



DISCUSSION GUIDE—BEFRIENDING YOURSELF

The items in red are to help leaders make it easy for students to contribute during small group discussion.

Please don't use them as a bulleted list of points to make during the discussion. Instead, read the helps ahead of time. For each discussion question, save one discussion helper in the back pocket of your brain. Only use it if you're hearing an awkward silence as students struggle to answer the question.

1. Go around the circle. Everyone share your name and where you are from.

If you can, share an example of a friendship you admire. (It can be real or fictional.) What do you appreciate about that friendship?

2. Jonathan was a selfless friend to David. Who is a selfless, supportive friend to you? What has that friend done that makes you thankful for his/her friendship?

LEADERS' HINTS

(Take some notes on what students say here so you can reference them in the answers to number 4.)

(What are some ways Jonathan was friendly to David? He defended his reputation in front of King Saul. He told him what he appreciated about him. He tried to treat him with the kindness with which the Lord treats people.)

(How would friendly talk sound if a friend is disappointed? For example, they didn't make a team, didn't get an invite, got a lower grade than they wanted.)

(How would friendly talk sound if a friend is struggling? For example, they have a difficult class, are being bullied, are wrestling with temptation or repeated sin.)

3. Jesus enjoyed spending time with people who were a mess. How would you treat others differently if you didn't focus on how the "cool group" views you when you befriend those who are viewed as a "mess" socially?

LEADERS' HINTS

(So often when we walk into a room, our first thoughts are where we rank compared to the other people. Can you relate to that? What does that cause you to do?)

(You can speak kindly of others because it isn't bad for you if their reputation goes up.)

(You can ask about other people's interests because you don't need to be the star of the conversation.)

4. God calls us to live for Jesus. How would your friendships change if you were to "live for the one who died for you"?

LEADERS' HINTS

(You don't live to get yourself attention or pity.)

(You don't live to please your friends, which frees you from some negative peer pressure.)

(You can treat others in the way that Jesus treated you, which is very kind.)

(You don't need other people to appreciate or pay you back, because your friendliness doesn't depend on their response.)

5. Think of how you often speak to yourself. What would it be like if you spoke to yourself the way Jonathan spoke to David?

LEADERS' HINTS

(Refer to what students said in question number 1 and ask them to apply the same thought process to themselves.)

(When your friend is disappointed, you acknowledge their situation is tough and encourage them to keep going.)

(When your friend feels bad about doing something wrong, you don't pretend they did nothing wrong, but you don't beat them up about it. You gently point out their failure so you can assure them you still love them and Jesus does too.)

6. Jesus loved his friends without evaluating them. How would your life change if you were not evaluating yourself so often?

LEADERS' HINTS

(Self-evaluation puts a lot of pressure on you. Friendship doesn't come with that kind of pressure.)

(Evaluation often serves to bolster your self-image. But your identity doesn't come from your accomplishments. Your identity is already fixed as a unique creation of the Father.)

(Where do you feel pressure to perform? Grades? Music? Sports? Popularity? Social media? Those things are gifts from God for us to enjoy and for us to use as a blessing to others. They aren't meant to give us more anxiety. When you see your academic self as a friend, it's fun. When you see your basketball self as a friend, it's a joy. If you see music as jamming with friends, it's in its proper place.)

7. In Psalm 42:11, David speaks to himself, "Why, my soul, are you downcast?" In modern English: "What's bothering you right now?" Ask yourself this question and respond like a Christian friend.

LEADERS' HINTS

(Students may spend more time talking about what's bothering them than they do responding like a Christian. The second part is the most important, so encourage students to think how a Christian friend would respond to what's bothering them.)

(David talks to himself the way you talk to a friend. When he's sad, he asks himself, "What's going on?" Can you talk to yourself that way?)

(If a dear friend asked you, "What's going on with you right now?" what would you say? All of the sudden, you are talking to yourself like a friend.)

(This idea has crossover with the secular idea of mindfulness—just be aware of what you are feeling and think through why you might feel that way. It's not about whether you deserve compassion. You don't get compassion because you deserve it. You get it because you are having a tough time.)

[When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them. Why? Not because they had earned or deserved it but because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36).]