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## **Relationships**

### **Safe Environment Lesson**

#### **Outcomes**

The learner will be able to:

- ✓ Recognize qualities of meaningful relationships
- ✓ Appreciate more deeply their friendships with others – adults, friends, and Jesus
- ✓ Identify how they will incorporate the Christian values and relationship skills discussed into their personal relationships
- ✓ Appreciate the Christian understanding that we are created in the image and likeness of God and that all of creation is good

#### **Gather the following items for this lesson:**

- Pens for each student
- Writing paper for each student
- Bible for prayer
- Copy of prayer for each student
- Copies of all handouts (included in a separate section at the end of this lesson.)
- Movie clips as needed

#### **LESSON OUTLINE**

Large Group Presentation: Qualities of Relationships

**Part I:** Introduction: icebreaker, activity, or media presentation

Characteristics of Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships and Skills for Healthy Relating

**Part II:** Choose one of the following

##### **Option A**

- Relationships in Scripture
- Jesus and Friends
- Saint Paul

##### **Option B**

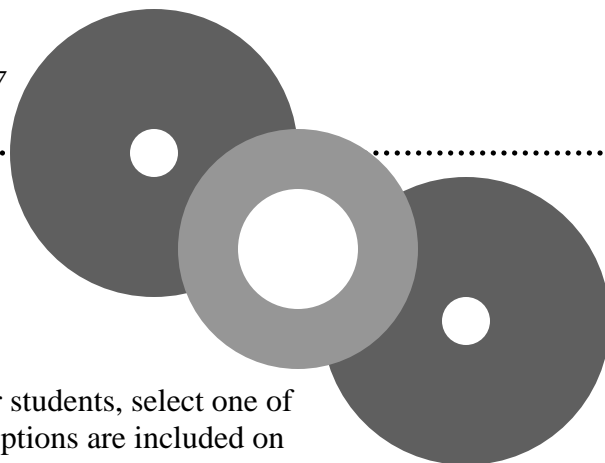
Small group “stations” or “centers” or “workshops” (groups would rotate through)

- Self-esteem
- Friends
- Dating
- Parents/Family

##### **Option C**

- Large Group Presentation: Jesus as Human, Friend, and Reconciler
- Relationship Cycle
- Relationship Problems / Forgiveness

**Part III:** Closing Prayer



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**Part One**

Introduction

1. Based on the characteristics and needs of your students, select one of the following (Instructions for all three of these options are included on pages 9 through 12 of this lesson.):

- A. Pinwheel Icebreaker: Focusing on Relationships
- B. Demonstration Activity: The Effect of Relationships
- C. Evaluating Media Images: Select video clip, TV show, ad, or song

2. Characteristics of Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships

Distribute copies of the handout, *Characteristics of Healthy & Unhealthy Relationships*. Ask the students to read through the lists and look for any characteristic they think is on the wrong list. (There are not any, but some could feel that there are.) Respond to any students who feel that a characteristic is on the wrong list by explaining why the characteristic is listed where it is.

Lead the group into a quiet time for reflection (and journaling if this a practice you use with your group). Give each student a copy of *Skills for Healthy Relating* and allow about 15 minutes for them to read through the statements and write (in their journal) how they will incorporate one or two skills into their life.

**Part Two**

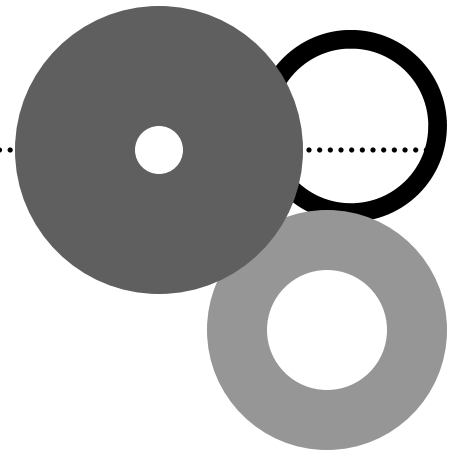
Choose one of the following options and determine the scope of the activity based on the group of participants and the time frame of the session.

**Option A: Relationships in Scripture**

*Jesus and Friends*

This portion of the presentation needs to be prepared in advance either by teens and/or adult facilitators. Each facilitator presents the characteristics of the meaningful relationship presented in the Scripture passage. An alternate way to present the characteristics of relationships from Scripture would be to divide the large group into smaller groups and assign a prepared facilitator to each group. Plan to use as few or as many of the following to meet the needs of your teens and your schedule:

Peter: Matthew 4:18-22, 21-28;  
Mark 14:32-41, 66-72;  
John 1:35-42; 21:15-19; 13:3-20



Nicodemus: John 3:1-21; 7:45-52; 19:38-42  
Zaccheus: Luke 19:1-9  
Thomas: John 11:16; 14:1-14; 20:24-29  
The Samaritan Woman: John 4:1-42  
Matthew: Luke 5:27-32  
Lazarus: John 11:1-44; 12:1-2  
The Blind Man: Luke 18:35-43

Introduce this portion of the presentation by saying in these or in your own words,  
*The real meaning of relationships or friendship for us as Christians can be found in how Jesus related to people and the way he interacted with them. Let's take a look at a few of the people Jesus met during his life and ministry.*

**If you choose to present the Scripture passages to the large group by a prepared facilitator:**

Explain that during this part of the session, qualities of meaningful relationships will be presented from a variety of Scripture passages. Have a flip chart or prepared poster boards ready to record the characteristics highlighted. (See the bulleted points below for specific focus areas.)

**If you choose to do the Scripture passages in small groups:**

Explain that during the next 10 minutes each facilitator or small group will read the Scripture passage assigned to them and prepare a presentation on the characteristics of the meaningful relationships in the Scripture passage. They might use a flip chart, power point, very short skit (2 minutes), or some other creative presentation that highlights:

- What the Scripture story is about
- What qualities of meaningful relationships are present in the story
- What the Gospel character learned through his/her relationship with Jesus

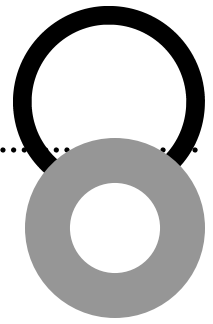
After 10 minutes have gone by, invite the facilitators or group representative to make their presentation to the large group. Keep the presentations short and focused on the points you have outlined above.

Summarize what we can learn from Jesus in these or your own words:

*We have noticed that Jesus loved each person he met. In fact, he loved them to the point of giving up his life for their sake. This example of Jesus shows us how we are called give of ourselves in our personal relationships: to treat others with respect and equality, to communicate honestly in all our dealings, and to work for justice and peace for all.*

**Saint Paul**

Follow the format used above with the Scripture passages about Jesus and Friends or use an alternate format for variety of presentation; i.e., presentation by prepared teen or adult facilitator or by small groups. Have a flip chart ready to record the meaningful qualities from Saint Paul.



Introduce this portion on Saint Paul in these or your own words: *Throughout his letters to the early Christians, Saint Paul gives us a portrait of meaningful relationships. He writes to the earliest Christian churches instructing them on how to live together in peace and harmony. Let's look at some of his recommendations and consider how they might apply to us today.*

- Ephesians 4: 1-2, 23-32
- Romans 12:3, 9-12
- Philippians 2:3-4
- Galatians 5: 22-26; 6:2
- Colossians 3: 12-15

Have a brief discussion on how the qualities highlighted in these passages apply to their daily lives.

Summarize what we can learn from Saint Paul in these or your own words: *Looking at the qualities that Saint Paul urges the early Christian churches to practice: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, love, we can see that these qualities lie at the heart of all Christian relationships. They are the hallmark qualities and what marks us as disciples of Jesus Christ.*

(Conclude the lesson with Part 3—Closing Prayer, page 8.)

### **Option B: Learning Stations**

Set up four areas as Learning Stations for these topics: Self-Esteem, Friends, Dating, and Parents/Family. If the group is small, plan to move from station to station as a whole. If the group is large, divide the group into four small groups. If the group needs significant time for these topics, plan to address just one or two and leave the others for another time.

#### 1. Self-Esteem

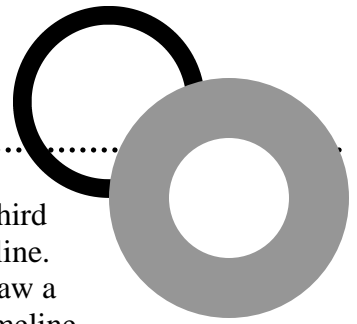
This station provides exercises on giftedness, barriers to self-esteem, and self-love. The exercises are reflective in nature and allow for individual and original expression. Each exercise can be followed by sharing and discussion with the guidance of a prepared adult facilitator. Again, if the group's needs require more time, choose one or two rather than all of the topics.

#### 2. Friends

Scripture is the basis for this station. The passages are the same as those listed in Part One—Option A, and focus on the characteristics of Jesus' friendships and on Saint Paul's qualities of relationships. The other two exercises, *Qualities of Meaningful Relationships (handout)* and *Charting Personal Relationships (exercise)*, involve activity and discussion.

### **Instructions for Charting Personal Relationships**

1. Give each young person a 4 foot long strip of adding machine tape and a pen or a pencil. Direct them to unroll the tape and draw a line approximately 20 inches long down the left side of the tape, beginning about 5 inches from the top. Then have them

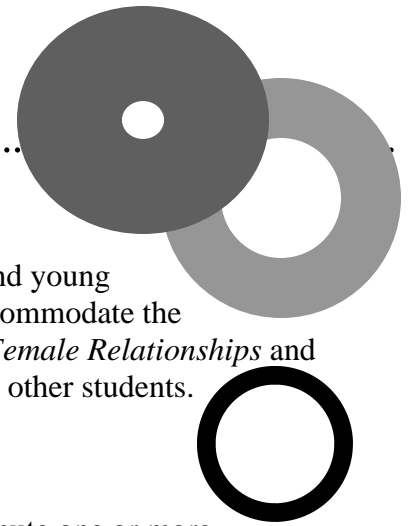


write “Grades K-5” at the top of the line, “Grades 7-9” about one third down the line, and “grades 10-present” about two thirds down the line. (Adjust according to the grade level of your group.) Have them draw a horizontal line across the tape a few inches below the end of the timeline.

2. Instruct them to create a personal relationship history according to the following directions. As you give the directions, it will be helpful to refer to a sample timeline that you have prepared before the lesson.
  - First, write your name and the heading “Relationship Timeline” across the top of your tape. Below this title write the words “friends,” “family,” and “other significant people.” These terms will serve as a reminder of the timeline categories.
  - Second, in the blank spaces for each of the three age periods, write the names of your friends, family and other people who were significant in your life at that time. For example, in the section labeled “Grades K-5” you might name your grade school friends, parents, siblings, grandparents, teachers, etc. Leave some space after each name.
  - Third, beside the name of each friend write some things you did with that person, how the relationship began, what you two talked about, and how or why the relationships ended, if it has.
3. Now that they have created the outline for their timeline, give them directions for filling in some of the relationship details. Distribute colored pencils or pens and give the following instructions:
  - Put a small x by any relationship in which you experienced disappointment, hurt, conflict, or betrayal.
  - Put a small star by the relationships in which you experienced joy.
  - Put a checkmark by the relationships that have changed significantly. Write a few words about how they have changed.
  - Circle any relationship in which you were your best self. Jot down a few thoughts about why you think this is true.
  - Underline any relationship that challenged you to move beyond who you thought you could be. Indicate how you were challenged by that person.

As you read each instruction, allow time for the group to think and write. When all have finished, invite participants to share one or two things from their timeline, as time permits.

Summarize the points made: *The information recorded on the chart gives a quick glimpse of your relationship history. It indicates beginnings and endings as well as good and difficult relationships. It is likely that any relationship will have hurt and disappointment and by learning how to handle these feelings, we can avoid becoming bitter or resentful. Our healthiest relationships call us to be our best selves. Those that challenge us, though uncomfortable at times, help us learn about ourselves and make positive changes. All relationships are opportunities for growth and can help us acquire skills for future healthy relationships.*



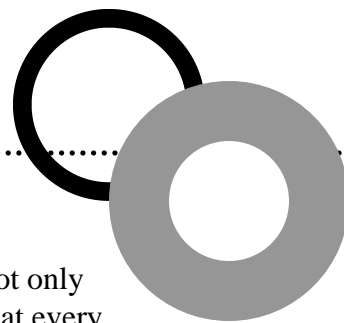
3. Dating

A type of “Dating Game” is part of this station. There are two handouts included which give some questions for young men and young women to ask each other. Consider setting up the station to accommodate the bachelors and bachelorettes. There are also handouts on *Male-Female Relationships* and *Pressure*. These involve personal response and sharing with the other students.

4. Parents/Family

- *Animal Friends* is one of the resources at this station. Distribute one or more descriptions from this handout to each participant. Use them all. Have each person read the description aloud without revealing the animal and have the group guess which animal is being described. As each one is revealed, write the animal name on newsprint or on the board.
- Tell the group that we can think of these animal characteristics as describing ways human beings relate. Ask the group to write the names of their family members on a blank piece of paper and to write beside each name the animal(s) that most closely resembles that person’s style of relating. They can use the animals already named or they may think of new ones. Tell them their information will remain private.
- Have them write their own names and an animal(s) that resembles their style of relating. Do they see any similarities with their parents or other family members? Ask if anyone wants to share anything they have learned from this exercise.
- Finish this step by making some points:
  - ◇ Family members know one another better than anyone else. They see each other at their best and their worst. It’s easy to take family for granted or to take things out on them even though they may not be the cause of our frustrations.
  - ◇ People often exhibit the same styles of relating as one or both parents or other family members. This happens even if there are characteristics that we don’t want to have. But, we live what we learn so we have to make conscious choices to change if that’s we believe we must do.
  - ◇ The joys and difficulties we experience in family settings will most likely occur in other relationships. Often we think that when we leave home, everything will be different—no more arguing, conflicts, etc. This isn’t true. We will relate, whether positively or negatively, the same with close friends as we did with family members.
  - ◇ People don’t choose their family of origin, but we can choose to change how we have learned to relate...It may be difficult, but not impossible, to learn to relate in new ways. Good, positive relationships enrich our lives, and though they require hard work, they are certainly worth the effort.
- The other three resources for this station are: *Improving your Relationship with Parents*, *Parent-Teen Relations*, and *10 Ways to Build Better Relationships with Parents*.

(Conclude the lesson with Part 3—Closing Prayer, page 8.)



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**Option C: Relationships / Forgiveness / Reconciliation**

**1.** A lesson on relationships needs to include a consideration of not only the characteristics of meaningful relationships but also the reality that every relationship requires ongoing effort. We are good yet limited people and our limitations are as much a part of who we are as our strengths are. In this section we will address the cycle of relationships, forgiveness and reconciliation.

**2.** Using the list of characteristics of meaningful relationships from Part One, involve the students in a reflective sharing or journal session on which of these qualities are part of their relationship with Jesus and which are weak in their relationship with him. Invite them to add qualities that are not part of the list but are significant to their relationship at this time.

Ask for some feedback in the large group. Listen for and list the qualities that are particularly important to this group of teens. When the list includes enough qualities for you to work with, lead the group into a consideration of how their relationship with Jesus began and how it has grown throughout their life. Remind them that each of us is invited by God to develop and live in relationship with him. We are invited to be friends of Jesus and to live as God's children. One way for each of us to strengthen our relationship with God and with others is to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance.

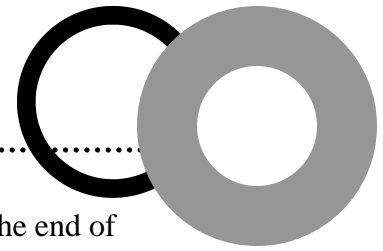
Share a Scripture passage that would highlight an important dimension of who Jesus is and/or what friendship with him involves. For example:

- John 15:10-17 ("Love one another...I call you friends...")
- Mark 8:27-29, 31 ("Who do you say that I am?")...
- Mark 10:35-45 ("Grant that we may sit one at your right...")
- Matthew 7:7-8 ("Ask and it will be given to you...")

**3.** After a brief discussion on the passage, introduce *The Relationship Cycle*. It may be best to have a large version on newsprint as well as handouts for the students. You will need to be willing to share a relationship that you are part of to go through the cycle. Keep your sharing to pertinent information so that it is not too personal. Use the same relationship throughout your presentation of the cycle. Invite the students to identify a past and current relationship that they can reflect on as you move through the cycle with them. It does not have to be a boy-girl relationship.

**4.** Address the need for forgiveness and reconciliation within relationships. The students' experience of the cycle of relationships will highlight this in varying degrees. Look over the handouts related to problems in relationships (*Relationship Challenges, Step By Step, Got Problems?, Tips for the Troubled*) and ways to deal with them. Select one or more appropriate for the group. If you choose a handout that asks the students to respond to questions, invite them to do so and specify a time for them to complete it. If you choose the handout *Tips for the Troubled*, ask the students to read them quietly. Once they are finished reading, invite comments or highlight a few of the items from the list and engage in a brief dialogue.

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**Part Three**

Closing Prayer (Use this or choose from some of the options listed at the end of these lessons)

**Prayer for Lighting Two Candles**

Our God is a faithful God, loving us no matter what and always with us.  
As the source of all life God guides us and walks with us.

Aware of God's loving, faithful presence, we light a candle to the past.  
*(Pause for the lighting of the candle.)*

We pray in gratitude for all our family members and friends  
who have gone before us, held fast to their faith, and walked with us  
in relationship. May their example guide us, especially in times of trouble and hardship.

And we light a second candle to the future. *(Pause for the lighting of the candle.)*

We pray in hope that the love and care we have known from others will be strengthened within  
us and help us to be and live as true friends of Jesus.  
May the active, loving presence of God be clearly visible in all that we do and be a strong  
foundation for God's Kingdom.

And between the past and the future is the now,  
the present moment where God lives within and among us in relationship.  
Let us open our minds, our ears and our hearts  
to the timeless, active, living Word of God.

**Reading**      John 15: 10-17

**Reflection**

Invite the group into a few minutes of quiet reflection on what it means to them when they hear  
Jesus say that he calls them "friend".

Depending on the group and its size:

- Invite the teens to share their reflection with one other person in the group
- Have the teens write a word or phrase that sums up their reflection on a small piece of paper. Collect the papers in a basket and place them on the table with the two candles.
- Have the teens write a word or phrase that sums up their reflection on a small piece of paper. Collect the papers in a basket and have two teens read some or all of the words/ phrases as a litany of thanks for Jesus' choosing and calling them his friends.

**Community Response**

Invite the group as friends of Jesus to pray in the words that he taught us,  
"Our Father..."

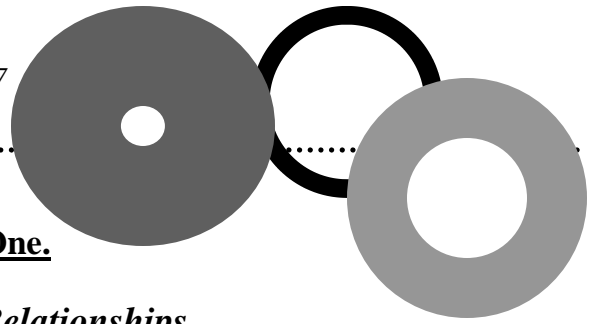
Invite the teens to share a Sign of Peace

**Closing Song**

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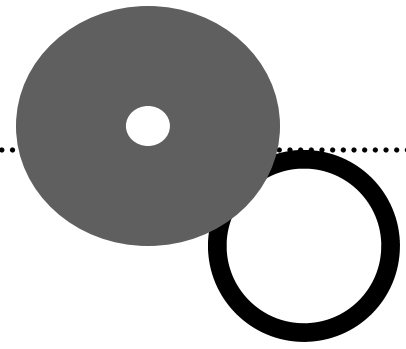




**Instructions for three options suggested in Part One.**

***Option A: Pinwheel Icebreaker: Focusing on Relationships***

1. Ask participants to select a partner, and include yourself in this process. If you have an odd number of teens, pair up with one of them; if you have an even number, form a trio.
2. Direct the pairs to form two circles, with one circle inside the other and one partner in each circle. If you are part of a trio, join the partner in the outer circle, and when the game begins, move with that person as he or she is directed to move. The people in the inner circle should face their partner in the outer circle. It is easiest to do this standing, but you can use chairs if you wish.
3. Announce that you will read some comparison statements that the participants are to discuss with their partner. After about 60 seconds of discussion, ask the people in the outer circle to move one person to the right and read another comparison statement for them to discuss with their new partner. Repeat this process, with a new statement for each round, until time is up. Use the following statements or create your own:
  - In your relationship with your best friend, are you more like a pogo stick or in-line skates? Why?
  - In your relationship with your parents, are you more like a volcano or a babbling brook? Why?
  - In your relationship with your siblings, or the relative closest to your own age, are you more like a world championship boxing match or the Olympic ice-skating finales? Why?
  - In your relationship with the teacher you like the least, are you more like a pit bull or a Dalmatian? Why?
  - In your relationship to your school, in general are you more like a cheerleader or a political analyst? Why?
  - In your relationship with your boss, are you more like a vulture or a hummingbird? Why?
  - In your relationship with your peers, are you more like a butterfly or an ant? Why?
  - In your relationship with your neighbors, are you more like a squirrel or a groundhog? Why?
  - In your relationship with God, are you more like a puppet or a musician in an orchestra? Why?
  - In your relationship with strangers, are you more like a rosebush or a field of daisies? Why?
  - In your relationship with people you date (or would like to date), are you more like a teddy bear or a grizzly bear? Why?
4. In your own words, explain to the teens that the analogies can help them understand how they relate to people. Did their responses indicate an open or closed pattern in their relating? a pattern? Just as this exercise explored a wide variety of relationships, the rest of the course will do the same. Invite the teens to discuss with their last partner any patterns they may have noticed in their answers.



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***Option B: Demonstration Activity:***  
***The Effects of Relationships***

***NB:*** *Because this activity uses rubber bands and push pins, it is important that you evaluate the maturity of the group of teens and that you weigh that reality against the possible misuse of the rubber bands and push pins. Be sure that you prepare a relationship model prior to the lesson. It will serve as a very effective demonstration tool to introduce and summarize the lesson. Otherwise, choose Option A or C to introduce this lesson.*

***Before the session:*** Assemble a relationship connections model to use in the demonstration. You will need the following materials:

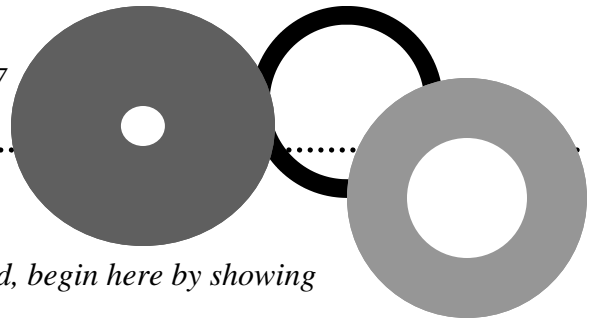
- An 18 x 18 inch piece of cardboard or a cardboard box
- 16-20 large paper clips
- 8-10 rubber bands of different sizes
- 8-10 push pins
- A large washer, at least one inch in diameter

Attach a paper clip to each end of each rubber band to the washer, using the paper clips. Then attach the other end of the rubber bands to the piece of cardboard or the cardboard box by sticking pushpins through the paper clips into the cardboard. The result should resemble a hub with spokes. The washer should be in the center. Because each rubber band is a different size, the resulting shape will not be a perfect circle. You may find that this works most easily if you initially attach the washer to the center of the cardboard with a push pin and remove the pin once the rubber bands are secured. This will leave the washer freely suspended by the rubber bands.

Also, pin a couple of rubber bands with paper clips to the cardboard that are not attached to the washer. Finally, tie two rubber bands to each other so that it would be difficult to separate them. (*See illustration at end of handout section*)

*If you are having the teens participate in creating a relationship model begin here:*

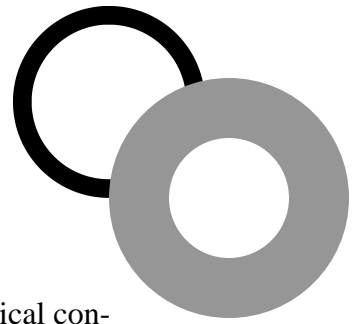
1. Gather the group members in your meeting area and divide them into teams of three. Give each team a set of materials like you used in making your sample model. Tell them each team is to use these materials to create a model that represents the relationships that a person with healthy, well-balanced relationships has with other people. The model should also illustrate what happens when those relationships become unbalanced or unhealthy. You can give them the following clues: the washer represents the person, the rubber bands represent the person's relationships, and all the pieces should be attached to the cardboard. Each team must be able to explain its model to the whole group. Give them 10 minutes to spread out and work.
2. After 10 minutes call the teams back and have each team explain its model to the whole group. Applaud each team's work.



*If you are using a demonstration model that you prepared, begin here by showing the group the model you created.*

**Using the model you created or the ones created by the students, make the following points about healthy and unhealthy relationships.**

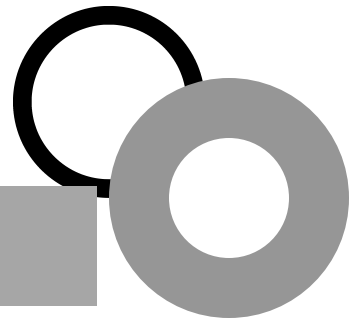
- The models represent that people are connected to each other through personal relationships. We know that human beings are social creatures; we cannot survive or grow in healthy ways independent of other people.
- The different rubber bands represent that we are involved in many different kinds of relationships. Some are strong and influential like relationships between best friends and family members. These relationships are represented by the strong heavy rubber bands. Other relationships are relatively weak and fragile, and the model represents these with the thinner rubber bands.  
We are all part of a web of relationships. We have relationships with family members, classmates, and people at our workplaces. Such groups can exert great influence in one another's lives. What affects the life of one of our friends can also affect our relationship with him or her. (To demonstrate this, pull on one rubber band in your model and ask all the groups to notice how all the others are affected. This movement is even more dramatic if you pull on one of the thicker rubber bands.)
- When people are excited or joyful, the people connected to them also feel that excitement or joy. On the other hand, if people are in an argument with their friends, the argument can put a strain on every other relationship they have. If one of their relationships becomes stronger, or if one of their weak connections grows into a strong connection, it can strengthen the entire network of relationships.
- If one of our relationships becomes overpowering and dominates our life, it can waken all the other relationships. (Demonstrate by pulling on a rubber band in your model, snapping it several times.) Notice what happens to all the other relationships – they become strained. When one person in a relationship pulls the other in a direction that is unhealthy and manipulates or controls the relationship, the whole web of relationships is affected. For example, if a friend has an eating disorder and has sworn you to secrecy, you may be afraid to inform others of the problem because you are afraid the person won't be your friend anymore. Sometimes people fear abandonment and so stay connected to others even when they know doing so is an unhealthy situation.
- This kind of relationship is called codependency. Each person is dependent on the other in some way, and the relationship supports the unhealthy manipulation and control that one person has over another. In a codependent relationship, the person who allowed the other to dominate sometimes makes the codependency worse by allowing everything to look okay from the outside. These are very unhealthy relationships.



- In the worst situations, one person controls another with violence or physical control. This kind of relationship has a victim and an abuser. Often the interconnectedness in an abusive relationship is so tight the only way that the abuse can be stopped is for the relationship to break or be severed. (Demonstrate by pulling one rubber band very tight. Then cut that rubber band with a scissors.) Consider what has happened to the abusive relationship and the other relationships. The person in the center was able to regain some balance in his or her other relationships. People can never fully understand themselves as persons or assume some control of their life without understanding how their important relationships influence them.

### ***Option C: Relationships and the Media- Evaluating the Images***

***Before the session:*** Select a movie clip, currently popular song, magazine, newspaper, or TV advertisement that presents or portrays an image or images of relationships. Review the media you have selected in relation to the questions on the prepared handout, *Relationships and the Media: Evaluating the Images*, included in the separate handout section at the end of this lesson.



# PRAYER RESOURCES

Listed on this page are Scripture references and suggested music for use with the high school lessons.

## SCRIPTURE

- |                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Genesis 16         | Love and Jealousy          |
| 2. Genesis 33: 1-17   | Letting Go of the Past     |
| 3. Judges 10: 10-16   | Effects of Sin             |
| 4. 1 Samuel 20        | Friends Forever            |
| 5. Psalm 51           | A Fresh Start              |
| 6. Psalm 103          | Letting Go of Anger        |
| 7. Proverbs 22: 24-25 | Choosing friends           |
| 8. Sirach 6: 5-17     | Friendship, False and True |
| 9. Matthew 18: 21-35  | Forgive Us Our Debts       |
| 10. Matthew 26: 36-45 | Jesus' Imperfect Friends   |
| 11. Mark 2: 1-12      | Faithful Friends           |
| 12. Mark 14: 66-72    | A Friend's Betrayal        |
| 13. Luke 15: 1-7      | Lost and Found             |
| 14. Luke 15: 11-32    | God's Limitless Love       |
| 15. John 17           | Prayer for Friends         |
| 16. Acts 20:36-38     | Good-bye to a Friend       |

## MUSIC

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Envia Tu Espiritu/Send Us Your Spirit | Bob Hurd                        |
| 2. Lean On Me                            | Bill Withers                    |
| 3. We Are One Body                       | Dana Scallon                    |
| 4. Bread for the World                   | Bernadette Farrell              |
| 5. Christ Be Our Light                   | Bernadette Farrell              |
| 6. Be Not Afraid                         | Bob Dufford                     |
| 7. Go Make a Difference                  | Steve Angrisano                 |
| 8. Pescador de Hombres                   | Cesareo Gabarain                |
| 9. Somos El Cuerpo de Cristo             | Jaime Cortez                    |
| 10. The Summons                          | KELVINGROVE (arr. Bobby Fisher) |
| 11. Gather Your People                   | Bob Hurd                        |
| 12. Lead Me, Lord                        | John D. Becker                  |
| 13. Here I Am                            | Tom Booth                       |
| 14. Be With Me, Lord                     | Tom Booth                       |