



Introduction

Many schools follow a programme of key values throughout the school year. These values can be an important framework for helping to define and validate the work of the school 'beyond the curriculum'. Each value can be used as the theme for collective worship, the focus for classroom reflection and the subject matter for main hall or quiet corner displays.

The Bible has so much to offer in this area of positive personal, relational and community values, and its timeless wisdom can help all schools pass on to the next generation the qualities of life that are most valuable and which, as Christians, we believe are not only God-given but also can be God-energised in our lives.

Preparation

What follows is a series of ideas linked to the value of **'Friendship'**.

It includes: key themes to explore, a key Bible verse to use, key concepts to unpack, ideas for displays and reflective corners, as well as Bible story links with further connections to material on the Barnabas websites.

Development

1. Key themes to explore:

What are the qualities of a good friend?

How do we make friends? Are there criteria for choosing a friend?

Why do we need friends?

How can we be/become good friends?

How do we keep our friends? What nourishes friendships?

2. Key Bible verses

'Greater love hath no man than this, than that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13, KJV).

or

'The greatest way to show love for friends is to die for them' (CEV).

'I speak to you as my friends' (John 15:15).



Jesus was known as the 'friend of sinners' (Matthew 11:19).

'A friend is always a friend' (Proverbs 17:17).

'A true friend is closer than your own family' (Proverbs 18:24).

'You can trust a friend who corrects you' (Proverbs 27:6).

Abraham and Moses are known as 'friends of God' (2 Chronicles 20:7 and Exodus 33:11).

'You are better off having a friend than being all alone... If you fall, your friend can help you up. But if you fall without having a friend nearby, you are really in trouble' (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

Friendship with God:

When God made people, one way they were like God was the ability to offer and receive the gift of friendship. However, when people chose to betray friendship (with God or with each other), this gift became broken. People often choose to hate others, turning friends into enemies. But the Bible story shows how God never stopped longing for friendship with and between all people. Finally, Jesus came in to the world so that everyone could see the 'forever friendship' that God offers. It is a friendship that is greater than the power of revenge, hatred and death and, when Jesus rose from the dead, it was made available to anyone. Again and again God shows through the stories in the Bible how hatred can be turned into love and enemies can become friends. This is the good news that Christians are called to pass on to a broken world.

3. Words about Friendship

There are lots of famous sayings about friendship written by the great and the good. You can find many in books of quotations or in those little 'books of friendship' often sold in stationer's. The fact that there is such a wealth of advice and wisdom on friendship shows how important friendship is for our general well-being and our fulfilment as people. Some of the following quotes include the words 'man' and 'he' and you may like to change these to more inclusive language. Here are some possible quotes to use:

'A faithful friend is a strong defence; and if you have found such a one, you have found a treasure.'
from the Apocrypha

'What sweetness is left in life if you take away friendship.'
Cicero

'Friendship is equality.'
Pythagoras

'A man should keep his friendships in constant repair'.
Dr Johnson



'No man is useless while he has a friend.'

Robert Louis Stevenson

'A friend is the gift of God, and only he who made hearts can unite them.'

Robert Southey

'The man who has one friend is infinitely better off than the man who has no enemies and a million acquaintances'

E.F. Benson

'The only way to have a friend is to be one.'

Ralph Waldo Emerson

'Friendship is a sheltering tree.'

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

'Friend is a word of royal tone; friend is a poem all alone.'

Hafiz (Persian poet)

'I get by with a little help from my friends.'

John Lennon and Paul McCartney

'Each friend represents a world in us; a world possibly not born until they arrived, and is only by this meeting that the new world is born.'

Anais Nin

'Fate chooses your relations; you choose your friends.'

Jacques Delille

Here is a **dictionary definition of friendship**:

the tendency to desire what is best for the other; sympathy and empathy; honesty, perhaps in situations where it may be difficult for others to speak the truth, especially in terms of pointing out the perceived faults of one's counterpart; mutual understanding and compassion

4. **Key concepts to unpack**

- Making new friends - starting in a new class/school. Finding out about each other; where do I start? What questions do I ask? What do we have in common? What differences?
- How can we be friends to others? By noticing, smiling, helping, listening and waiting
- How do I receive another's friendship? Thankfully, gently, attentively, patiently and ready to receive.
- How do we mark friendship? What ways of greeting each other are there? What friendship games might we play in a circle to remember names? How can we play a game that puts us in differently sized groups to work together to make friendships?

- Friendship is a partnership of shared experiences, talents, interests and enthusiasms. If it is all one-way traffic, is this really friendship?
- 'Friendship is...' Canvass the class with a survey on this and talk about the best ways they come up with for defining true friendship. Start with some ideas:

True friendship is sharing everything.

True friendship is being able to laugh or cry together, whatever happens.

True friendship is wanting the best for the other person, even if it you lose out.

True friendship is not weakened by separation of time or distance.

- For discussion: how many friends is it possible to have? Are there different sorts and degrees of friendship? What is the difference between acquaintance, mate, special friend, soul mate, partner, associate and buddy?

5. Ideas for a hall display or reflective corner in the classroom

- Include lots of pictures of best friends who are walking, playing, talking or having fun together
- Include some of the sayings about friendship (see above)
- Include a Bible open with a key Bible verse/verses (see above)
- Include signs of friendship, for example friendship bracelets; a ring; a greetings card or other merchandise with the words 'best friend' on them. You can find various symbols for friendship from around the world if you search for friendship images on the Internet.
- Include an image from the *Friends*DVD series
- Include digital photos of children giving handshakes/high fives/hugs and other forms of saying hello to each other. Maybe one class can be responsible for providing these?
- Include some other physical images such as several wooden or metal links joined up, different coloured ropes tied together, jigsaw pieces joined up
- The Zinnia plant is a symbol of 'thoughts of friendship'. Include some pictures or even a real plant as part of this display. Have a packet of seeds from this plant nearby – what 'seeds of friendship' will you sow today? Ivy is also used as an image of fidelity and friendship.
- The precious stone lapis lazuli is a symbol of friendship
- Include questions/statements such as: *Who are my special friends? What makes a friend special? How can I be a good friend? Why do I need friends? True friendship is...*
- Include a special prayer on the theme (by a child perhaps)

6. Ideas for collective worship

[A whole school assembly outline on friendship, using the story of Ruth.](#)

7. Further work for the classroom and Bible story links

- A key reflective question: **Who is your best friend and why?**
- Discussion starters



Two's company - I wonder why most of us would say we need to have a special friend?

It takes two to tango - what are the qualities of a special friend? Do you think that friends should have lots in common with each other, or that friendship can work even if people have different views and tastes?

Two-getherness - what would you miss if you didn't have a friend? What difference to *you* does having a friend make?

Take 2 - what do you think is the test of a true friendship?

Two too many? - Why do you think some friendships don't last? What sort of things put pressure on even the best of friends?

Classroom Activity ideas

1. 'It's not good to be alone'

Read the story of Adam's search in the Garden of Eden for a true friend (Genesis 2:18-25). What do you think this story tells us about the nature of friendship?

2. In your class or children's group arrange to interview pairs of friends to discover what your group's top ten qualities for a good friendship are.
3. In teams list as many famous friendship pairings as you can think of, from real life or fiction. For example: Laurel and Hardy; Morecambe and Wise; Romeo and Juliet; Jack and Jill; Bill and Ben, and so on.
4. A famous friendship from the Bible is that of David and Jonathan. You can read part of their story in 1 Samuel 20. Their friendship was severely tested by the attitude of Jonathan's father, King Saul, who came to hate David. What sort of risks does Jonathan take for the sake of friendship? What proofs of their friendship can you find in the story?
5. The book of Proverbs in the Bible has some advice on friendship.

Give the following Bible verses to groups to look up and then collect together what each finds there about friendship. Ask them to try putting each of the verses in their own words. **Proverbs: 17:17; 18:24; 19:6; 27:6; 27:17; 19:4; 17:9; 16:28.**

For a useful summary of some of these verses, see The Barnabas Children's Bible, story 150, 'Wisdom about Friends'.

6. Sometimes best friends exchange a special gift as a sign of their commitment to each other. In a marriage, for example, rings are exchanged; others may use friendship bracelets or bands. In groups, come up with some ideas for original friendship tokens that could be used to symbolise a lasting friendship.
7. Christians believe that God's friendship towards us will last forever. Try making a Mobius ring. Cut a long strip of paper about 3 cms wide and 20 cms long. Twist the paper once before

joining the ends together. If you now write a sentence such as 'God's friendship lasts for ever' again and again along the strip, you should find that the last word eventually meets up with the first word you have written.

8. **Further thoughts for extended work and discussion**

- What other words are linked to the concept of friendship? For example, loyalty, devotion, commitment, mutual support, empathy, support.
- What about people who have no friends?
- Why do some people find it hard to make friends?
- What will make our class known as a friendly class?
- What will make our school known as a friendly school?
- Can we make other people be friendly?
- What helps friendship develop and last?
- What do we mean when we say 'a friend in need is a friend indeed'?
- Does having lots of friends on social networking sites like Facebook really mean I have true friends? Discuss!

Here are some ideas about what makes a good friend. How would you rank these in order of importance? What new ones would you add?

- Good friends listen to each other.
- Good friends don't put each other down or hurt each other's feelings.
- Good friends try to understand each other's feelings and moods.
- Good friends help each other solve problems.
- Good friends give each other compliments.
- Good friends can disagree without hurting each other.
- Good friends are dependable.
- Good friends respect each other.
- Good friends are trustworthy.
- Good friends give each other room to change.
- Good friends care about each other.