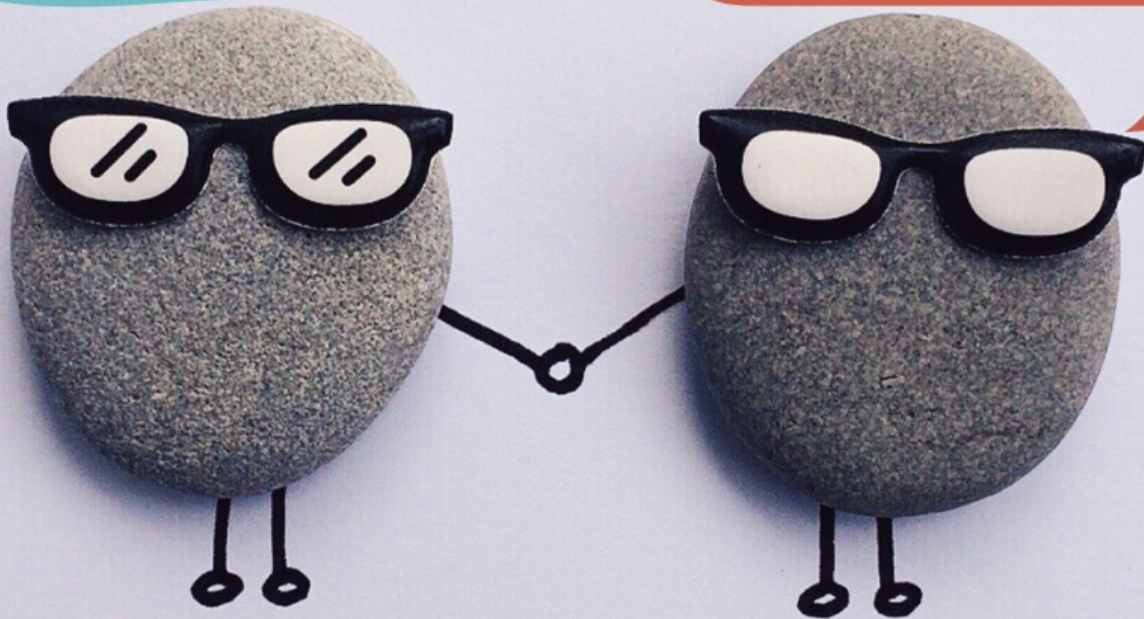


Can we really
be friends with
everyone? 



I can't wait.



Friends with Everyone ...

Tween Small Group

Week 1 : Intro & Get 2 Know

CAN WE REALLY BE FRIENDS WITH EVERYONE?

Activity: Kindness Rocks

*Supplies: rocks, paints, brushes, short quotes to paint on rocks, hashtag labels.
Optional Leader Prep: register a hashtag and print out labels to attach to rocks.*

Today, we're going to spread some kindness. Well, we're going to start by painting and writing nice things on rocks, taping hashtag labels on them (optional), and hiding them all over town.

How does this super fun activity and simple bit of effort spread kindness? Do you believe in coincidence? I don't. And here's why. We are all made purposefully unique, and placed exactly where we're supposed to be. We don't have to know who needs a kind word before we leave some lying around town. We can trust that whoever finds it ... needs to hear it. Maybe, even believe it. Do you believe that?

Friendship is very much like that. We don't have to look very far to find people in our lives. Our classmates, teammates, neighbors ... even our families ... are already in place. All we really have to do to find good friends and be good friends is pay attention, and participate. Are you ready for this?

Paying attention to and participating with the people already placed in our lives is the key to healthy and happy friendships. Before we can be a good friend to someone else, there's a little bit of housekeeping we need to do.

Pre-Friendship Housekeeping, 101

1. **Do you know who you are?**

We can't be very good friends to people well if we don't know who we are. The one who made you knows you are. Yes, your mom and dad have a very big role in who you are ... but God knew you before they did.

"Before I even formed you in your mother's womb, I knew all about you. Before you drew your first breath, I had already chosen you to be My prophet to speak My word to the nations."

Jeremiah 1:5 VOICE

Before you were born, God knew you. Mistakes, messes, triumphs and talents ... He knows you best. But what does it mean to be chosen to speak His word to the nations? What word? Love.

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" 1 John 3:1 NIV

God's love isn't something we deserve, or could ever earn. In fact, the Bible is full of human beings falling very short of just that. Enter, Jesus, who has also knows all of your days before you live them. In fact, He looked at all the bad decisions you would make in your life and decided to die on the cross to replace the death we all deserve for the opportunity to be with Him in heaven when we leave the earth.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 NIV

Are you starting to realize how incredible you are? How loved you are? Love ... that's the word we're called to pass on, and friendship gives us an amazing opportunity to do love people.

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN: "Consider the power of your presence in another person's life."

2. Is there anyone we need to forgive?

Unforgiveness is like an ingrown toe-nail. Ever had one of those? No? OK ... unforgiveness does to your heart what eating all of your Halloween candy in one sitting does to your stomach. Relate? The point is ... it's bad. It's not easy to forgive the people that hurt us. It's even harder to forgive people that are not sorry they've hurt us. But unless we want ingrown toe-nail and sick stomach-like hearts ... we have to forgive. But even if we wanted to do that ... how do we do that?

How do we forgive people when we don't feel like forgiving people? It's OK to admit. In fact, it's normal to feel this way. (*We'll talk more about the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation later in the study, but for now ... let's forgive.*) It's easier to forgive, when we understand what it's like to be forgiven.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9 NIV

If we confess our sins simply means to tell God we're sorry, and do our best not to repeat what we're apologizing for. I'm sorry is not a magic eraser. It doesn't undo the wrong we did, or the hurt we may have caused. Because of God's love for us, expressed through Jesus' death on the cross, we don't have to feel ashamed of ourselves when we make a mistake. We are always forgiven, and never loved less.

Try this: grab a piece of paper. Now, write down every bad decision you made in the last 24 hours. You don't want any one to see it, do you? These are just the mistakes we made! Imagine if we wrote down every thought or thing we were tempted to do but didn't! Holy cow embarrassing!!! Shred that paper before anyone else sees it! Those mistakes and thoughts are between you and God ...and the people you hurt when you apologize for them.

When we make mistakes, God doesn't tell anyone else, hold a grudge against you, or even remember them ...because of Jesus, He shreds them.

***"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."
Ephesians 4:32 NIV***

Now that you know what it feels like to be forgiven, it's easier to forgive others, right? Sometimes, we need to remind ourselves that we have already forgiven people ...and that's OK, too. Again ...normal. People that hurt us can cause us to be angry at what they did all over again ...but don't take the bait! Anger is a good emotion, if we know what to do with it. In this case, it might be warning you to guard your heart or create a healthy boundary. *(We'll talk more about both of those things later in the study.)*

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN: "You are always forgiven, and never loved less."

3. Talk About it.

Friendship can be tricky, because though we are all equally special to God, none of us are perfect.

"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23 NIV

Our unique differences can cause all kinds of challenges when trying to be a good friend and find good friends. It's a good idea to talk about all of it with someone you trust ...and with God. Prayer is a conversation. You can talk to God openly about what's going on in your life. He already knows, and is waiting to help you.

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18 NIV

When you are hurting, God is close. Life isn't always going to be easy. Sometimes, it hurts, it's unfair, and we don't understand. Don't be afraid to talk about it. Ask questions. And ask for help.

"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be open to you." Matthew 7:7 NLT

So, we know how to ask ...that's our conversation with God through prayer. (*Sometimes its easier to journal our prayers, and we'll talk more about that during this study, too.*) But how do we seek? And what are we seeking? Well, usually we ask for answers, right? And God communicates His answers to us in many ways ...but the main way is through His Word. The Bible.

If you don't already, try to read a little bit of it every day. There are devotional books written for tweens, and apps for your devices that make it easy and relevant to read and apply God's answers ...His Word ...to your everyday life. Ask questions about it, in prayer and to someone you love and trust. Keep the conversation going. The cool thing about Scripture is that it's alive and active.

"The word of God, you see, is alive and moving; sharper than a double edged sword; piercing the divide between soul and spirit, joints and marrow; able to judge the thoughts and will of the heart." Hebrews 4:12 VOICE

Do you know what that means? God knows what you are going to ask for before you ask, and he will prepare you ahead of time before you know what to face. He will encourage you through it, and convict you of some things you need to stop doing through it.

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN: "Keep the conversation going."

Tween Discussion Questions:

Remember, what we share here doesn't leave here ...so sign here. (Pass the confidentiality agreement around for everyone to sign it.)

1. What's your middle name?
2. Do you think we can really be friends with everyone?
3. Raise your hand if you've ever been bullied ...

4. Keep it raised if the person who bullied you was a friend.
5. Share something that was ...or still is ...hard to forgive.

Mom Discussion Questions:

1. Best or Worst friendship memory?
2. Do you think we can really be friends with everyone?
3. Share something that was ...or still is ...hard to forgive.
4. In one sentence ...What is your biggest hope for this group?

Wrap Up:

"Consider the power of your presence in another person's life."

"You are always forgiven, and never loved less."

"Keep the conversation going."

*Challenge of the week ...hide those rocks!

