



SERVICE ORDER

WEEK 2: Best Buds on the "Vine"

NOTES: Meet with the SG leaders before the service. Go over the day's theme, discipline, tickets and answer any questions about small group time. Pray with the team.

GAME TIME:

- **(A/V)** Have an upbeat song ready to go
- "Cinco de Find-O": See game for supply list

TUNE TIME: (Sample: Change to reflect real song set)

- Song 1
- Song 2
- Song 3

REMIND TIME:

- **(A/V)** Opening series video, Powerpoints, and 1 video clip
- **(A/V)** Display the Trait-N-Tagline Powerpoint
- Go over UNITE – I can connect Jesus to every part of my life.

TEACH TIME:

- **(A/V)** Bring up first Powerpoint on screen
- **Engage Them:** Play game called "Hang Out or Hang Up," underscoring good friendships
- **Teach Them:** Teaching about what makes a good friendship with Jesus and others
- **Challenge Them:** Spotlight verse, close in prayer

GIVE TIME: (Sample: Change to reflect whatever campaign you're working on)

- Ex. Malaria nets in Africa
- **(A/V)** Bring up goal Powerpoint on screen

CLOSE TIME:

- Announcements, up-coming events, hand out flyers
- Ticket Drawing
- Closing Song: ??
- Keep Groups together: Do Relate Time Sheets until parents come

EXIT: Distribute Parent Take-Away card directly to parents

TEACH them

2nd Segment: (15 min. – Then turn over to small groups)

The intent with this section is to **tell the Bible story** in a compelling, animated, and interesting way. A good communicator uses the following script only as a guideline to speak, but never reading from it, as children can lose interest. Make the story come alive with voice inflections, funny anecdotes and noises, and passionate emotion. We intentionally give great latitude for the speaker to make it 'their own', using props, involving kids...whatever you can do to help the kids remember the Bible lesson.

BIBLE text

John 15:1-8 – Friendship with God and others

PROPS n things

- PowerPoints from UNITE_PP_VineCentral_wk2 file in Speaker_Materials folder
- Bumper video "VineCentral_Opening_Video" in Speaker_Materials folder
- The Bible

BEGIN speaking

Show slide ("Opening Video")

Show slide ("Teach Time")

WHO IS JOHN?

Today, we are in the book of John again. John is the fourth book of the gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. What makes these four books special is that they record the life and ministry of Jesus and the authors were there in person to see it! The book of John was written by the Apostle John, and it has a lot of passages and stories that are not found in the other three books, one of them we are looking at all this month. Let's find the 15th chapter. I will read verse 4 and you can read along with me:

Show slide ("John 15:4")

"Remain joined to me, just as I also remain joined to you. No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain joined to the vine. In the same way, you can't bear fruit unless you remain joined to me."

In this verse, we see the word “remain” used 4 times, and we also see the word “joined” used 4 times. And each time they are displayed, they are displayed together, “remain joined.” Everyone say “remain joined” on the count of three. Ready? 1, 2, 3: “Remain joined!” Again! “Remain joined!” Good job.

HUMAN PRETZEL EXERCISE:

Let’s all stand together. I want you to do an exercise for me. Small groups, I want you to each form a circle right where you are at and face each other. Got it? Good! Now, I want you stretch both arms out straight in front of you so that all of your arms are in the center of the circle. Now, take each hand and link it up with a random hand in the circle. Don’t see who the hand is attached to, just grab a hand. Every hand should be connected to another hand other than your own, and not the person to your left or your right. Keep holding hands. You all look like human pretzels!

“REMAIN” DEFINITION:

Can someone tell what the word “remain” means! **(Wait for answers)** That’s right! It means to continue, stay put, endure, keep going.

“JOIN” DEFINITION:

Can someone tell me what the word “joined” means? **(Wait for answers)** That’s right! It means connected, linked together. You, as a group, are officially joined together. You are connected. You are one. If I asked you to untangle yourselves without letting go of each other’s hand, we might be here all day, and you’d still be joined together. Is it okay if we remain joined like this for the rest of our time together? What? Okay, I’m just kidding! You can let go and have a seat.

Last week, we talked about the importance of getting connected to Jesus, the “True Vine.” Why? Because Jesus is the central source of life and all that is good. If Jesus encouraged us to “remain joined” to Him 4 times in one verse, then it must be important to not only take this seriously, but to understand why Jesus wants us to remain in Him and what it does for us when we do.

Show slide (“Friendship”)

And to understand what it means to “remain joined” to Him, we don’t have to look anywhere else but the Bible. In Matthew 22, Jesus talks about “friendship.” He summed up all the Law, the Prophets, and the Ten Commandments and squeezed them into two simple commands around friendship.

Show slide (“Friendship: With God”)

The first command around our friendship is with God. Matthew 22:37-38 says: **“Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind.’ (Deut. 6:5) This is the first and most important commandment.”**

Our whole purpose for even being on this earth is “to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” (ref. Westminster Shorter Catechism) If God is the central source of life and all that is good, why wouldn’t we love Him with all our heart, mind and strength?

Show slide (“Friendship: With Others”)

The second command around friendship is just as important. Friendship is not only with Jesus, but with other people; your family, your neighbors, friends at school, at church, on your sports teams and clubs. Jesus continues, **“And the second is like it. ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ (Lev. 19:18) Everything that is written in the Law and the Prophets is based on these two commandments.”**

The key to friendship with others is to find the type of friends that are going to push us closer to Jesus rather than pull us away. You want to be “best buds” on the Vine! And for those friends that are not Jesus followers, Jesus commands us to treat them with love and kindness, and be generous with our time and our money. But a close friend who is a Jesus follower is the only kind of friend that should get a lot of your time and attention. Be very careful when choosing who you will allow to be a close friend of yours. The Bible says, **“Don’t let anyone fool you. “Bad companions make a good person bad.” (1 Cor. 15:33)** Choose your friends wisely. We often become what we read, what we watch and who we hang out with.

STORY OF RUTH AND NAOMI:

There is a great story in the Old Testament about two friends, but they didn’t become friends in the normal way you might meet someone and be friends. This story is in the book of Ruth, and it’s a great picture of what a true friendship with God and others looks like when we think about “remaining joined” to Jesus. In a place called Moab there lived a nice family. Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons moved there because there was more food there than where they used to live. After a while Elimelech died, but Naomi wasn’t alone. She still had two sons.

Her sons got married, but after about ten years they died too. Naomi called her sons wives, Orpah and Ruth, and told them, “I am going to go back to where I used to live and I would like you also to go back to your family where you used to live. May God show you kindness as you have showed me.”

Orpah didn’t want to leave Naomi but Naomi told her not to worry, she would be fine. Orpah left sad, returning to her family.

Show slide (“Ruth 1:15-17”)

But no matter what Naomi said to Ruth, Ruth would not leave. **“Look,” said Naomi. “Your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.” But Ruth replied, “Don’t try to make me leave you and go back. Where you go I’ll go. Where you stay I’ll stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God.**

Where you die I'll die. And there my body will be buried. I won't let even death separate you from me. Ruth was really determined to go with Naomi, and so Naomi finally stopped urging Ruth to return to her people, and they returned to Bethlehem together.

Show slide ("Friendship: HOW?")

I'm going to tell you the end of this story in a minute and how important the decision of Ruth to stay with Naomi turned out to be in the big picture of God's grand story. But first, let's breakdown this friendship and see what we can learn for ourselves as we grow our friendship with Jesus and others that help push us closer to Him.

There are a few things that need to be part of every good and healthy friendship; it's what a strong friendship looks like. So many times, we attach ourselves to people who we call "friends," because they might be popular, or funny, or athletic. But the recipe for a good friendship should at least have these basic elements:

Show slide ("Friendship: HOW? - TRUST")

Ruth told Naomi, "Your God will be my God." She was putting her trust in God, even though she didn't know what the future held in a brand new country. A friendship with Jesus, and with other people, should always be based on trust. For Jesus, we need to trust that He always has our best interests in mind. Even when life is difficult and things are not going well, we need to trust Him, because we can't see the future and we don't know the plan He has for us.

The same is true for our friendship with others. When Ruth followed Naomi, she was showing great trust in her friend. Why? Because they had a deep, close friendship. Would you ever share your private or personal feelings with a stranger? No! You do that with someone you trust and know very well. Would you get into a car with a stranger or someone you didn't trust just because they asked you to? No! You need to have a close friendship that is based on trust in order to put your life in someone else's hands.

Show slide ("Friendship: HOW? - ALIGNMENT")

A friendship with Jesus should not only be based on trust, but you need to be in alignment with Jesus. "Alignment" is a big word, but it basically means you need to be on the same page, be like-minded, and have the same purpose for life. This is where the importance of prayer comes in, why you must study your Bible consistently, spend time worshipping Him and thanking Him for His goodness. All these things bring you into alignment with His purposes for your life.

The same is true for your friendship with others. Earlier, we played the game, "Hang Out or Hang Up." In that game, it showed two types of friends: one that was pulling you away from Jesus by tempting you to do wrong or illegal things, and the other type

of friend that aligns with your values; one that is on the same page when it comes to doing the kinds of things that are right and good. Ruth said to Naomi, “**Don’t try to make me leave you and go back. Where you go I’ll go.**” Ruth understood the importance of her friendship with Naomi, and that those kinds of friends just don’t grow on trees. You want to be best buds with other Jesus followers, and together, you can grow closer to Jesus, the “True Vine.”

Show slide (“Friendship: HOW? – SHARED EXPERIENCES”)

Ruth and Naomi had a lot of history together. They were first brought together through marriage to Naomi’s son. They were mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, but when Ruth’s husband died, Ruth and Naomi became close friends. Why? Because they had spent years together, built up memories filled with joy, sadness, laughter and pain. Shared experiences bring you closer together.

When you start trusting Jesus with your whole life, and align your thinking and heart with His, you begin to see Him in every part of life. Our eyes are open to the fact that God created everything: the stars, the ocean, trees, animals, and us. You are a walking miracle, so intricately and uniquely designed by the Creator; it’s mind-blowing! You start to thank Him for answered prayers, and for showing up in those tough times just when you needed someone to talk to. Over time, you will have so many shared experiences together that you could not imagine living without Him in your life.

Show slide (“Friendship: HOW? – OBEY”)

This last one is a little different when it comes to a friendship with Jesus. Part of having a close friendship with Jesus is obeying His commands. That means that when you want to be angry at someone and get revenge, Jesus commands you to forgive them instead. Obeying Jesus means when you are tempted to steal that “thing” when no one is looking, you put it back because Jesus commands us “not to steal.” It means that when the kids at school are picking on another kid and making him cry, you step in and stand up for that kid and be his friend. I’m sure you can think of other ways of obeying Jesus and doing things His way that are completely different and opposite of how we would handle them on our own.

When it comes to a friendship with others, it’s not so much about obedience as it is about loyalty. You can be friends with someone without having to obey and do everything they tell you to do or say. More than that, you don’t always have to agree with your close friends. You might be total opposites of each other. In our Bible story, Naomi was not the easiest person to like. She was often negative and depressing to be around, and she tried to push both of her daughters away and send them back to their own families. Naomi told Ruth to call her “Mara,” which meant “bitter.” Ruth was opposite of Naomi, but she didn’t let that get in the way of her friendship with Naomi. To be loyal is to have someone’s back, to stand with that person no matter what

happens. And when you fight, you don't just blow up the friendship; you talk it through until you get it all worked out. When you love a friend, and trust them, and have history and shared experiences with them, you become loyal to that friend, willing to stand up for them and protect them.

THE REST OF THE STORY:

The rest of the story about Ruth and Naomi is that Ruth eventually married the owner of the field she worked in. His name was Boaz, and Boaz loved God very much. Boaz and Ruth had a son named Obed. Obed, when he was grown, had a son named Jesse. Jesse's son was David. The great-grandson of Ruth became king of Israel, King David! Ruth was not even an Israelite, but because Ruth committed herself to Naomi's people and was such a good friend, she was grafted in to the Jewish family line, and that family line was the line that Jesus was born from.

So, it started with the friendship between two women who could have easily gone their own separate ways. But they stayed together, which led to Ruth finding a husband, and their child would produce the family tree Jesus, the Savior of the world, would be born from.

Make sure you choose your friends wisely, and be the kind of Godly person that makes it easy for others to choose you as a friend.

Show slide ("Take-Away Point")

Our action hero, Unity, wants us to remember this Take-Away Point from today's lesson. Say it with me: **"A close friendship with Jesus is the key to my spiritual growth."**

Our Action Hero, Unity, knows about having a close friendship with Jesus, because she did it the wrong way for so long. People loved hanging out with her, but she soon discovered who her real friends were after her hover car accident. No one wanted to hang out with her because she was not longer fun to be around. In her loneliness, Unity reached out to Jesus and asked Him come into her heart and become her one, true friend. Having a close friendship with Jesus is the key to our spiritual growth.

EVALUATE their understanding

Okay kids...let's huddle up and face your small group leaders. Small group leaders, go through the **STEP 2 - EVALUATE** section on your small group leader sheet with your kids.

(While small groups are going, use this time to check your notes, reset your props, and walk around to some of the groups and listen to how it's going.)

CHALLENGE them

3rd Segment: (5 min. – Then turn over to small groups)

The intent with this section is to **encourage and challenge the kids** to take a spiritual step forward this week. We want them to stop and think, make better choices, form new habits and bring God into their everyday world. This is a great time to speak from your heart and then pray for them.

PROPS n things

- PowerPoints from UNITE_PP_VineCentral_wk2 file in Speaker_Materials directory
- 1 white oversized tee shirt (to place on a child)
- 1 jar of jelly
- 1 plastic knife

BEGIN speaking

It's easy to become friends with someone that is not a very good influence on you, because at first, they seem so nice and all-around normal. It's only after you spend more time with them and get to know them better, that the real person inside starts to show itself.

Let me demonstrate it this way. **(Call a child up to the stage and put the white tee shirt on them. Grab the jar of jelly and the knife.)**

(Name) here is a pretty good kid. He helps out around the house, does his homework, gets pretty good grades, and generally is a nice person to be around. However, **(name)** has been hanging around with a new friend, **(name of friend)**. And this friend talked **(name)** into putting a sign that says, "Kick Me" on the back of student. **(Smear some jelly on the tee shirt)**. He pushed a younger kid down on the ground and called him a "sissy" **(More jelly)**. He called someone a bad name **(More jelly)**. He watches inappropriate TV shows and movies **(More jelly)**. He doesn't come when his mom calls **(More jelly)**. Slowly over time, **(name of friend)** has rubbed off on **(name)**. His mom has noticed some new behaviors and increased disobedience. She even caught him stealing some snacks that were only meant for school lunches. She had to discipline him for calling his sister a mean name.

In other words, when you hang around kids that don't know Jesus, and that get into trouble regularly, or use bad or hurtful words, or talk back to the teacher – those bad habits can rub off on you, like a grape jelly stain on a white shirt! Hang around them

enough, and you will become just like them. **(Carefully removed the jelly stained shirt and dismiss the child.)**

We all have lots of friends, but your close, close friends – those should be “best buds” on the Vine; those who love Jesus and treat others with kindness and respect. When you find a friend like that, treat them like a gift from God. Be the kind of friend to others that Ruth was to Naomi. Be loyal, kind and unselfish - and look for those kinds of character traits in others.

Show slide (“Spotlight Verse”)

Let's say our Spotlight Verse with me from John 15:5: **“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.”**

Let's Pray: **“Dear God, thank You for giving us friends that push us closer to You, and helping us recognize those friends that can pull us away from You. I pray that these kids understand the deep value in knowing Jesus as a close friend, and as it says in John, “If we remain in Jesus, He will remain in us.” Lord, apart from You, we can do nothing; nothing that is good or has long-lasting value. I pray they not only stay connected to You, but grow a deep, close friendship with You and with other believers. In Jesus Name, Amen.”**

Great job! Next week, we're going to talk about how to produce good fruit in your life. Until then, have a great week.

ENCOURAGE their walk

Okay kids...let's huddle up and face your small group leaders. Small group leaders, go through the **STEP 3 - ENCOURAGE** section on your small group leader sheet with your kids.

WEEK 2: Best Buds on the "Vine"

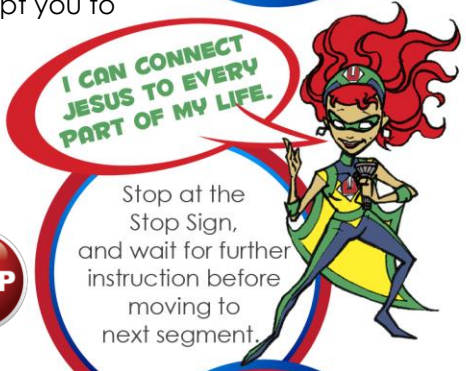
EXPLORE – their opinion

What is the difference between a good friend and a bad friend? Name some differences.

Do you remember the game we just played? Have you ever had a friend tempt you to do wrong things before? What happened?

If you had a friend that was causing you to do wrong things and say wrong or hurtful things, would you have courage to stop hanging out with them? Why or why not?

Let's say our tagline together: **"I can connect Jesus to every part of my life."**



Stop at the Stop Sign, and wait for further instruction before moving to next segment.



Don't rush it! Remember, the goal is not to just get through it, but to **get it through**.



Your 2 goals: **relate** with them, **reinforce** the lesson.

EVALUATE – their understanding

The two commands where Jesus summed up all the law and prophets gives us the roadmap for friendships. Fill in the blanks for me:

Jesus command us to love ____ (**God**) and to love _____ (**others**).

What do you remember about the story of Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi? (**Naomi's sons died, Naomi tried to send Ruth and Orpah back to their families, "Orpah left, but Ruth stayed. Ruth's famous speech to Naomi: "Where you go, I'll go. Where you stay, I'll stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Where you die, I'll die."**)

I'm going to call out some words which are important ingredients for a close friendship. Tell me if you have a friend where this quality exists. Ready? (**have group share after each word called out.**)

- Trust-worthy Like-minded Shared Experiences Loyalty Fun

How did Ruth's and Naomi's friendship eventually play a big part in God's big, grand story? (**Jesus was born through King David's line, and David was the son of Jesse, who was the son of Boaz, the man Ruth married.**)

GOING DEEPER: 1 Corinthians 15:33 say, **"Don't let anyone fool you. "Bad companions make a good person bad."**

Have you ever had a friend that lured you into doing something that you knew was wrong, and then you lied to your parents about it? Were you aware at the time that they were being a bad influence on you? Would you have the courage to cut off that friendship if it was hurting your friendship with Jesus?

Let's say our Take-Away Point for today: **"A close friendship with Jesus is the key to my spiritual growth."**



ENCOURAGE – their walk

The Bible says that we should love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We should be kind and generous to everyone, whether they are Jesus followers or not. But when it comes to our close friends who can really rub off on us and influence the way we act and behave, we need to make sure we are choosing friends that are pushing us towards Jesus, rather than pulling us away from Jesus. Whether we are good or bad, our choices will affect our friends. Hopefully, our goal is to have a positive effect on our friends, and they on us.

Let's pray that the Lord help us choose the right friends that will become "best buds" on the Vine: ***"Dear God, You remind us that if we remain in You, then You will remain in us. Part of our job of remaining in You is to obey your commands, and conduct ourselves in a way that does not hurt our friendship with Jesus or with others. Lord, help us to choose our close friends wisely. Point each of these kids toward that one, good friend that always points them back to You. In Jesus' name, Amen."***



Action Cards are a great way to practice being more UNITED with Jesus and connecting Him to every part of our lives. Take one home and tell me next week how it went. Who wants one?

MEMORIZE – God's Word



SPOTLIGHT VERSE:

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit." ~John 15:5 (NIV)

It's important for us to understand that apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. We must remain connected to the "True Vine," and when we are, Jesus promises that we will have a positive and lasting effect on the people around us.

PREPARE TO GIVE – (take cue from host or storyteller)

You are just a caretaker of the money God allows you to earn. The very jobs that your parents have is a blessing from the Lord. We need to learn to be thankful to Him for all good things that happen to us in this life.

Let's ask God to bless today's offering, that it may be used to produce good fruit and help others.

"Dear God, please bless today's offering. Work on our hearts to be generous and cheerful givers always. We want to lay down our dreams and pick up your dreams. Use us to accomplish Your purposes while we are on this earth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

I CAN CONNECT JESUS TO EVERY PART OF MY LIFE.

Encourage the kids to take a practical **ACTION** step in their faith journey this week.

Help them memorize this month's **Spotlight Verse.**

Prepare to Give is for children's programs that take an offering.