



Unit 1: BFFs

Faith Focus: Jesus is our friend.

Friends love all the time. (Proverbs 17:17)

SESSION 2

GROW IN FAITH

Friends Include—Mark 2:13-17

In this week's lesson we hear the story of Levi. Levi was a tax collector. When Jesus saw Levi, he issued the invitation "Follow me." With these words, Jesus extended an invitation to someone most people didn't even like. But the story of Jesus calling Levi is good news for us! Jesus' invitation is given to everyone. Not just to those who are perfect and righteous but to imperfect, ordinary, and even disliked people. Jesus calls all people to follow.

Levi must have known his life would change drastically if he accepted Jesus' invitation to follow. The passage does not mention any hesitation on Levi's part. When Jesus called, Levi followed. Jesus calls us all, and it seems even a tax collector wanted to be included in that kind of work. And the work of inclusion is work for us all.

- Help children notice differences.
- Utilize collaborative activities.
- Discuss feelings of exclusion and inclusion.

SUPPLIES

crayons

CEB Bible storybook

TV and DVD player or
streaming device

sticky notes

pencils

dot stickers in at least four
colors

construction paper

scissors

tape

SESSION OUTLINE

COME TOGETHER

Prepare to Learn

Faith Focus—Jesus Is Our Friend

Friends on the Journey (Puzzle)
and Finding Friends (Social)

FAITH CONNECTIONS

Read the Story

Big Faith Video

Faith Response

FUN WITH FAITH

Follow the Leader
(Movement Game)

Group Together (Critical
Thinking)

The Great Paper Chain (Craft)

SHARE YOUR FAITH

Big Faith Idea—Faith in Jesus

COME TOGETHER

Prepare to Learn

Supplies: All-Ages Class Pack, Activity Sheets, Activity Stickers

Prepare Ahead: Set up your area with the supplies and activity pages needed for today's session. Display the Unit 1 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15), Unit 1 Faith Focus Poster (Class Pack—pp. 2 & 23), and Unit 1 Faith Response Poster (Class Pack—pp. 11 & 14) to use later in the session.

- As children arrive, invite them to join you in a circle.
- Give each child a copy of the "Spring Sticker Page" (Activity Sheets—p. 29) and their own set of Activity Stickers. Have children place the coin sticker on the Session 2 space.

SAY: We are learning about people who were friends with Jesus and how we can be friends with Jesus.

ASK: How can you be a friend to Jesus? How is Jesus a friend to you?

Faith Focus—Jesus Is Our Friend

Supplies: All-Ages Class Pack, crayons

Prepare Ahead: Display the Unit 1 Faith Focus Poster (Class Pack—pp. 2 & 23). Photocopy "Jesus' Table" (Leader Guide—p. 22) for each child.

SAY: Jesus was friends with a lot of different people. He included all of them in his ministry. In our Bible story today, Jesus includes Levi and shares a meal with him.

ASK: What would it be like to sit at the table with Jesus?

- Give each child a copy of "Jesus' Table."
- Give children time and space to color the page and share their thoughts aloud.

Friends on the Journey and Finding Friends

Supplies: Activity Sheets, crayons

Prepare Ahead: Tear out "Friends on the Journey/Finding Friends" (Session 2 Activity Sheets) for each child.

SAY: In our Bible story today, we will hear how Jesus included people who were not popular in his group of friends. These friends traveled with Jesus and helped him show God's love to many people.

ASK: What can you do to let someone know you want to be their friend? How can people let you know that they want to be friends with you?

- Instruct children to solve the maze by picking up friends along the way. Also help children identify the pictures that show friendship.

FAITH CONNECTIONS

Read the Story

Supplies: CEB Bible storybook

- Invite the children to join you in a circle.
- Read the story of Jesus and Levi (Mark 2:13–17) from your favorite CEB Bible storybook.

SAY: Levi was not very popular because of his job as a tax collector. People thought Levi just wanted to take all of their money. But Jesus knew that Levi was a good person, even though he had made some mistakes and people didn't like him. Jesus included Levi in his group of friends.

ASK: How can we be friends to everyone, even if they make mistakes? What does it feel like to know that Jesus wants to be friends with everyone?

Big Faith Video

Supplies: Big Faith DVD, TV, DVD player or streaming device

- Watch the Session 2 video on the Big Faith DVD or via your Amplify Media subscription.
- Share the questions on the screen with the children. You may also choose to add your own questions. Give children time to share their responses and ideas.

ASK: What was your favorite part of the video?

Faith Response

Supplies: All-Ages Class Pack, sticky notes, pencils or crayons

Prepare Ahead: Display the Unit 1 Faith Response Poster (Class Pack—pp. 11 & 14) and Unit 1 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15) if you haven't already.

- Invite children to wonder about the images on the posters.
- Encourage children to say the Bible verse with you: "Friends love all the time" (Proverbs 17:17).

ASK: Have you ever made a mistake? What happened? What did you do next?

SAY: Everyone makes mistakes. The important thing is what we do next. Jesus knew that Levi had made mistakes and Levi could make a choice to make things right. Levi knew that his life would change if he followed Jesus—and so he chose to fix his mistakes! Jesus was happy to include his new friend Levi in his work of sharing God's love.

- Lay the Faith Response Poster on the floor or a table and invite the children to gather around it. Give each child a sticky note.

ASK: How do you think Levi felt before he met Jesus? How do you think Levi felt after he met Jesus? How do you think the community felt when they saw Levi fixing his mistakes?

- As the children share, invite them to use pencils or crayons to draw Levi's feelings on their sticky notes. Have the children put their sticky notes on the poster.

FUN WITH FAITH

Follow the Leader

ASK: Have you ever had to follow directions?

SAY: In our Bible story, Levi chose to follow Jesus. Let's play a game of "Follow the Leader."

- Have the children line up and travel around your space. Have the person at the front of the line do a motion that everyone behind will copy. After a short time, have the person at the front of the line go to the back so it is the next person's turn. Repeat until everyone in line has had a chance to be the leader.

ASK: How did it feel to follow the leader? How can we follow Jesus?

Group Together

Supplies: dot stickers in at least four colors

SAY: Jesus didn't want all of his friends to be just like him—or just like each other! He wanted to be friends with different kinds of people. Jesus wanted to include everyone in his friend group.

- Give each child a dot sticker to put on one hand.
- Have the children stand far apart from one another in the room. Tell them you will call different groups based on the color of the dots on their hands and they will have to organize themselves.
- Call out groups like: a group of all one color of dot, a group with two different colors, a group with three of one color, a group with one of each color, and so forth.

ASK: How did you feel having to figure out each type of group? What did it feel like to be included in a group?

The Great Paper Chain

Supplies: construction paper in multiple colors, scissors, tape

Prepare Ahead: Cut construction paper into long equal strips.

- Gather children in a circle. Give each child two or three strips of paper.
SAY: Jesus wants all of us to be his friends and to follow his example of being friends with many different kinds of people. When we are friends with each other, we are making Jesus' group of friends even bigger!
- Make a circle with one paper strip and use tape to secure it. Then invite the children to come forward and add their paper strips to the chain.

SHARE YOUR FAITH

Big Faith Idea—Faith in Jesus

Supplies: All-Ages Class Pack

Prepare Ahead: Display the Spring Big Faith Idea Poster (Class Pack—pp. 4 & 21).

Photocopy the Unit 1 Family Faith Letter (Leader Guide—pp. 91–92) as needed.

- Show children the Big Faith Idea Poster.
SAY: Today we learned that Jesus includes everyone, even if they make mistakes. Making mistakes is part of being human, and we can do our best to fix the mistakes.
ASK: How do you make something right after you make a mistake?
SAY: Including people is one way we can show God's love.
ASK: How does it feel to be included in a group?
- Invite the children to gather in a circle, shoulder to shoulder. Invite all of the children to put one or both hands in the center of the circle, one child at a time. As each child places their hand(s) in, encourage the children to say, "Jesus includes everyone" with you.
PRAY: Repeat after me: "God, we thank you for including all people in your love. Help us follow Jesus' example of being friends with people who are often left out. Amen."
- Send the Unit 1 Family Faith Letter and activity home with each child who has not yet received them.
- Also send home any activities or items made during today's session.

REPRODUCIBLE SESSION 2 Jesus' Table

Draw yourself and your friends eating with Jesus!



Art: Tatevik Avakyan/Illustration Online LLC