



SHARPENING IRON

BUILDING GODLY FRIENDSHIPS



HOT
SHOTS

Sharpening Iron: Building Godly Friendships
Revised by Christa Lord

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Introduction

God's Word is the primary catalyst for our spiritual growth. And as God teaches us His truth through His Word, He does so in a way that captivates our attention and opens our understanding. Just as Christ illustrated His teaching with tangible objects—a coin, a tree, or a sheep—you can use illustrations to cement biblical principles in the minds of your students. As you teach, instead of simply talking about how God's Word reveals our heart (cf. James 1:22–25), bring a mirror to show your students.

Hot Shots encourage interaction between students and teacher through exercises, handouts, and lively illustrations. Use the suggestions provided in each lesson, but feel free to enrich the lesson by using your own ideas.

Lesson Format

Each Hot Shot lesson follows the same format.

- The **Warm-Up** introduces the lesson topic to your students through activities such as songs, games, handouts, and discussion questions.
- The **Bridge** transitions from The Warm-Up to the main text of Scripture for the lesson.
- The **Lesson Content** introduces and expands the main points. Throughout the lesson, you'll use handouts and discussion questions to help students internalize what they've heard.
- The **Closing** concludes the lesson by reviewing the main points and applying them to your students' lives.

Handouts may be copied for church use. They are also available as a free PDF download on the *Sharpening Iron* product page at positiveaction.org.

Before Each Lesson . . .

1. Read through the lesson and note the objectives and any preparation needed for creative teaching segments.
2. Adapt the lesson if necessary. Determine ahead of time if you'll need to modify teaching methods or activities to fit your equipment or facilities.
3. Plan your schedule for class time. Each lesson can be taught in 30–45 minutes, but feel free to shorten or lengthen the lesson to fit your needs.
4. Be enthusiastic! Excitement on your part will help cultivate your students' interest. If you don't feel that one of the teaching ideas or Warm-Ups provided will excite your teens, modify it to fit your group.

Course Objectives

This study will . . .

- Examine the purpose and blessings of friendship
- Note the qualities of a good friend, as well as the qualities of a bad friend
- Discuss good listening and communication skills
- Map out conflict resolution within a friendship
- Distinguish forgiveness, restoration, and reconciliation

Lesson Overview

Lesson 1—What Is Friendship?

- Friendship is a way to share God's goodness with a friend.
- The purpose of friendship is to glorify God.
- Friendship offers fun, support, community, and growth.

Lesson 2—Characteristics of a Good Friend

- A good friend loves, builds trust, and reaches out.
- Love often requires personal sacrifice.

Lesson 3—Characteristics of a Bad Friend

- We should not make close friends with people who degrade themselves or others.
- Self-centeredness is the opposite of the love described in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7.

Lesson 4—Building a Good Friendship

- Good listening requires paying attention.
- Verbal and nonverbal communication are equally important.
- We should respect our friends, even when we disagree.

Lesson 5—How to Heal a Friendship

- Before you confront a friend who has wronged you, address your own sin.
- If possible and appropriate, let love cover minor offenses.
- Forgiveness is unconditional, but reconciliation and restoration depend on the willingness of both parties.

LESSON 1



WHAT IS FRIENDSHIP?



Before we dive into creating or improving friendships, we first should define what friendship means.

Objectives

- Friendship is a way to share God’s goodness with a friend.
- The purpose of friendship is to glorify God.
- Friendship offers fun, support, community, and growth.

Lesson

Warm-Up

Give each student a copy of Handout 1 (“The Best Kind of Friend”) to work on before class starts, or complete it as a group during class. Discuss what the students chose as the most important qualities of a friend, the least important, and why.

Bridge

Friendships can be great, mediocre, or straight-up horrible. It all depends on how friends treat each other and how much effort they put into the relationship.

But before we talk about the good and the bad, let’s start with the foundation: What is friendship? What makes friendship different from other relationships?

What Is Friendship?

This might seem like a no-brainer, but *friendship* can be defined as the relationship we have with a friend—someone with whom we share God’s goodness.

Preparation

You will need . . .

- Copies of Handout 1 (“The Best Kind of Friend”)
—one per student
- Pens or pencils

The right kind of friendship—true friendship—is really a form of love. We have our friends’ best interest at heart. We spend time together, discuss our hopes and fears, offer support, and have fun with them. A good friendship is a great source of joy and encouragement.

What Is the Purpose of Friendship?

We might think that friendship is only about enjoying someone’s company—or at the very least, it’s a way to avoid loneliness. But the real point of friendship is to glorify God. We interact with our friends in a way that reflects the character and work of God.

Discussion: How is friendship different from other relationships? If we treat friends with the same love and respect we should give to everyone, what makes friendship different? We rely on our friends in ways that we don’t rely on everyone we meet. Friendship is a two-way street, involving both give and take.

Read Psalm 1. What two types of people are contrasted in this psalm? What is the difference between them? What company do they keep, and what do they pursue?

What Are the Blessings of Friendship?

We can share God’s goodness with our friends in specific ways.

Fun

Friendship gives us a way to enjoy God’s gifts with other people. And while socializing may be invigorating for some and exhausting for others, most people enjoy companionship.

Illustration: Adam and Eve

God designed humans to be social. After creating Adam, He stated that it wasn’t good for Adam to live alone—so He made Eve. God created the first people to enjoy each other and to fellowship with Him (Gen. 2:18–23).

Support

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9–12. We uphold our friends during hard times, and they do the same for us. Our friends make us stronger.

Life isn't always fun—sometimes we get discouraged by heavy concerns. During these times, we can lift up our friends with encouragement, comfort, and advice. We celebrate good things together, and we sorrow over misfortune together.

Discussion: How does God respond to us when we're hopeless and helpless? See Psalm 37:23–26; 103:11–14. What are some ways we can reflect this compassion and support to our friends?

Community

How do people choose friends? We tend to make friends with people who are similar to us. Maybe we like the same things or share the same stage of life. While you're in school, most of your friends will also be in school. If you live in a neighborhood, maybe you're friends with others who live nearby. If you have a job, you may have friends at work. We create a sense of community when we share life experiences with others.

Illustration: Finding New Friends

The drawback, however, is the risk of losing these friendships as our interests and lifestyles change. That's normal for these kinds of friendships. As you grow, you will make friends with people you may not have considered before.

Teacher's Note: You may want to share your own experiences. How did your friendships change as you graduated school, started a family, or moved to a new area?

It's important for our closest friendships to be built on something more than convenience.

Read Ephesians 4:4–6. No matter how diverse Christians may be, we are all unified in Christ.

We all have different backgrounds, cultures, personalities, and life experiences, yet we form a unified family in Jesus. We have the same goal—to become like Christ. This kind of foundation helps to build strong friendships that last over time, forming a bond stronger than our differences.

Growth

Our friends greatly influence us—for good or evil. Good friends will help us grow in wisdom by teaching us about ourselves and about God. They can encourage us and challenge our failures. Older, more experienced friends can share wisdom they've learned over the years, helping us to make good life decisions.

On the other hand, the wrong kind of friends can pressure us to make unwise decisions. We may act like them to fit in, until we eventually become like them even when we're apart. When we spend much time with someone, we will copy their speech, worldview, and values.

Illustration: King Rehoboam's Counsel (2 Chron. 10:6–11, 16–19; 1 Kings 12:1–20)

After King Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam took the throne. Whereas Solomon was known for his wisdom, Rehoboam became known for his foolish decisions. He rejected the wise council of the elders and followed the advice of his younger friends.

He then had to pay the price for his actions. The people revolted against him in civil war, and the Kingdom of Israel split into two. Rehoboam lost his kingship over Israel and fled to another city for safety. His pride and foolishness, encouraged by his friends, tore his country apart.

Because of the great impact that our friends have on us, it's vital that we choose our friends carefully.

Discussion: Can a Christian be friends with someone who is unsaved? Based on our definition of friendship, the answer is yes—with some qualifications. A Christian can and should share goodness with others, including those who are unbelievers.

However, it's dangerous to underestimate how much our friends influence us. Believers and unbelievers have different values, and those values may differ on moral decisions. And while we should be able to depend on our friends for certain kinds of support, we won't be able to depend on an unsaved friend to offer us spiritual support or correction.

Young people often face pressure to fit in so that they will be liked by others. In a friendship, this can present a huge temptation to sin in order to make someone like us. Most young people should avoid forming *close* friendships or partnerships with the unsaved—*unless* that young person also has close, mature, Christian friends with whom they interact regularly.

While it's important to develop relationships with others, we can't forget the effect they have on us, in turn.

Closing

Each of us needs other people. Friendships are a great way to depend on each other and reflect God's love and truth to the people around us.

In the next lesson, we'll begin to look more closely at how to choose our friends, and how to be the right kind of friend.

THE BEST KIND OF FRIEND

What do you think are the most important qualities in a friend? On the right side of the scale, list 3 of the most important things about friendship. List 3 of the least important items on the left side.

1.

2.

3.

1.

2.

3.

