** things (John 14:12).
2. Friends sometimes **look** or dress similarly – Jesus **created** you in His **image** (Genesis 1:26).
3. **Friends** are faithful – Jesus is **faithful** to us, even if we are unfaithful to Him (2 Timothy 2:13).
4. Friends **listen** – Jesus hears and **answers** our **prayers** (1 John 5:15).
5. Friends are **truthful** – **Jesus** is the Truth (John 14:6).
6. Friends **confide** in each other – Jesus tells us what He hears the **Father** say (John 15:15).
7. Friends **love** – Jesus showed love when He **died** for your **sins**. (John 15:13)

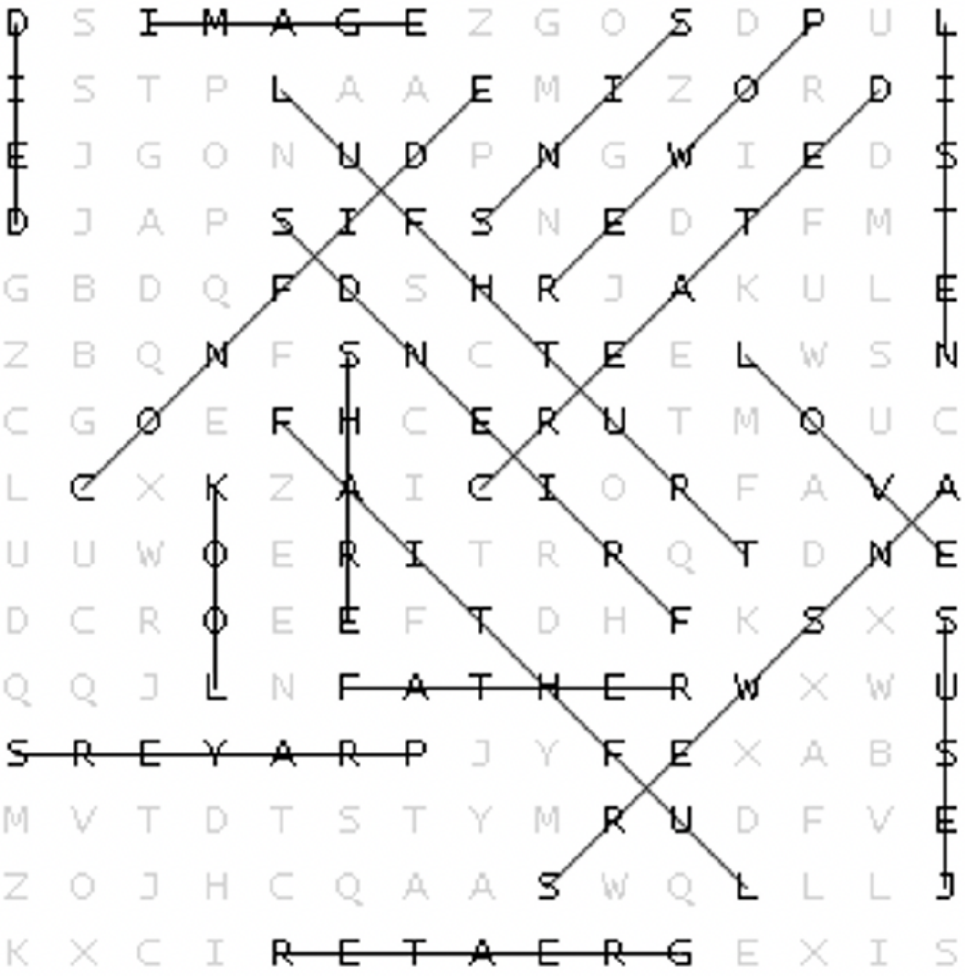
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ANSWERS

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