

We Need Each Other

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1



Lesson 4

Focus:

Our God made us for relationships.

Lesson 4

Bible Basis:

Genesis 2:18-23

Lesson 4

Memory Verse:

A friend loves at all times.
—Proverbs 17:17a

Your students will discuss the challenges of fostering friendships through “The Loneliness Epidemic” as they explore how God created us to relate to one another.

Materials:

- Internet access

All people, young and old, are designed for friendship. You’ve probably experienced good friendships, and you may also know what it feels like to feel left out or disconnected from friends. As our society becomes increasingly disconnected, people of all ages have felt lonelier and more disconnected from their friends over the last few years. This feeling of disconnection has become so common that it’s now commonly called “The Loneliness Epidemic.”

Play the following video for your students [6:05; stop at 0:55]:

US surgeon general declares loneliness epidemic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aR1tTwaRxPk>

When you’re finished, discuss the following questions with your class:

- **Think back to when you were in elementary school. Was it easier or harder to make friends than in middle school?** (Let students share their insights. Some might say that elementary school is harder because kids are less mature, but others might say that middle school is full of more jealousy, drama, and alliances.)
- **Do you think it’s hard for kids your age to reach out to others—especially if they’re different? Why or why not?** (Kids are naturally cautious about new people. They want to be liked, and they worry about which friendships feel safe and nurturing.)
- **What strategies could work for making and building friendships in middle school?** (Let students discuss other ways that their teachers or parents have tried to foster friendships in middle school.)

➤ **What is more valuable? A dozen or more friends—or just a few close ones?** (Students will probably share the importance of one or two close friends. Having many friends, especially through social media alone, doesn't guarantee closeness or loyalty.)

The Bible teaches us about God's design for human interaction and friendship. Let's take a look at some good instructions that will help us nurture healthy relationships with others. It's how God made us!

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

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Materials:

- String (1 – 5 ft. length for every other student)
- Beach ball

Ahead of time, cut pieces of string five feet long to use as a visual aid for Step 4. You will need one piece for every other student. If your class is meeting online, you can demonstrate the activity with a member of your household while students watch from home.

When God created Adam and Eve, companionship was part of His design. There are some things we can't do very well without someone to help us. We're going to demonstrate how relationships work by using a simple string technique to help us.

Have students stand in a circle. (If your group is very large, you may need to create several smaller circles—no more than 8–10 students in each). Give every other student a piece of five-foot long string. The person holding one end of the string will ask the person across from him to grab the other end. When all strings are paired, it will create an interesting web connecting the entire circle.

This web simply wouldn't work if we held only one end of the string. Strong friendships in churches, schools, and communities create an interlocking support system. Now let's try something else. If your class is meeting online, end your demonstration here, inviting students to share how the activity would be different if there were many other people holding strings in the web.

If your class is meeting in person, throw the beach ball into the center of the web. Ask your students to “bounce” the beach ball using their string web. If the ball falls through the web, have your students take two steps toward their partner, grasping the string closer to the center and tightening the string even further.

Let your students move closer together. You can try this several times until the web can support your beach ball or balloon without it slipping through. Let the group bounce the ball repeatedly using their string web. When you're finished with the object lesson, discuss the following questions together.

➤ **Is it okay to have just a few close friends rather than a whole bunch? How do our natural personalities shape our friendships?** (Let students share their ideas.)

➤ **Families are super important, but what benefits does a friendship provide that even a family member can't?** (Friends can provide a safety net away from the pressures of home. Friends can be there when families are absent or far away. Sometimes friends can better relate to the experiences unique to teenagers.)

➤ **Are friends going to be mature and accepting all the time? What should we do when a friend makes mistakes?** (Since we are all selfish by nature, it's important to give grace to our friends when they disappoint us. We can make it easier by modeling good friendship first before expecting it from others. It's better to be a good friend than to find a good friend.)

➤ **Does social media make it harder to nurture real relationships?** (If time allows, students may want to share their experiences with the shallow nature of online friendship.)

God hasn't designed us to be alone. Middle school is one of the hardest times to nurture strong relationships, but finding the right friend can make a huge difference in our lives.

Before class is dismissed, let the "string partners" share prayer requests or talk through the questions further. Cut each string in half and have them tie their piece around the other person's wrist. If they don't know the person well, encourage them to share contact information, pray for them, or check on them during the week. Use the string bracelets as a reminder that "a friend loves at all times." If your class is meeting online, you can use the breakout rooms feature of your video chat software for small groups of students to pray together.

Close in prayer.

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