

6

Best Friends

Community
We reflect God's love in our relationships.

POWER TEXT

"I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them" (John 17:26).

KEY REFERENCES

- John 15; 17
- *Steps to Christ,* chap. 11, pp. 93-104
- *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 167-170
- student story on page 72 of this guide

OUR BELIEFS

- No. 5, The Holy Spirit
- No. 14, Unity in the Body of Christ
- No. 4, The Son

OBJECTIVES

The students will:

- **Know** that they can stay connected with Jesus and the Father through prayer.
- **Feel** that they want to keep in contact with Jesus.
- **Respond** by committing to stay connected with Jesus through prayer.

POWERPOINT

Our friendship with Jesus grows stronger when we pray.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

John is the disciple who stays closest to Jesus. Jesus shares His deepest spiritual truths with John. In spite of John's defects of character, he continually opens his heart to Jesus as a friend. He stays near throughout Jesus' trial and crucifixion and takes care of Jesus' mother. John is the only Gospel writer who records Jesus' final prayer for unity and connection among Christian believers and with God.

This is a lesson about community.

Grace is the gift of God's undeserved love and power. John responded to that grace by staying in close contact with Jesus and opening his heart completely to Jesus' love and transforming influence. We may also stay in vital connection with God's love and transforming influence through prayer and the Holy Spirit.

Teacher Enrichment

"Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 93).

"Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. . . . Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel" (*Steps to Christ,* p. 100).

What would my life look like if I opened my heart completely to Jesus' love?

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 door. Ask about their week.	
1 Readiness	10-15	*A. Prayer Survey* *B. Are You Listening?* *C. Remember Me*	prayer survey sheets—see page 148, or copied questions, paper, pencils paper circle, pens, paint, or rubber stamp pad
* Prayer and Praise	15-20	See page 67. Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.	songbooks, offering plate/basket, trash container, sheets of scrap paper
2 Bible Lesson	15-20	Introducing the Bible Story Experiencing the Story Exploring the Bible	blindfolds for half the group, soft objects to throw Bibles Bibles, whiteboard/chalkboard, markers/chalk
3 Applying the Lesson	10-15	*Heavenly Pen Pal*	notebook or journal for each student (optional)
4 Sharing the Lesson	10-15	*Reaching Out*	recent newspaper or current articles cutout; paper and pens/pencils (optional)
* 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:
- ☐ survey sheets (p. 148)
- ☐ paper
- ☐ pencils

Prayer Survey

Photocopy the questionnaire on page 148 and give one to each student. Ask them to fill in the most appropriate answer. If you prefer, you could copy five or six questions on separate pieces of paper and place them around the room. Give each student a blank piece of paper on which to answer the questions. They should write the answer that most nearly resembles their situation. Their questionnaires (or answer sheets) should not be signed. (This will encourage honest answers.) Put all the answer papers in a pile and have student volunteers help you create a chart showing the numbers who chose each option.

Debriefing

Ask: **What surprised you about the answers? Did you find some of the questions challenging? Why?** (Some will not feel comfortable in answering this.)

Say: **Prayer is a wonderful gift from God. Today we are going to learn more about this gift and how to use it effectively.**

Our friendship with Jesus grows stronger when we pray.

Accommodation for students with special needs

Model this activity for students. You may read the questions aloud and have the students mark the answers.

B

Are You Listening?

Divide the students into two teams. Give each team different, secret instructions. Make sure that each team doesn't know what the other is supposed to do. For example, say to team 1: **When I say "Go," find a person and get them to count to 100.** Say to team 2: **When I say "Go," find a person and get them to say the letters of the alphabet in order 3 times.** Give them a 30-second time limit to achieve their task. As the teams mix, each team member is trying to get the other person to listen to them.

Debriefing

Ask: **How successful were you in your mission? How is this similar to what sometimes happens when we pray?** Read Psalm 46:10 aloud. **Why is it hard to listen when we pray?** (Encourage a variety of answers.)

Say: **It is often much easier to go to God with our wish list telling Him what we want and go away hoping that He will do just what we ask. Sometimes we are so busy trying to get God to do what we want Him to do that we can miss out on the friendship He wants to have with us. Prayer keeps us connected to God and His plan for our lives.**

Our friendship with Jesus grows stronger when we pray.

(You may want to provide an acrostic for students to remember different aspects of prayer such as **P**-ray, **A**-sk, **L**-isten; or **A**-doration, **C**-onfession, **T**-hanksgiving, **S**-upplication.

Prayer and Praise

C

Remember Me

YOU NEED:
- ☐ paper circle
- ☐ pens
- ☐ paint or rubber stamp pad

Cut a large circle of paper. Place it on a table with pens and a rubber stamp pad or paint.

Say: **Every day I pray for each of the students in my Sabbath School class. I would like you to help me think of you each day. Would you please place your thumbprint and write your name on this circle of paper? I will put this on my wall at home, and every time I see it I will talk to God about you.**

Debriefing

Ask: **How do you feel knowing that someone is praying for you every day? Who do you pray for regularly? What difference does it make when you are praying for someone or someone is praying for you?** (Allow students to express their opinions here. Some may express doubts. Explain that God does not always intervene in Satan's plans without the direct request of believers' prayers.)

Say: **Jesus felt it was important to pray. Before He died He prayed for His disciples and all believers, including us. He wanted all His followers to stay closely connected with Him even after He went back to heaven.**

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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

"I Will Call Upon the Lord" (*Praise Time*, no. 32)
"Behold What Manner of Love" (*He Is Our Song,* no. 42)
"Calvary's Love" (*He Is Our Song,* no. 60)
"Jesus, Name Above All Names" (*He Is Our Song,* no. 54)

Mission

Use *Adventist Mission* magazine for the mission story. You can go to https://am.adventistmission.org/mq-children or go to www.juniorpowerpoints.org and click on MISSION.

Offering

YOU NEED:
- ☐ offering plate/basket

God has given us everything we have. When we bring our offerings we respond to His amazing gift of love.

Prayer

YOU NEED:
- ☐ trash container
- ☐ sheets of scrap paper

Sit in a circle around a trash container. Give each student several pieces of newsprint or other scrap paper. Say: **Today we are going to throw away our worries.** Go around the circle and ask each student to say: "One thing I worry about is_____." Ask them to crumple a piece of paper and toss it into the trash container as they say it. Continue till the container is full or students are out of ideas. Read Matthew 6:25-34 aloud. Ask: **What does Jesus want us to do with the things that concern us?** (Wait for responses.) Read Philippians 4:6, 7 aloud. **What are we supposed to do instead of worrying?** (Wait for responses.) **Prayer is the way that God has provided for us to give all our troubles to Him. When we pray we are connected to God. He can then take all the things that worry and burden us.** Close by asking God to take away all the worries and replace them with a close friendship with Him. Each time, ask a different student to pray. This way you will encourage all students to take a turn and have prayer for their class.

*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

2

BIBLE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- blindfolds for half the students
- soft objects to throw

Introducing the Bible Story

Divide students into teams of two. Blindfold one member of each team. Provide a soft object such as a rolled-up pair of mittens for each pair. Ask the blindfolded students to line up against the wall and try to catch and identify objects that their partners throw to them.

Debriefing

Ask: **How was this activity like things that happen in our lives?** (We don't know what life is going to bring us. We're in the dark. **How do we respond when life circumstances are according to our expectations? Are we thankful to God? How do we react when things are not according to our expectations? Do we complain?)** Read Jeremiah 29:11-13. **What promise does God make?** (God knows what is going to happen to us.)

Say: **God knows what is coming next; prayer helps us to tune in to God's plans and God's solutions. It helps us get to know Him and trust His will for our lives. When Jesus was with His disciples for the last time before He died, He prayed that they would experience the wonderful closeness with God that He had.**

YOU NEED:
- Bibles

Experiencing the Story

The students read John 17 last week. This week divide them into three groups and have each group read one section of Jesus' prayer: John 17:1-5; 17:6-19; and 17:20-24. Ask them to discuss, with an adult facilitator, what their section of Jesus' last prayer says to them about the special friendship Jesus wants to have with them. Have each group report back to the entire class.

Debriefing

Ask: **How did you feel knowing that Jesus included you in His last prayer?** (Encourage sharing.) **What have you learned about your relationship with God?** (Encourage a variety of answers.)

Say: **Let's say together the power text for this week:**

"I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them" (John 17:26).

Accommodation for students with special needs

Use the Bibles with tabs so that students who don't know all the books of the Bible may become independent in finding them.

3

APPLYING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ whiteboard/chalkboard
- ☐ chalk/markers

Exploring the Bible

Assign the following Bible passages to volunteers. Say: **There are many different aspects to prayer. We are going to discover some of them.** Ask each volunteer to read their verse. Ask someone to list where all can see the aspect of prayer that the class finds in the verse.

Matthew 6:9, 10	(God's will)
Ephesians 6:18	(persistence)
Psalms 9:1, 2; 104:1	(praise)
Matthew 5:44, 45	(help for enemies)
1 Timothy 2:1	(thanks)
Matthew 6:11, 12	(basic needs)
Philippians 4:6	(worries)

Debriefing

Ask: **How do the aspects of prayer we have listed on the board affect you personally?** (Encourage discussion.) **As we get to know Jesus, and learn to trust Him more and more, we grow closer to Him and more like Him.**

Our friendship with Jesus grows stronger when we pray.

Accommodation for students with special needs

Use the Bibles with tabs so that students who don't know all the books of the Bible may become independent in finding them.

Heavenly Pen Pal

YOU NEED:
- ☐ notebook or journal for each student (optional)

Ask your students to try keeping a prayer journal for two weeks. (If you have a small class, and are able, provide a notebook or journal for each student.) They may choose to use their Bible study journal or use a different notebook or computer file. Ask them to consider themselves pen pals with God. For those who are familiar with computers, suggest that they think of their writing as e-mail to God. Each day, as they begin to write, have them review their previous day's entry and think about what happened over the past 24 hours. Then they can write to God about their reactions to any "messages" with which He has been impressing them (such as an opportunity to talk with someone they have been praying for, or an easy time on a test they had prayed about). Encourage them to ask specific questions about everyday activities and decisions they must make, and watch for answers.

Plan to provide a time in Sabbath School for the next two weeks for them to report on their prayer journaling.

Our friendship with Jesus grows stronger when we pray.

4

SHARING THE LESSON

Reaching Out

YOU NEED:
- recent newspaper or current articles cutout

Provide several recent newspapers (or bring cutout articles). Ask the students to scan the papers to find stories of people in need. Have each student choose an article to read and then share with the rest of the group. After each student shares, offer a prayer for the people in that particular situation (or ask the student who shared to pray, if they are willing).

Debriefing

Ask: **How can prayer make a difference in our lives? Jesus prayed for others. What benefit do you receive when you follow His example and pray for others?** (Prayer keeps us connected to God. When we are connected to God, we are more prepared to look for and pray for others in need.)

Alternative

Choose prayer partners. Each pair of students can share needs, wants, joys, etc. Have students record these and commit to praying for each other until next Sabbath.

YOU NEED:
- paper
- pens/pencils

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Closing

Prayer and closing comments:

Close with a simple, informal prayer of friendship with God.

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 teaches us to love one another. We reflect the character of Jesus when we nurture positive relationships.**

Notes

Student lesson

Best Friends

Think of your best friend. What makes them laugh? What makes them mad? What makes them happy? When you know someone very well, you know how they think and act. You even begin to think and act like them.

John was one of Jesus' closest friends. Perhaps because John was the youngest of the 12 disciples He seemed to confide more in Jesus than the older men did—just as one would with a best friend. Jesus valued His special friendship with John.

Right from the beginning, John stayed close to Jesus. At first, John's friendship with Jesus might have been classified as "opposites attract." John was not a patient, humble person. In fact, he and his brother James were called the "Sons of Thunder" (see Mark 3:17). John was proud. He was ambitious and ready to fight at a moment's notice.

Being close friends with Jesus, an always-honest friend, meant that John sometimes heard about the flaws in his character. As good friends do, Jesus would point out when he was acting selfish, bossy, or impatient. Yet, Jesus loved John's enthusiastic, sincere, and loving heart.

Jesus responded to John's devotion by frequently inviting him, along with two other disciples, when He went to pray. This is how John learned about the importance of prayer. He often observed that "very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35). John learned to follow his Master's example, and as a result, the closer John stayed to Jesus, the more like Him he became.

That didn't mean that John suddenly became perfect. One time, when some Samaritans were not treating Jesus with respect and wouldn't let Him sleep in their town, John and his brother got really upset. They could see Mount Carmel in the distance, where Elijah had called down fire from heaven. That would be a perfect punishment for the insolent Samaritans, they thought. So they went running to Jesus to tell Him their idea. Of course, Jesus was sad with their response. He suggested that they simply go to another village.

No, John had not overcome his temper overnight. Neither had he overcome wanting to be the best. Once John and his brother had told someone to quit casting out demons in the name of Jesus because the person wasn't one of Jesus' regular followers. What they were really worried about was how it made them look. They weren't always successful when they tried to cast out demons, even though they were close friends with Jesus. However, Jesus reminded them that they could be successful in their work for others only if they trusted God completely and prayed regularly (see Mark 9:29).

John was proud. He thought he was the best. John's ambition led to jealousy among Jesus' followers. John's selfishness also prevented him from growing even closer to his Friend Jesus. By contrast, Jesus' character always reflected selfless love for others. John needed change. He needed to be more like Jesus. The other disciples couldn't quit talking about the fact that James and John's mother had asked Jesus if they could be the two top advisers in His kingdom.

In spite of his weaknesses, his temper, and his pride, John stayed close to Jesus. He learned from his Master that through much prayer and faith in God he could overcome his weaknesses. Jesus promised, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7). Holding on to these words, John could trust God to help him be more patient, kind, and loving. You may be wondering, *What became of John as he continued to spend time walking and talking with Jesus?* The changes were gradual but each day John learned to be more like his Best Friend, Jesus. Later, on the night when Jesus would be on trial, John would be in the judgment hall. He would not pretend that he didn't know Jesus; he would just stand in a corner and watch, as close as he could be to his Best Friend. The next day, when Jesus would be led to Calvary to be crucified, John would follow along supporting Jesus' mother. As Jesus would look at His mother and John at the foot of the cross, He would have the assurance that there would be no safer place for her than in the heart and home of His beloved friend, John.

During Jesus' ministry on earth, John came into a very close relationship with Him. However, John, and the rest of Jesus' followers needed to continue walking with Him and talking with Him in order to keep their friendship growing.

Jesus thought of the time He would no longer be present with them, and He prayed for the greatest gift of all for His disciples and all other believers—the gift of staying connected with Him. He would send the Holy Spirit to make this connection possible.

KEY REFERENCES

- John 15; 17
- *Steps to Christ,* chap. 11, pp. 93-104
- *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 167-170 ("The Voice Behind You")
- Our Beliefs, nos. 5, 14, 4

POWER TEXT

"I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them" (John 17:26).

POWER POINT

Our friendship with Jesus grows stronger when we pray.

John had watched Jesus spend much time in prayer, talking with His Father. The more he thought about it, the more John wanted to have that special kind of relationship in which he could talk with God, just as one talks to a best friend. John decided to follow Jesus' example of staying connected with his heavenly Father in prayer.

At the end of his life John would receive from Jesus the special messages in Revelation. Jesus could entrust this very special task only to someone He knew well and trusted. A very close friend.

Sabbath

DO this week's activity on page 47.

Sunday

READ Read 1 Corinthians 12:7–11 and this week's story, "Best Friends."

BEGIN Begin to learn this week's power text, John 17:26.

PRAY Pray that your friendship with God will grow this week.

Monday

READ Read John 17:15–19.

WRITE In your Bible study journal, write how you think the disciples may have felt when Jesus prayed for them. How do you feel knowing that Jesus prayed for you?

PRAY Go for a walk around your block. As you see people, silently pray for them and ask God to draw them closer to Him.

Tuesday

RESEARCH Find the following texts: John 15:7; James 1:5, 6. What do they tell you about prayer? What does Ephesians 6:18 tell us to do when God doesn't seem to answer our prayers?

TELL Ask an adult to tell you about a time God gave them wisdom.

PRAY Sing a prayer of praise to God.

Wednesday

READ Read Ephesians 6:18.

THINK This Bible verse encourages us to pray for "all the Lord's people." Who are some people for whom you could pray?

COMPARE In your Bible study journal, compare praying to talking with a friend. How are they alike?

PRAY Make a list of words, starting with the letters A through M, of things for which you want to praise, thank, or ask God.

Thursday

READ Read Philippians 4:6, 7.

WRITE Write your own definition of prayer in your Bible study journal.

SHARE Tell someone that you are praying for them.

PRAY Make a list of words, starting with the letters N through Z, of things for which you want to praise, thank, or ask God.

Friday

READ Read 1 Timothy 2:1.

LISTEN Read or watch the news today. Pick one story and pray for the people involved.

WORSHIP Read Psalm 103 with the family tonight for worship.

PRAY With your family, pray that God will be with you as you begin His special day.