

Building Strong Friendships

Dear Facilitator: This week we will be discussing how important it is for families to build strong friendships. The friendships in our lives should be on many different levels (see diagram at the end of the lesson). There are some types of friendships that will be on a mere acquaintance level, and others will involve the sharing of activities and responsibilities. Then, there are those friendships that allow us to share more of our emotions and innermost feelings and have close, open, and honest relationships.

Encourage participants to ask the LORD to fill them with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so they can know what level of friendship to have with each person they meet. Our Christian faith is built on relationships. This means that our relationships in life are of great importance to God, and it is important that we choose and develop them wisely.

When we look at the Trinity, we see all three persons in the Godhead as interdependent and submissive to one another. God is Himself a community of three divine persons living together and loving one another within the unity of the Godhead. By ourselves, we cannot imitate Christ, but because God created male and female and intended for us to be in relationship, we can imitate the mutual give-and-take relationship that we see in the Godhead between the Father, Son, and Spirit. This helps us understand why we should build friendships. It's because we can reflect Christ in our relationships through giving to others.

continued

Notes

It might be helpful for you to know what we hope to accomplish through this lesson. Participants will:

1. Explain why they should build friendships and relationships with others.
2. Define what it means to be a good friend.
3. Uncover ways to make friends for our family.

During the past few lessons, we have made commitment statements. This week's commitment statement is: We commit to building friendships because we reflect Christ in our relationships and contribute to the lives of others.

We pray that God will give you direction and clarity as you prepare the lesson and activities. We hope that the families in your group will grow together in God's love and become a source of friendship and support for one another.

Blessings

Welcome *5 minutes*

 **Say:** Welcome back! I hope it's been a good week for all of you as you have been working diligently on many things that are positively influencing and leading your family.

Last week we spent time talking about communication.

 **Ask:** Did anyone try something this past week that made a positive difference in your family that you would be willing to share?

Introduction 5 minutes

 **Say:** “Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down!”
—Oprah Winfrey

Friends are very important in our lives and especially friends of our families.

In today’s session, our teaching objectives are to:

1. Explain why we should build friendships and relationships with others.
2. Define what it means to be a good friend.
3. Uncover ways to make friends for our family.

During the past few lessons, we have made commitment statements. This week’s commitment statement is: We commit to building friendships because we reflect Christ in our relationships and contribute to the lives of others.

Today during our table talk time, we want to talk about the different types of friends we have. Friendships are important to God, and He has created us to be in relationship with Him and with others. It’s important to consider our friendships and how they affect us and help us in our families. As you sit at the dinner table this evening, take time to talk about the different types of friends that you have in your lives as well as what makes a good friend.

Family & Table Talk 20 minutes

 **Say:** As you enjoy your dinner, talk about the following questions at your table:

1. What are some of the different types of friends we have?
2. What is a good friend like?
3. Who are some of the friends of your family?

After the meal, children are dismissed to their group.

Notes

40 minutes

Parent Training

Engaging The World

**BUILDING STRONG
FRIENDSHIPS**

How was your discussion? What did you learn about how your family views friendships? Friends bring life to us, and today we want to look at why we should build friendships, as well as what makes a good friend. As we consider friendship tonight, we also want to talk about how we make friends, especially making friendships with other families. There are many different levels of friends, and one is not necessarily better than the other. We need all levels of friendships in our lives. In addition to bringing added comfort and joy into our households, friendships of all levels with other families give us opportunities to contribute to others what God has given to us.

When we look at the Trinity, we see all three persons in the Godhead as interdependent and submissive to one another. God is Himself a community of three divine persons living together and loving one another within the unity of the Godhead. By ourselves, we cannot imitate Christ, but because God created male and female and intended for us to be in relationship, we can imitate the mutual give-and-take relationship that we see in the Godhead between the Father, Son, and Spirit. This helps us understand why we should build

friendships. It's because we can reflect Christ in our relationships through giving to others.

Remember David who planned and prepared to build the temple in the Bible? When David was young, he had an amazing best friend by the name of Jonathan. In fact, they had so much in common that they thought alike and watched out for each other all the time. Jonathan even gave David some of his valued possessions. Jonathan spoke well of David to his father even though his father, Saul, didn't like him. He built up David and gave examples of the good work that David

had done in defending Saul and Israel against the Philistines. Jonathan asked Saul to promise that David wouldn't be put to death. These two friends made a promise to love and care for each other as well as their families even beyond their death. Jonathan had a love for David that only best friends can share and understand! This story is found in 1 Samuel 18-20.

DISCUSS

- How can you reflect Christ in your friendships with others?
- What are some characteristics of good friends?
- What are some characteristics of someone who is not a good friend?
- What do you feel is important about making friendships with other families?
- How would you suggest that people make friendships with other families?
- What benefits are there for you and others in having friends of your family?
- How can you be intentional in your friendship building, and do you think it will make a difference?

As you discuss, make two lists on the board—one with characteristics of good friends and the other with characteristics of those who aren't good friends.

Ideas, if needed:

Good Friends

Shares joys and hard times
Speaks well of you
Loves and sticks beside you
Trustworthy
Wise
Encourages

Not A Friend

Selfish
Gossips
Is in it for themselves
Flatterer
Foolish
Puts you or others down

God does not allow anyone to be a lone ranger! We first need Christ and then the fellowship of other believers and friends. The whole Christian faith is built on relationships which imply that all levels of friendships are of great importance to God and to us.



Scripture SUPPORT

1 Samuel 18-20

Chapter 18:

Saul's Growing Fear of David

Chapter 19:

Saul Tries to Kill David

Chapter 20:

David and Jonathan

Proverbs 11:30

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives.

Proverbs 12:26

The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Proverbs 17:17

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

Proverbs 18:24

One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.



Scripture SUPPORT

Proverbs 24:26

*An honest answer is like
a kiss on the lips.*

Proverbs 27:9

*Perfume and incense bring
joy to the heart, and the
pleasantness of a friend springs
from their heartfelt advice.*

Matthew 7:4

*How can you say to your brother,
'Let me take the speck out of
your eye,' when all the time there
is a plank in your own eye?*

Luke 16:9

*I tell you, use worldly wealth to
gain friends for yourselves, so
that when it is gone, you will be
welcomed into eternal dwellings.*

James 2:23

*And the scripture was fulfilled
that says, "Abraham believed
God, and it was credited to him
as righteousness," and he was
called God's friend.*

Choose your friends wisely and consider having family friends at all levels!

SUMMARY

We covered a lot of material in the lesson. Our teaching objectives were to:

1. Explain why we should build friendships and relationships with others.
2. Define what it means to be a good friend.
3. Uncover ways to make friends for our family.

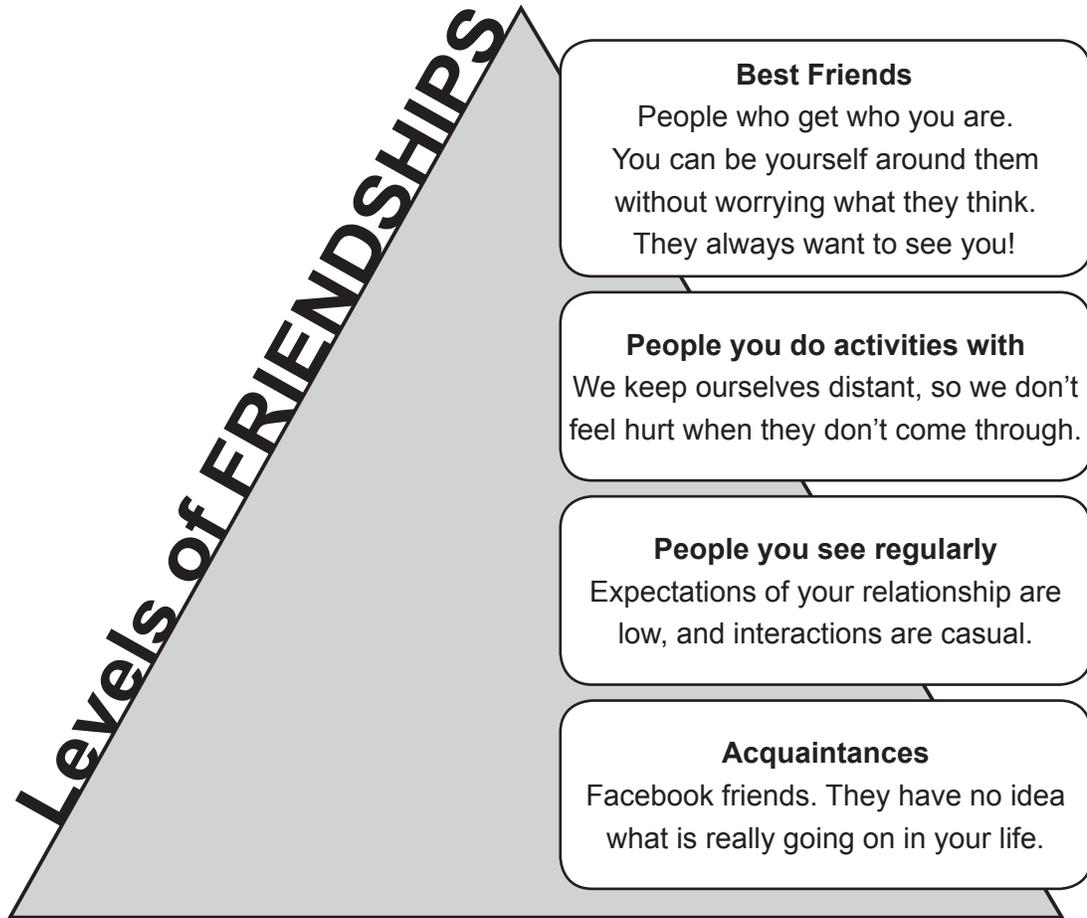
This week's commitment statement is: We commit to building friendships because we reflect Christ in our relationships and contribute to the lives of others.

To end our lesson, please answer the following:

1. Who has an insight tonight about something you've learned or want to try?
2. What will you change or improve in your role as a parent this week?

Building Strong Friendships

Friendships at all levels give us the opportunity to reflect Christ and positively influence our families, neighbors, and community.



Best Friends

David and Jonathan type of friendships - *friends who are as close as family and we know them well.*

People you do activities with

Coworkers, neighbors, or others you know - *this friendship is valued because of the opportunity to encourage and influence.*

People you see regularly

People we might see once or twice a month and share common interests and activities - *this friendship is valued because of what we learn together.*

Acquaintances

Important to have acquaintances to meet people and learn new things – *good for networking and connecting with people.*

Ages 4-16

40 minutes

Student Training

Engaging The World

**BUILDING STRONG
FRIENDSHIPS**

Objectives

- **Help children understand why they should build friendships and relationships with others.**
- **Help children be aware of what makes a godly friend.**
- **Help children be aware of how to be a godly friend.**
- **Help children be aware of how to make friends.**

Have you ever heard the saying, “No man is an island?” That is a quote by John Donne, an English poet. It means, human beings do not thrive when isolated from others. No one is self-sufficient; everyone relies on others. None of us can accomplish much left to ourselves. We need other people to be complete—we need relationships.

When God created us, He created us to desire relationships with other humans. We want to get to know others and have them get to know us. The Bible tells us that two are better off than one because they can accomplish more together. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 tells us that if one falls, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone and falls, it’s just too bad, because there is no one to help him. If it is cold, two

can snuggle together and stay warm, but how can you keep warm by yourself? Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break. Through these examples, God says that we were not created to be alone.

There is a reason that we are wired this way. The reason is we are made in the image of God, and God loves relationships. And because we are made in God’s likeness, we are drawn to relationships too. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us that God created us so that He can be in a relationship with us. He told us that He loves us, we are His children, and He wants to be a father to us. God tells us to love one another as He has loved us. In

this same verse, He goes on to call us His friends. In John 15:12-15, He correlates love with being our Father and our friend. God wants us to have friends here on earth, but more than that, He wants us to be friends with Him.

The Bible also lets us know that there are many benefits to building strong friendships. Here are some of the blessings involved when we establish friendships. Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” People learn from one another, just as “iron sharpens iron.” Friends encourage and help one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Friends open their home to one another (1 Peter 4:9). Friends love earnestly (1 Peter 4:8). Friends are determined to do good for their friends and are concerned for their welfare (Hebrews 10:24). With blessings like that, no wonder God wants us to be a good friend and have good friends in our lives. Friendships make our lives better.

So how do we find these wonderful friends to enhance our lives? It has been said that if you want to attract good friends, you must be friendly and reach out to others. Remember, Matthew 7:12 instructs us, “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” So, the first thing you can do to attract friends is to treat people with kindness. Reaching out might make you feel a little anxious, but sometimes all it may take is saying, “Hi!” Just a smile can be enough to let a person see that you are a friendly person.

Every friendship begins when two people give each other an indication that they are interested in becoming friends. People who make friends easily are those who show an interest in others and activities they are involved in. When you ask questions and show interest in others, you make them feel appreciated and welcome. Some children feel comfortable simply asking, “Do you want to be friends?” Another way to show that you are friendly is by compliments. Find something that you like about the other person and tell them about it. You

can say something like, “I like the picture you drew” or “I like your shoes.” Compliments make people feel good and cause them to respond in a friendly manner. Demonstrating kindness is another way to let a person know you would like to have them as a friend. You could loan them a pencil or share one of the cookies your mother packed in your lunch. However, be careful not to try and buy a person’s friendship. It never works and can hurt a chance for a true, positive friendship to develop.

One of the best ways to scope out potential friends is through sharing fun together. Your involvement in sports, band, church, and any other positive activity will be a great place to find friends. Laughing and playing outdoor games in your neighborhood, working on projects in the classroom, shooting baskets on the playground, or praising God and worshipping together in church youth group can help you get to know people better and lead to invitations for friendship. And don’t forget to keep your eyes open for God’s other children who may be feeling lonely and friendless. You are God’s agent in the earth. He wants you to let your light shine by reaching out to them. They just might be a treasure of a friend that the LORD has set apart for you.

As Christian young people, there is another element to establishing and building strong friendships that must be considered. In Jeremiah 29:11 God says to you, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Included in that plan are godly friends that God has destined to be a part of your life journey. A godly friend is a rare treasure and a gift from God because they are your brother or sister in Christ Jesus as well as a friend. It is important that you recognize godly friends when God sends them your way. Here are some extra special characteristics that you will find in a godly friend:

1. They love the LORD and share your faith in Jesus.

2. They have the Holy Spirit in them helping them give godly advice and wise counsel (Proverbs 12:26) (Proverbs 27:9).
3. They are faithful and loyal and love you unconditionally through difficult times (Proverbs 17:17).
4. They have integrity and a pure heart (Proverbs 22:11).
5. They are sincere and speak the truth in love, even when it hurts (Proverbs 27:5-6).
6. They strengthen, encourage, and help you (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
7. They forgive (Colossians 3:12-13).

As you spend time praying, learning more and more about God, and getting closer to Him, you will become godlier. Then the Holy Spirit will help you recognize the godly friends that the LORD has given to you as special gifts. And when those friends come into your life, you will be ready to value them, appreciate them, love them, and go out of your way to nurture that friendship and keep it strong! There is a song titled, "No Man Is an Island. The words to this song tells us that we need each other; we need friends.

No Man Is an Island

No man is an island, no man stands alone.

Each man's joy is joy to me, each man's grief is my own.

We need one another, so I will defend

Each man as my brother, each man as my friend.

By Joan Whitney and Alex Kramer



Scripture **SUPPORT**

Ecclesiastes 4:9

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor.

Ecclesiastes 4:10

If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

Ecclesiastes 4:11

Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?

Ecclesiastes 4:12

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

John 15:12-14

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.

DISCUSS

- Lead children in a discussion about why the Bible says we should build friendships and relationships with others.
- Lead children in a discussion about the benefits of building strong friendships.
- Lead children in a discussion about what characteristics make a good friend.
- Lead children in a discussion about the special characteristics of a godly friend.
- Lead children in a discussion about ways to make friends.
- Lead children in a discussion about places they may find potential friends.



Activities

Activities are age appropriate. One is focused on ages 4-11, and the second is for older children ages 12-16.

AGES 4-11

Materials

Technology to show video

“Friendship Soup” worksheet

Pencils, crayons, or markers

Easel or white board for group discussion (optional)

Have children view YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/H7w7yXkJTu>

“Friendship Soup Recipe”

- After the video, discuss briefly what makes a good friend. (Use information from video and lesson.)
- Write some words on the easel or white board to get them started. Then have children write words on the Soup Pot diagram that are good ingredients of “Friendship Soup.” For instance, words like: Fun, caring, cheer you up, share your secrets, etc.

AGES 12-16

Materials

Technology to show video

Letter to friend worksheet

Pencils, crayons, or markers

Easel or white board for group discussion (optional)

Have children view YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/J5IRfU2CDSk>

“What’s a Real Friend”

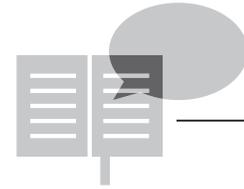
and YouTube video:

<https://youtu.be/g5sL8f-aucM>

“No Man is an Island”

- After the video, discuss briefly the importance of having good friends. (Use information from video and lesson.)
- Then have children write a letter to their best friend using the letter worksheet.

Notes



Scripture
SUPPORT

John 15:15

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Peter 4:9

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Hebrews 10:24

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Matthew 7:12

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Proverbs 12:26

The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Proverbs 27:9

Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice.

Proverbs 17:17

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

Proverbs 22:11

One who loves a pure heart and who speaks with grace will have the king for a friend.

Proverbs 27:5-6

Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

Colossians 3:12

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the LORD forgave you.



CHALLENGE QUESTION

AM I A GOOD FRIEND?

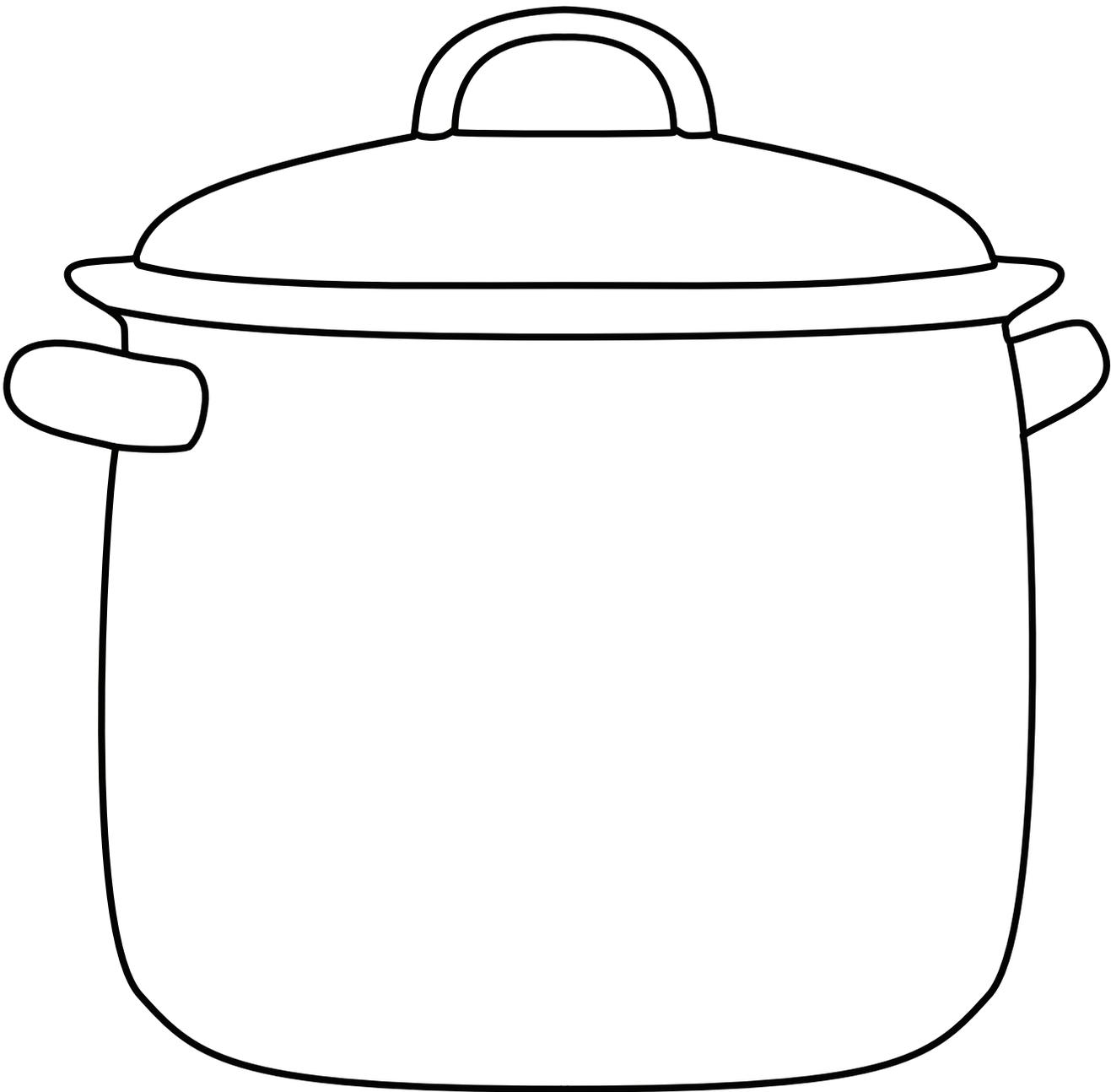
CHALLENGE COMMITMENT

WHAT CAN I DO TO WORK ON THE CHALLENGE QUESTION?

	AFFIRMATION <i>Have children repeat:</i>
	<i>I do unto others as I would have them do to me.</i>

FRIENDSHIP SOUP

IN THE POT, WRITE ALL THE INGREDIENTS
THAT MAKE A GOOD FRIENDSHIP.



FRIENDSHIP LETTER

Date _____

Dear _____

*I am writing this letter to you because
you are such a good friend. Here are the things
I like about you:*

I am so thankful to have a friend like you.

God bless you.

Your friend,

