

YEAR B | QUARTER 1

11

The Connection

Community
Jesus' friendship helps us to be true friends to others.

POWER TEXT

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

KEY REFERENCES

- John 15:1-12
- *The Desire of Ages*, chap. 73, pp. 674-678
- *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 259
- No corresponding story from *The Bible Story*
- Student lesson on page 122 of this guide

OUR BELIEFS

- No. 14, Unity in the Body of Christ
- No. 11, Growing in Christ
- No. 12, The Church

OBJECTIVES

The students will:

- **Know** that only by staying completely connected to Jesus can they lead others to Him.
- **Feel** a desire to develop a lasting relationship with Jesus and lead others to Him.
- **Respond** by maintaining a close friendship with Jesus and helping others to accept Him as their personal Savior and Friend.



Through a close friendship with Jesus we can build truly loving friendships with others.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Jesus is on His way to the Garden of Gethsemane. He knows He is on His way to die, but His concern is for the disciples. He wants them to understand how their friendship can grow and develop even when they are no longer physically together. He wants to reassure them that they need not feel alone or afraid and that He will be with them. He takes the picture of the vine and the gardener and uses it to open their minds to understand the beautiful gift of friendship that He offers.

This is a lesson about community.

God, our heavenly Father, desires to have a close and personal friendship with each one of His earthly children. Jesus taught that our close connection with Him is of vital importance in maintaining wholesome and meaningful friendships with others. He promises that, as the branches are connected to the vine, if we abide in Him He will give us the power to live for Him and love one another.

Teacher Enrichment

"The Jews had always regarded the vine as the most noble of plants, and a type of all that was powerful, excellent, and fruitful. . . .

". . . On the hills of Palestine our heavenly Father had planted this goodly Vine, and He Himself was the husbandman. Many were attracted by the beauty of this Vine, and declared its heavenly origin. But to the leaders in Israel it appeared as a root out of a dry ground. They took the plant, and bruised it, and trampled it under their unholy feet. Their thought was to destroy it forever. But the heavenly Husbandman never lost sight of His plant. After men thought they had killed it, He took it, and replanted it on the other side of the wall. The vine stock was to be no longer visible. It was hidden from the rude assaults of men. But the branches of the Vine hung over the wall. . . .

". . . Though He was about to be removed from them, their spiritual union with Him was to be unchanged. . . . The life of the vine becomes the life of the branch. So the soul dead in trespasses and sins receives life through connection with Christ" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 675).

What choices do I make to maintain a close friendship with Jesus? How does my friendship with Jesus impact on my friendships with those around me?

Welcome

Welcome students at the door and direct them to their seats. Ask them how their week has been. Encourage learners to study their Sabbath School lesson regularly, and use several minutes to debrief students on the previous week's lesson.

Ask: **What was the most interesting part of the Bible story? What activity did you find the most helpful? Which activity was the most fun?** Invite students to share their experiences and/or the handiworks they created for Sabbath School during the week. (The leader should be familiar with the previous lesson to be able to direct the discussion.) This is also a good time to have students recite the power text.

Have students begin the Readiness Activity of your choice.

Program notes

LESSON SECTION	MINUTES	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
Welcome	Ongoing	Greet students at the door. Ask about their week.	
1 Readiness	10-15	*A. Contacts* *B. Connections*	paper, pencils
* Prayer & Praise	15-20	See page 117. Prayer & Praise may be used at any time during the program.	songbooks, world map, pushpins, milk OR honey container
2 Bible Lesson	15-20	Introducing the Bible Story Experiencing the Story Exploring the Bible	music player and recordings of praise music Bibles, music player and recordings of praise music, guest (optional) Bibles
3 Applying the Lesson	10-15	*How Do We Know?*	five paper plates; marker
4 Sharing the Lesson	10-15	*We've Come to Know*	12-inch (30-centimeter) cord or piece of yarn for each student
* Closing		A. Prayer and Closing Comments B. Reminder to Parents C. Coming Up Next Week	

1

READINESS ACTIVITIES

Select the activity or activities that are most appropriate for your situation.

A

YOU NEED:
- ☐ paper
- ☐ pencils

Contacts

Distribute to the students paper and pencils. Ask them to write down the names of:

- Their best friend.
- Someone they would help if they were in trouble.
- Someone whom they could call late at night if they got stuck somewhere.
- Someone to whom they would talk if they were afraid.
- Someone who could help them with their homework.
- Someone with whom they would plan a fun activity.
- Their parents.
- Their pastor.
- Their youth leader or Sabbath School teacher.

Debriefing

Ask: **Was it hard to think of someone to fill all those categories? Which names were the easiest to remember? Did any of the same names come up more than once? How do you feel about the person whose name you used the most? How is that person important in your life? Let's say together our power text, John 15:5:**

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Say: **Our close friends are people we talk to all the time. In our lesson today we are going to learn about the best friendship we can ever make. Let's say our power point together:**

Through a close friendship with Jesus we can build truly loving friendships with others.

B

Connections

Explain to the students the concept of metaphors. Define metaphor as a type of implied comparison between two dissimilar things that have something in common and illustrate a particular aspect of a concept. Say: **We use metaphors or mental images to help us better understand a subject or topic that seems otherwise difficult.** Give some examples of metaphors that describe the idea of vital connections. (For example, God's love is my soul's power cord/engine/fuel. Much like a power cord connects my computer to the source of electricity, so the Holy Spirit connects me to God, who is my source of life, strength, and wisdom.) Ask students to think for a few moments of mental pictures that they associate with their relationships with family and friends (e.g., I feel safe in my family nest and under my parents' wings). Next they will share metaphors (mental pictures) that help them think of their connection to God as their source of life. After a short time, draw students' attention back and ask them to share their metaphors with the class.

Debriefing

Ask: **How do these mental pictures help you better understand the elements necessary to building positive relationships? Why is it important that we understand the importance of having a close relationship with God? What can you do to strengthen your relationship with God? Just as all electronic devices need a source of power, so we all need to be connected to God, our source of energy and power. Today we are learning about the best friendship you could ever have, your friendship with Jesus. If we spend time with Him and are connected to Him, our friendship with Him will grow stronger. Let's say together our power text, John 15:5:**

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Let's say our power point together:

Through a close friendship with Jesus we can build truly loving friendships with others.

Prayer & Praise

Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). If they have given you permission, share one or two special items from students' Bible study during the week. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors.

Suggested Songs

List the songs focusing on community that you have sung during the past four weeks. Vote on the students' favorite and sing that one. Then have them nominate and vote on their favorite song about Jesus and sing it.

Mission

YOU NEED:
- ☐ world map
- ☐ pushpins

Use *Adventist Mission for Youth and Adults* (go to www.juniorpowerpoints.org and click on MISSION) or another mission report available to you. For the mission story, have a map of the world where the students can identify the location of the mission story and compare it to where they are. You could use pushpins to mark where the mission story takes place.

Offering

YOU NEED:
- ☐ milk OR honey container

Say: **By giving our offering, we make it possible for others to know that a relationship with Jesus is the secret to having successful relationships with friends, family, fellow citizens, and even enemies.**

Prayer

Say: **Let's think about our friends. I will tell you a friendship quality and then pause. You think of someone you know with that quality and either aloud or silently thank God for that person.**

Close thanking God for being the very best friend to each of us and praying for the students' joys and sorrows, for the birthday and other special event celebrants, as well as for the visitors.

Notes

2

BIBLE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ music player and recordings of praise music

Introducing the Bible Story

Have an electric or battery-operated music* player and music recording of praise music (without batteries or electric current) as you introduce the lesson. Talk very briefly with the students about their favorite stations.

*Some parts of the world may use a cassette player.

YOU NEED:
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ music player and recordings of praise music
- ☐ guest (optional)

Experiencing the Story

Say: **We have read in the Bible about being willing to lay down our life for a friend, about being kind and loving at all times, about living by God's kingdom rules, and loving even our enemies. But today we are going to talk about how you can't really do any of that.**

Make a show of turning on the music player.

Say: **Just as this perfectly good music player cannot play music in its current condition, you cannot do all those loving things without the power of a close relationship with Jesus. Let's read about it in John 15:1-11.**

Have volunteers take turns reading the verses. Then plug in the music player with a recording of praise music and let them hear the music.

Say: **Jesus chose to use the example of a grapevine and branches and fruit instead of a music player and music recording and electricity.**

If possible, bring in a gardener who can explain (even demonstrate) grafting. You can also try to find illustrations and explanations in a book or on the Internet. Explain to the students that God compared us to a branch without a life source of our own. If a plant that can be a life source is cut and the branch (shoot or bud) without its own life source is bound tightly to the rooted plant, they begin to grow together. Then the life-giving sap can flow completely through the grafted-on branch and that branch can bear fruit.

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3

APPLYING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- Bibles

Exploring the Bible

Ask all students born in January, February, March, and April to form a group and find and read 2 Corinthians 3:18. All students born in May, June, July, and August should form a group and find and read 1 Peter 1:8. Students born in September, October, November, and December should group and find and read Hebrews 4:15, 16.

Ask each group to discuss how their text relates to today's power text: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Ask them to prepare to share their thoughts with the rest of the group.

Guide the students' thoughts with these ideas:

2 Corinthians 3:18

As we turn our eyes on Jesus and think about Him, confessing our faults to Him, the Spirit transforms us into His likeness, making us able to love as He loves.

1 Peter 1:8

Even though we cannot see Him, we can choose to love Him and have faith in Him, which fills us with joy and other good fruits, just like the vine and the branches.

Hebrews 4:15, 16

Just as the branch that is grafted onto the vine has to have the same cell structure, so Jesus has been human just as we are and He can give us the power and grace we need to love as He loves, even though we are still human.

Debriefing

Ask: **What do you like most about your relationship with Jesus? What might change about your life? Let's say together our power text, John 15:5:**

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Remember our power point:

Through a close friendship with Jesus we can build truly loving friendships with others.

YOU NEED:
- five paper plates
- markers

How Do We Know?

For this activity, write the names of four well-known people and Jesus on five paper plates. (Suggested categories of names: a president, an athlete, a teacher, the pastor. Be sure that your students know about the people you choose.) Scatter the five paper plates facedown around the room.

Ask five volunteers to each move to a paper plate and silently read the name on it. Have students at each plate describe to the rest of the group, without saying the name on the plate, how their lives would be different if they personally knew the person listed on their plate. For example, someone near the "Michael Jordan" plate might say, "I'd be famous if I knew this person" or "I'd probably become a better basketball player."

Then have the students at that plate take turns answering the following questions.

- **How would your relationship with this person change your living conditions?**
- **How would you spend your free time differently if you knew this person?**
- **How would your group of friends be different?**
- **Would your parents approve of this relationship? Why or why not?**
- **Would you want to grow to be more like this person? Explain.**

Continue having the students at each plate tell about their person in this manner, and ask the students standing near the "Jesus" plate to go last (remember where you placed this plate). Then have the class guess the names written on each plate.

Debriefing

Ask: **What's the difference between "knowing about" someone and "having a relationship" with that person?** (Encourage a variety of responses.) **How do we have a relationship with Jesus?** (turning to Him with our joys and sorrows; spending time with Him privately, at family worship, and at church; talking to Him about anything, anytime; listening to Him speak through the Bible, devotional readings, the wonders of creation found in nature, and the voice of conscience; helping His children in need; confessing one's sins, and acknowledging one's need of Him; accepting His grace)

Let's repeat our power point:

Through a close friendship with Jesus we can build truly loving friendships with others.

(Adapted from *No-Miss Lessons for Pre-Teen Kids* [Loveland, Col: Group Publishing, 1997], p. 8. Used by permission.)

4

SHARING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:

- ☐ 12-inch (30 cm) piece of cord or yarn for each student

We've Come to Know

Allow students to share with the class if they have observed that their relationships with others have improved as a result of having spent time with Jesus. Ask: **How has your friendship with Jesus helped you maintain positive relationships with others? Did others recognize that you have a personal friendship with Jesus?**

You will need a 12-inch (30-centimeter) piece of cord or heavy yarn for each student. Ask your students about different ways they've come to know Jesus.

Then give students each a piece of cord or heavy yarn, and say: **Tie a knot in this cord for each of three times in your life when you've come to know Jesus better. You might think of crisis situations, times spent in prayer, or occasions when a friend helped you experience Jesus' love.**

Have students form groups of three or four, and have them tell what their knots symbolize.

(Adapted from *No-Miss Lessons for Pre-Teen Kids* [Loveland, Colo: Group Publishing, 1997], pp. 8, 9. Used by permission.)

Debriefing

Ask the students if any small group would like to share with the larger group. Encourage the students to use their cords as bookmarks. Ask them to add a knot each time God helps them grow significantly in their relationship with Jesus.

Through a close friendship with Jesus we can build truly loving friendships with others.

Global Youth Day: Today is Global Youth Day. With your Sabbath School class implement in practice the community service project or mission initiative you have planned together. The possibilities for service are endless. Some examples may include: visiting a nursing home, hospital, orphanage, or prison to comfort, sing, and pray for those who are sick, needy, and destitute, feeding the homeless, inviting people from the community to an open house event, etc.

Closing

Prayer and closing comments:

Say: **Jesus wants to develop a forever friendship with us every day. Let's pray together, asking Him to prune away those things that will stop us from being friends with Him and to let His love flow through us to make us good friends to others.**

Reminder to parents:

Say: **Check out the student Bible study guide to find Parents' Pages for your use in family worship, or however you wish to use them to guide your children spiritually. You may listen to the podcast of the lesson online at www.juniorpowerpoints.org/podcast.php?channel=1.**

Coming up next week:

Say: **Jesus calls us friends. He wants us to love others the way He loves us.**

Notes

Student lesson

The Connection

Do you get along with everyone? Have you ever wished that you could show sympathy, love, and kindness to everyone, just like Jesus?

One evening, while walking with His disciples, Jesus brought their attention to a vine. He wanted them to understand two spiritual lessons about relationships.

"I am the true vine," Jesus said (John 15:1). He could have compared Himself to a stately tree, but He wanted them to understand that even He, in His humanity, needed the support of His heavenly Father, just as a vine needs to be supported by a trellis. "I can of Myself do nothing," He said (John 5:30). The same is true of you and me.

"My Father is the vinedresser," He continued. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:1, 2). Here Jesus points out that many will profess to be His followers, but their character and how they treat others shows they have no relationship with Him. They are like dead branches, which bear no fruit.

Jesus' greatest desire is to see us become like His Father. That's why the Bible tells us that having the Spirit of God within us develops the fruit of love, joy, peace, kindness, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (see Galatians 5:22, 23).

If we each developed such fruits, we would act differently, wouldn't we? We wouldn't get caught up in arguments or feel envy toward others. We would look for ways to help others; we would always have a kind word to say or a smile to give away. Jesus wants us to live in harmony with each other as evidence of our love and commitment to Him.

Jesus' disciples had already committed themselves to Him. They were His "branches." However, Jesus told them, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me" (verse 4).

Even though the disciples were committed to Jesus, He was telling them they needed to stay committed to Him. Separated from Him, the True Vine, they, the branches, could never hope to escape nor overcome sin. None of us can ever hope to overcome one sinful tendency or resist one temptation unless we are united with Christ.

If we truly desire to overcome sin and temptation, if we want to live in harmony and love with others, we must abide in Jesus daily. To abide in Jesus means to have a relationship with Him. This is possible only through daily Bible study, prayer, and a willingness to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus does not ask us to work at bearing the fruit of the Spirit; instead, He asks us to abide in Him, and the fruit will naturally develop.

Abiding in Jesus is the secret of unity within the church. He is the center to whom everyone should be attracted. When we come closer to Jesus, we will also come closer to each other. The result will be unity of purpose and harmony as we work together and live for Jesus.

In this last meeting with His disciples, Jesus' greatest desire was for them to love one another as He had loved them. More than once He said, "Love one another." The disciples had not loved one another as Christ had loved them; they spent a lot of time arguing. Jesus saw they needed a new understanding of love that included self-denial and self-sacrifice. Jesus is our supreme example in how we may truly love one another.

In His last recorded prayer, Jesus had a burden on His heart for us to become unified. He said: "I . . . pray . . . that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17: 20, 21). When we are drawn close together, not by circumstances or self-interest, but by love, we will show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this unity exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in us; that He is able to subdue the selfishness in our hearts.

These are the spiritual lessons Jesus wanted His disciples to learn. If we have a daily living connection with Jesus, He will change our character. As we spend time learning from Jesus daily, following His example, and obeying His teachings, we will receive spiritual nourishment. Then the Holy Spirit will produce in our lives the fruit of the Spirit.

KEY REFERENCES

- John 15:1-12
- *The Desire of Ages*, chap. 73, pp. 674-678
- *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 259
- No corresponding story from *The Bible Story*
- Our Beliefs, nos. 14, 11, 12

POWER TEXT

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

POWER POINT

Through a close friendship with Jesus we can build truly loving friendships with others.







Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 88.

Sunday

READ Read John 15:1, 2, and this week's story, "The Connection."

MAKE Draw a grapevine with fruit. Write the power text on it.

REVIEW Review the power text, John 15:5.

PRAY Ask God to "prune" you so that you can "bear fruit."

Monday

READ Read John 15:3, 4.

RESEARCH From a science book, encyclopedia, Internet, or a gardener, learn about "grafting" and "pruning."

NOTE In your Bible study journal, write what you learned.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you stay connected to Jesus. Pray for good fruits in your life, the evidence of your connection with Jesus.

Tuesday

READ Read John 15:5-8.

THINK Jesus said that if we remain in Him, we can ask for what we need. He wants us to have fruitful lives.

WRITE In your Bible study journal, write about what it means to you that through Jesus you can "bear fruits."

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray that you may abide in God and in His will.

Wednesday

READ Read John 15:9-12.

DISCUSS Ask an adult to tell you about a time he/she has come to know Jesus better. What situation or life event led him/her to recognize Jesus as a personal Savior and Friend? Talk about times you have experienced that Jesus loves you and has a plan for your life.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to show you how to know Jesus better.

Thursday

READ Read Hebrews 4:15, 16.

THINK Think about emotions that you feel (sad, glad).

TALK With an adult, talk about how Jesus experienced human emotions and can identify Himself with us.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for sending Jesus to show us how human beings can live connected to the Father.

Friday

READ Read 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 1 Peter 1:8.

DO Find a wastebasket and a ball that will fit into it. Stand five yards (or five meters) away from the basket and try to throw the ball into it five times. Come a few steps closer and try five more times. Repeat this three times. Keep score at every distance.

THINK The closer you come to Jesus, the better able you are to be on target in all of your relationships.

REPEAT Say the power text by memory.

PRAY Ask God to help you be closely connected with Him as the branches are to the grapevine.