

Week 1 One

Week One

Staying Connected—(for your personal preparation this week)

Just as God has been gearing up the students in your group to go beyond their comfort zones, He's been doing the same for you. With some exceptions, many Christian youth leaders have fallen out of the habit of spending time with non-Christians their own age. Their gifts and time commitments have focused them on building up God's flock—and that focus needs to be strong!

However, you know when a Christian stops giving, they often stop growing. No doubt, you haven't slowed up on your giving to Christians. But if you're perceptive, you know that when you're constantly around Christians, you lose the edge. Even your heart can become indifferent toward those who don't know Christ.

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Evaluate your relationships this week. Read pages 15 —17 of this Leader Guide, and fill in the blanks with the names of those near your own age group.

There are many areas where you need to set the pace and truly lead the charge up the mountain. However, the area of persistent prayer and sharing your faith might be a struggle you can share with your students. Letting your group know that this emphasis is not just a challenge for them, but for you as well, will give credibility to An Awesome Way to Pray emphasis. As the students share their success and failure stories, you'll be able to do the same. Of course, the only failure is you or one of your students not trying. The successes will not be because of skill, but because of prayer and God's faithfulness to honor His Word!

**Group
Session 2**

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Love Your

FRIENDS

The Big Picture

Success Objectives:

To help your students intentionally love their friends through

- prayer partnerships with two other Christians, and
- selecting three non-Christian friends to pray for.

Materials Needed

•

Have a copy of *An Awesome Way to Pray Journal* for each student.

•

Chalkboard, overhead projector, or flip chart.

•

Sheet of paper and a pencil for each student.

•

TV and VCR if using any videos.

•

Copy of Action Handout #1 (p. 43) for each student.

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In advance, ask student leaders to share the process of how they came to know Christ.

Session Overview

• Opener (10 minutes)

Pull your group together in the way that fits them the best so they will be receptive to the session goals. You could show a video (See You at the Pole) or use the How Good a Friend Are You? handout (p. 43).

• Large Group Discussion (10-15 min.)

Youth Leader Note: Most likely, not everyone in your group participated in last year's See You At the Pole (SYATP). The immediate goal is to pull the entire group together by focusing on a common mission. Whenever you lead a large group discussion, ask for raised hands, have only one person speak at a time, and remind the group that no one gets put down for anything that is said.

1. Say, **When you close your eyes and recall one image from last year's SYATP, what is it? Can you think of one good result that occurred because of SYATP?**

2. Continue to discuss the previous year's SYATP. Build up the importance of the event, but try to find out if the momentum created carried much beyond the actual day.

3. Explain that many students throughout the country are going to take the next step...taking their faith from the pole to their locker (example: praying for and sharing their faith with their friends).

4. Ask students, **What are the main obstacles to sharing your faith?** List these on a chalkboard, overhead, or flip chart (answers should include: fear; not knowing how to answer their questions; no heart for the lost/not caring; not knowing many non-Christians;not understanding the process people go through before they say yes to Christ—process includes see it, consider it, question it, read about it, hear about it, ask others about it, accept or reject it; not actually believing in a heaven or hell).

5. Have a few students read some of these familiar passages: *John 3:16; John 14:6; Romans 5:8; Matthew 6:25-27; Matthew 11:28-30.*

After each passage is read, ask the question, **Does anyone doubt the truth of this passage?** (Most will say no.)
Should we doubt that these verses were put in the Bible for us?

Now have other students read some or all of these passages: *Matthew 29:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Colossians 1:28-29; Matthew 9:37-38; John 15:16; 2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Peter 3:15; Romans 10:14-15.* Ask, **Why is it more difficult to take these passages at face value than the previous ones?**

6. Ask, **What is the process some of you went through to really know Christ?**

This question may take more time than you have, but it could encourage your students by helping them see that they are part of the process with their friends—and that it may take time before they come to Christ. Rely on the student leaders you enlisted earlier to carry this, if necessary.

• **Small Group Discussion (10-15 min.)**

1. Divide students into small groups. Ask each group to write their answers to these questions. When the groups are finished, have each group share their answers with the entire group.

- Who are your friends most likely to listen to: you, or a balding adult? Why?
- What friendship characteristics do you have that are attractive to others? Which ones do you need to cultivate?
- What are some ways to start friendships where none exist?
- What are ways to deepen your friendships that already exist?
- What are some practical ways to love/serve your friends who do not have faith in Jesus Christ?

• **Scripture and Challenge (20 min.)**

1. Start with an illustration (out of your own life experience, if possible), move on to the Scripture and application, and then a challenge and conclusion. This can be given by you, or a few students or adults. Adapt this material to fit your style and students. For this session tell about a friend who has been very special to you and why, or show the "Generations" video Part 1 (Mars Hill Productions).

2. Ask students: **What does it take for you to love your friends?** After a few responses, give them the following three Scripture answers.

- *A friend loves at all times (Prov. 17:17).*

Talk about the process you went through in your own faith development. Try to recall the different steps and time it took,

and especially the friends who were instrumental in your conversion. Mention how meaningful it was when others served you or took the time to love you. Be specific about specific friends.

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A friend...sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24).

Present the challenge: if they are going to love their friends, it means getting involved in the process of their friends' lives. It's not their responsibility to save them, but to be faithful and available—especially in prayer.

Using a puzzle, illustrate how their words and their lives may only put together five percent of the faith puzzle for a classmate, but that effort moves that person five percent closer to eternity with Jesus (instead of the other place). That's a significant part of the puzzle, and you have the confidence in them that they can do it. Say, **As you love, pray, and share, and others do too, eventually all pieces of the puzzle fit together for your friend.**

•
Wounds from a friend can be trusted (Prov. 27:6).

Sometimes it's risky to tell your friend the truth and you may get hurt. Mention a few of your school friends who were likely never prayed for. Describe their life then and now. Tell how it starts with prayer with your Christian friends, and prayer for your non-Christian friends.

3. Tell students you're not asking them to do anything you're not doing yourself. Describe your plans, your fears, past failures, and apprehensions. Then let them know what your expectations are for yourself. Say, **I don't know if I will have the chance to say two words about the Lord to these three people I've chosen, but I know I will pray for them and I want to talk to them. It's up to God to create the opportunities, but it's up to me to pray, serve, and love them in a way that creates a thirst for God by what they see. And that's what we're supposed to do, be the salt that makes them thirsty for God (Matt. 5:13).**

4. Hand out *An Awesome Way to Pray Journal* to each student. Ask them to turn to pages 11—14. Encourage students to take the challenge to partner with two others who will pray with them and for them as they seek to represent Jesus to those whom God has laid on their hearts. Give them a moment to write their name on the line on page 11. Next, Allow a moment for them to write the time and place on page 12.

Challenge them with the goal to get together three times a week to pray for their three friends and each other. Help them choose three non-Christian people to pray for during the next six weeks. They could be friends or acquaintances that they would like to see God influence. Ask them to complete the blanks on pages 13-14 as soon as possible and to begin to meet and pray with their friends this week.

Answer any questions they may have about the challenge, process, or expectations. Ask them to read and complete the activities in the book pages 7 through 29 this week before coming back to the meeting next week. Help them see the important step they are taking in their Christian walk.

5. Distribute the Action Handout "How Good a Friend Are You?" #1 (p. 43) if you didn't use it as an opener activity. Briefly go through the handout with them and encourage them to get it done!

• **Wrap-up and Closing Prayer (5 min.)**

1. As you close the meeting, praise students for their willingness to accept the challenge to love their friends and for getting involved in the process of their friends' lives. Remind them of the date, time, and place for next week's meeting and for them to read the Introduction and complete Week 1 in *An Awesome Way to Pray Journal*.

2. Call on three or four of your student leaders to pray that God will give them a deep love for their non-Christian friends.

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