



# DECISION WEEK

## Theme

God promises that He will always be with us, will always stick with us, will always be our friend.

## Scripture

**Deuteronomy 31:8 NCV**

The Lord himself will go before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or forget you. Don't be afraid and don't worry."<sup>1</sup>

**Matthew 26:47 - 56 NLT**

And even as Jesus said this, Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent by the leading priests and elders of the people. The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: "You will know which one to arrest when I greet Him with a kiss." So Judas came straight to Jesus. "Greetings, Rabbi!" He exclaimed and gave Him the kiss.

Jesus said, "My friend, go ahead and do what you have come for."

Then the others grabbed Jesus and arrested Him. But one of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and struck the high priest's slave, slashing off his ear.

"Put away your sword," Jesus told him. "Those who use the sword will die by the sword. Don't you realize that I could ask my Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and He would send them instantly? But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that describe what must happen now?"

Then Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I some dangerous revolutionary, that you come with swords and clubs to arrest me? Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple? I was there teaching every day. But this is all happening to fulfil the words of the prophets as recorded in the Scriptures." At that point, all the disciples deserted Him and fled.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Everyday Bible: **New Century Version**, Nashville, TN. : Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2055, S. Dt 31:8

<sup>2</sup> Tyndale House Publishers: **Holy Bible : New Living Translation**. 2nd ed. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2004, S. Mt 26:47-56



## To the Leaders

There is a great deal of research to support the belief that children learn at a rapid pace, absorbing all that is going on around them. We often have only a small window of opportunity to introduce children to the loving friendship of Jesus before the many other voices that influence their lives begin to drown out this message. Our children are not just important for our future. They are important right now. Let's continue to work together to invest in their lives, to learn from their insights and to minister alongside them in our communities.

Sticker sheets will be sent out to all corps to accompany this material. If you haven't received them please contact THQ Children's Ministries.

## Whole Church Activity

### Preparation

In the weeks leading up to 'Decision Sunday' ask everyone in your congregation to bring in a photo of themselves with a friend. Make a space where they can leave the photos for safe keeping if they would like to bring them in early. You can include members of your community who don't attend a Sunday service — for example, administrative staff, Family Store volunteers, Mini Muso's families.

Cut out cardboard shapes in a variety of colours and have these available for visitors and those who have forgotten to bring a photo. Ask these people to draw a picture of their friend or write the name of their friend. You could also glue the photos on to cardboard to make a colourful frame.

Tape together enough sheets of black cardboard to accommodate all of the photos, pictures and names for your church community. Put these words at the top of the cardboard: "Jesus is a friend who sticks with us".

## During Worship Time

Invite everyone in the congregation to work together to create a collage of friends on the black background.

## Introduction

Display a collection of items such as glue, sticky tape, staplers and paper clips. Ask the children what these items have in common. They all stick things together.



Today we are going to be talking about friends. Some friends stick by us for a while but after a bit, for one reason or another, we stop being so close. There is one friend who sticks by us through everything, for all time.

Has anyone got a really great friend? What is it that makes that friend so special? Tell us about something they have done to help you? Tell us about something nice that your friend has said to you?

Have you ever felt like you don't have a friend? Have you felt left out by your friends — like they just don't want to play with you? Maybe a friend has hurt you or upset you at some time?

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In the Bible Jesus tells us that even though we can't see Him, He wants to be our friend. He promises to stick with us, to listen to us and to help us. We can count on Him to be the best friend ever and our best friend forever.

Do the Whole Church Activity.

## Part 1 - Jesus Sticks by Us

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When Jesus lived on earth He had a group of close friends. They worked together, went to church together and hung out together. They visited each other's families and helped each other out. They knew all about each other. One day Jesus was in trouble. People were angry about some of the things He had been saying and they came to arrest Him. At the time, Jesus was hanging out with His mates. What do you think His friends did when all these angry people came along?

Allow time for responses

When Jesus was in trouble, this is what His friends said...

Have people within the congregation prepared to call out responses like:

"Jesus who?"

"I'm telling you, I don't know him"

"I've never seen him before in my life"

"I was just out walking my dog"



"I'm out of here"

How do you think Jesus felt about His friends after they said they didn't know Him and ran away when He needed them? I guess He was pretty hurt and upset. But Jesus didn't stay upset with His friends. The next time He saw them He cooked them breakfast and He continued to care about them.

This is the kind of friend that Jesus is to us as well. He will stick by us no matter what we do.

Ask one of the older children in advance to read Matthew 26:47 - 56.

## Part 2 - Jesus is a Friend for Everyone

### GAME - ONE LEFT OUT:

- Ask the children to form groups of three or four.
- If you have a small number of children, invite some of the adults to join in. You can make the point with as few as three people. If you have a large number of children you could make the groups bigger.
- Explain to the children that you are going to play some music (live or taped).
- When the music plays the children must separate from their group and move around the room.
- When the music stops the children must find the members of their group. The last person from each group to reconnect is out.
- After a few turns, ask the children how it felt to be the one left out of the group.

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Sometimes when we are spending time with a group of friends at school, or parties or at church we find that not everyone is getting along together.

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Sometimes we can end up feeling alone and lonely. Sometimes we can be the one to go off with a group of friends and leave someone else feeling alone and lonely.



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Jesus promises to be a friend to everyone. He doesn't want to see anyone feeling alone or lonely. When you feeling alone, try to remember that Jesus is with you, that He is your friend and that He will stick by.

When we see other kids who are sad and alone we can share our friend, Jesus, with them. We can explain to them He is a friend for everyone and that He cares about how they are feeling.

We are going to give you some stickers today that you can take home with you. You might like to cut some of them off and give them to your friends.

## Part 3 - Best Friend Forever

How many of you have a BFF? A 'Best Friend Forever'. That's what Jesus offers to be for us. Have you noticed that as we grow up our BFF's change? The friends that we thought we would always be besties with are no longer that close to us. Our BFF's are not always **Best Friend's Forever**. In fact, if we are being honest, it's really hard to promise someone that we will be their **Best Friend Forever**.

Jesus is the only one who can make this promise and really mean it. Jesus left His home in Heaven and He came to Earth. He grew up from a baby into a man and He taught us about His Father, God. He showed us how to live well, how to care for other people, how to love people that are hard to love. Then one day He died on the cross — a punishment to make up for all the wrong things that we have done. But He didn't stay dead! After three days He came back to life and He will be alive forever. Because of what Jesus did we can be His friend forever.

## RESPONSE TIME ACTIVITY

- You will need a supply of colourful strips of paper for this activity. Scrapbooking paper is a good option as it is thicker and stronger than photocopy paper.



When we are friends of Jesus we become linked together as friends with each other as well. This morning we are going to make a friendship chain. It all begins with Jesus.

- On the first strip of paper write Jesus' name. Use a stapler or tape to form this strip into a loop.
- Ask the children to write their names on the strips of paper.
- You might also like to ask the adults in the service to do the same.
- Have a couple of people assist in linking the strips into the first loop to form a chain.
- When the chain is complete drape it around a cross if possible.
- Ask everyone to form a large circle, holding hands around the room.

Some people here today have been friends with Jesus for a long time. Some of us are new friends of Jesus and are only just starting to get to know him. Some of us might not really know Jesus at all yet and. If you are not a friend of Jesus yet, maybe you would like to become his friend right now. All you have to do is tell him and he promises that He will be your friend.

Let's talk to Jesus now...

Jesus thanks for the fun that we have had today. It's great to have friends that we can share life with. We have been talking about how you want to be our friend for now and forever. Thanks that you are a friend that we can count on, a friend that sticks with us.

The Bible teaches us about how you lived when you were on earth and how you want your friends to live. We are sorry for the times that we haven't been very good friends to you or very good friends to each other. Please help us not to give up, but to keep on trying to be the best friends we can be to you and to everyone around us. Amen

