

FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS... week 1

IN SUMMARY FOR YOU THE LEADER- THE POINT OF THIS STUDY:

- ⊙ **THIS SERIES:** This series is all about good friendships by helping students understand the things a good friend is.... But in reverse sorta.

Friends don't let friends:

1. Be fake
2. Stay in a funk
3. Live disconnected from God or do life alone
4. Miss their potential

- ⊙ **THIS WEEK:** Friends don't let friends **be Fake..**

JUST A FEW REMINDERS TO DO AT SOME POINT:

1. Don't forget to pray with and for your students.
2. Reminder phone calls are super important early on to make sure students remember when group is, where you're meeting and what's going on. So call your students.
3. Make sure you get everyone's contact info. You might also want to get facebook addresses for those students who might have one, that is helpful in getting to know them by what they post and communicating with them too.
4. Take attendance every week.
5. Pray about how to divide up your group to better shepherd them with other caring adults or a co-leader. Like maybe share the load of praying for them or calling for reminders or whatever.

FOR STARTERS: Maybe like 15ish minutes

Talk about it: (here's some ideas- use the ones you like and have time for or invent your own intro that sets the stage better)

1. Who is your best friend? What do you like about them? If you don't have a "best friend" , do you think that's important to have or not?
2. Define a good friend. What character traits do they have?
3. How influential do you think friends really are on people's choices? Do you choose friends based on the choices they make?
4. Who is the most influential person in your life? Would you consider them a friend? Why or why not?
5. What is the most important character trait in a friend for you? Like if you could only have them be one thing, what would they be? Loyal? Funny? Fun to be with? Honest? Etc.
6. How do you think the average high school student today chooses their friends? Do you think much thought goes into this? Is this good or bad?
7. What would you say is the hardest thing about finding friends?
8. Do you ever feel lonely or do you really like being alone? Do you think it's possible to live the life of a faithful follower of Jesus alone? Like is it critical that you have friends? Why or why not?
9. Do you think that you can have too many friends?
10. What do you think usually causes someone to "lose a friend?"
11. What makes a friendship last a lifetime?
12. Today we're talking about being fake.... Do you think being fake can ruin a friendship? How so?
13. What is the difference between being fake and just not sharing everything all at once? How do you know you're being fake and not just careful with what you share?

OUT LOUD/THE MAIN MESSAGE: (30 ish minutes)

Read: Matt 23 1-28 where Jesus confronts the Pharisee's for being fake. That's an understatement to say the least. He's really ticked off.

Here it is in the message paraphrase for an easy read. You may want to have them just read part of it or read part and then talk about it and then read another part... it's broken down by verse in the teaching portion that follows:

(Matthew 23:1–20)

"Now Jesus turned to address his disciples, along with the crowd that had gathered with them. "The religion scholars and Pharisees are competent teachers in God's Law. You won't go wrong in following their teachings on Moses. But be careful about following *them*. They talk a good line, but they don't live it. They don't take it into their hearts and live it out in their behavior. It's all spit-and-polish veneer. "Instead of giving you God's Law as food and drink by which you can banquet on God, they package it in bundles of rules, loading you down like pack animals. They seem to take pleasure in watching you stagger under these loads, and wouldn't think of lifting a finger to help. Their lives are perpetual fashion shows, embroidered prayer shawls one day and flowery prayers the next. They love to sit at the head table at church dinners, basking in the most prominent positions, preening in the radiance of public flattery, receiving honorary degrees, and getting called 'Doctor' and 'Reverend.' "Don't let people do that to *you*, put you on a pedestal like that. You all have a single Teacher, and you are all classmates. Don't set people up as experts over your life, letting them tell you what to do. Save that authority for God; let *him* tell you what to do. No one else should carry the title of 'Father'; you have only one Father, and he's in heaven. And don't let people maneuver you into taking charge of them. There is only one Life-Leader for you and them—Christ. "Do you want to stand out? Then step down. Be a servant. If you puff yourself up, you'll get the wind knocked out of you. But if you're content to simply be yourself, your life will count for plenty. "I've had it with you! You're hopeless, you religion scholars, you Pharisees! Frauds! Your lives are roadblocks to God's kingdom. You refuse to enter, and won't let anyone else in either. "You're hopeless, you religion scholars and Pharisees! Frauds! You go halfway around the world to make a convert, but once you get him you make him into a replica of yourselves, double-damned. "You're hopeless! What arrogant stupidity! You say, 'If someone makes a promise with his fingers crossed, that's nothing; but if he swears with his hand on the Bible, that's serious.' What ignorance! Does the leather on the Bible carry more weight than the skin on your hands? And what about this piece of trivia: 'If you shake hands on a promise, that's nothing; but if you raise your hand that God is your witness, that's serious'? What ridiculous hairsplitting! What difference does it make whether you shake hands or raise hands? A promise is a promise. What difference does it make if you make your promise inside or outside a house of worship? A promise is a promise. God is present, watching and holding you to account regardless."--

(Matthew 23:23–28)

""You're hopeless, you religion scholars and Pharisees! Frauds! You keep meticulous account books, tithing on every nickel and dime you get, but on the meat of God's Law, things like fairness and compassion and commitment—the absolute basics!—you carelessly take it or leave it. Careful bookkeeping is commendable, but the basics are required. Do you have any idea how silly you look, writing a life story that's wrong from start to finish, nitpicking over commas and semicolons? "You're hopeless, you religion scholars and Pharisees! Frauds! You burnish the surface of your cups and bowls so they sparkle in the sun, while the insides are maggoty with your greed and gluttony. Stupid Pharisee! Scour the insides, and then the gleaming surface will mean something. "You're hopeless, you religion scholars and Pharisees! Frauds! You're like manicured grave plots, grass clipped and the flowers bright, but six feet down it's all rotting bones and worm-eaten flesh. People look at you and think you're saints, but beneath the skin you're total frauds."

WHEN IS SOMEONE FAKE? ANSWER- WHEN WHAT THEY SAY IS NOT THE SAME AS HOW THEY ACT.

Matt. 23:1-3

EXAMPLES: Someone who “believes” stealing is wrong, but gives away free drinks to friends at their work when the boss is gone. Someone who claims they are faithful to you, but is dating others behind your back. Someone who says they like to surf in the ocean on their Myspace details, but later you find out they’ve never surfed a day in their life, they were just trying to look cool.

ANOTHER SIGN SOMEONE IS BEING FAKE: THEY ACT LIKE THEY ALWAYS HAVE IT ALL TOGETHER AND ALWAYS TELL OTHER PEOPLE WHAT TO DO.

Matt. 23:4-7

CAUTION: When trying to help a friend stop being fake, it’s super easy to become fake yourself or to begin to think you’re better than they are. Be careful that you help others without appearing to not struggle with issues yourself, even if the issue your friend is being fake in, is not an issue for you. We are all fake sometimes.

QUESTION: What area of life do you think Christians have the biggest reputation for being fake in? Could you put a finger on an area in your life you’re most often fake in or at least are tempted to be fake?

IF YOU HAVE “FAKER SYNDROME” HUMILITY AND SERVANTHOOD ARE THE CURES.

Matt. 23:8-12

When I don’t act like I have it all together, I don’t have to be fake. I can just humbly admit my faults, ask others to help me in my weaknesses and move on. Faking it is a huge temptation in our world. It can be solved by not trying to impress anyone but God. Keep your eyes on Jesus and be His servant. Help students around you become more and more like Jesus by encouraging them to join you in the anti-faker journey. Be humble and serve one another.

TRUE FRIENDS CAN BE TRUSTED AT THEIR WORD. THEY ARE HONEST AND TRUTHFUL- NOT FAKE WITH THEIR PROMISES.

Matt. 23:13-20

Jesus is really angry here. He’s upset because these teachers of the day are making all kinds of false promises and creating people who do the same thing. Talk about the power of our words and how we should be careful to mean what we say. You might talk about how powerful words are and how to control our tongues. Think before we speak... etc. A lot of

problems at home, in friendships, and at school are because people say hurtful things without thinking. James 3 is another good text on this principle.

TRUE FRIENDS CARE MORE ABOUT THE INSIDE OF MY LIFE THAN THE OUTSIDE.

Matt. 23:23-28

Illustration: you could use the same one Jesus does. Dirty the inside of a coffee cup... better yet leave one with very little coffee in it this week and let it get moldy. Clean the outside spotless, then ask if anyone would use the cup. You could do this with gift bags made to look nice too, but put nice things in some and trash in others.

Talk about how much of high school is spent on the "externals" and not the internals of others. le: how we dress versus how we care for others, etc...

SO WHAT: (some questions to consider in acct. groups. 20 minutes)

As an adult, this reminds me.... As the leader, share your story. What do you struggle with as a hypocrite? Do you find yourself being fake? How can you keep others from faking it? Have you ever had to confront someone who was ruining a friendship by being fake? What was the result?

In your life this might mean...

- Is there anyone in your life you need to stop being fake around?
- Is there anyone in your life you need to talk to about being fake? How would you do this?
- Setting a standard as a small group about how you'll keep each other's info confidential so that you can be honest and not be a faker.
- You might need to identify some fears in life that keep you faking it. There is a reason we all fake it from time to time. If you can identify what those reasons are, you can actually stop letting them control your actions.

EXPERIENCE IT: (place in the teaching wherever it's works)

2 ideas:

1. PICK A BAG: have several gift bags- some pretty, some not so pretty, ideally enough for everyone to get one. If not, put them in teams. Have inside some cool stuff, like a can of coke or even an encouragement card written out to them about their potential in Jesus. In others put an empty bottle of soda or a half eaten something or maybe an expired coupon or whatever... something no one wants. Change it up. Don't put all the good prizes in good bags or all in bad bags. Make it mixed and then Then talk about why you chose the one you chose and how we do the same people with people, judging their externals first.

2. TALK IS CHEAP: play two truths and a lie, but with something you've done for a friend verses haven't done. Like have every student write down 2 things they really did to help someone and one thing they said they did, but never did. Have them make that one up. Then have the others guess, which thing you believe they really did. This plays into easily the words are powerful piece. If your friends have to play 2 truths and a lie and guess when you're telling the truth with them and can be counted on, then the truth is you're a faker. If you have a lot of students, this could be done in smaller teams, like groups of 3 could come up with stuff they've collectively done vs. no one in their group has done, etc...

FOR KEEPS:

Memory verse for those who are up to it:

Matt. 23:26 First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.