

GENERATE CAMP: Make it Matter

Session 3: The Way of God

What We Want Students to Learn: That a life of real impact is empowered by Gospel-centered friendships.

Scripture:

- Narrative Snapshot: Paul mentioning his “friends in ministry” (Romans 16)
- Supporting Passages: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 and John 15:12-14

Session Snapshot: Romans 16 may at first seem like an unlikely passage to do a Bible study on. But it’s actually a super cool case study in what it looks like to live a life of meaning alongside others. Paul reminds us of a truth that is easy to miss: God created us to be in community with each other. Friendships are an invaluable blessing given by God to help us on our way. This session will help your students see this and challenge them to commit to seeing friendships as part of their life of impact.

Bible Background

The Bible Background is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.

Teacher Prep Video

Each Small Group Leader’s Guide comes with a *Teacher Prep Video*. These are simply short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

Your teacher prep videos are located in your download, under Small Group Lesson Plans. There is a sub-folder titled “Teacher Prep Videos” that will have a document for you. On the document, you should be able to click the link designated for the lesson you are currently on.

The Details

Romans

- **Author:** Paul is the author of Romans.
- **Time frame:** Romans was probably written from Corinth in the winter of 56-57 AD.
- **Purpose:** Since the church in Rome had not received comprehensive theological teaching on salvation and other implications of following Christ, Paul wrote Romans to ensure a good understanding of such things. Also, since many Jewish Christians were rejecting some of the new Gentile converts, it was essential that a level playing field was given to all Believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.

Ecclesiastes

- **Author:** Though there has been considerable debate over Ecclesiastes’ authorship over the centuries, the traditional view is that Solomon is its author.
- **Time frame:** If Solomon is held to be the author, then dating its writing to Solomon’s reign, 971-931 BC, puts it mid-10th century BC.
- **Purpose:** The purpose of Ecclesiastes is to call people to fear God in a world that has abandoned a pursuit of God. When we don’t seek God, we despair because there is no wisdom or truth apart from God.

John

- **Author:** The Gospel of John was written by John the Apostle, son of Zebedee. A fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus, John also penned the Book of Revelation, as well as the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- **Purpose:** John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John's goal seems to have been to communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

The Main Point

The main point of Romans 16 is to provide a valuable example of what it looks like to live a life that matters alongside friends who feel the same way. Romans 16 is a really fascinating look at a guy (Paul) who has lived his faith to its fullest but hasn't done it alone. Everyone who partnered with Paul was also doing the same thing. And while we might not be able to pronounce all the names (lol), it's obvious from reading Paul's list of friends that all of their lives were richer because they were on mission together.

The Takeaway

The takeaway here is for students to understand that the call to live a life that matters isn't the call to do it alone. God's plan was for His people to come alongside each other and impact the world together. We were never meant to go alone. This session will highlight this truth and call students to embrace this reality.

Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called Getting Started; the Bible study section called Digging In; and an application-focused segment called Wrapping Up.

Getting Started

- Student Book Pages
 - This lesson will utilize pages 24-28 in the Make It Matter Student Book.
 - This activity will use pages 24-25.
- Additional Instructions
 - None

FIRST, have students turn to page 24 of their student books. Direct their attention to the questions on the page and say something like this:

- **Friends are awesome, aren't they? Take a moment and look at these questions. Think about your best friend or maybe your group of friends. Answer as many of these as you want in the next couple of minutes. Have fun. We're going to share some of our responses when you're done.**

NEXT, allow them time to answer the questions. Remind them they don't have to answer all, and they don't have to share. But once they've had a chance to answer, allow anyone to share a chance to do so. Have fun

with this. Let it breathe for a bit. Laugh at funny stories. Respond in shock to the friend who has still not given back the two pairs of lululemon leggings. Let your group have their moment. The questions are listed here as well as in the book:

- **What is the craziest thing you've ever done with a friend?**
- **Write down a time when you really needed a friend, and they were there.**
- **What is the best gift a friend has ever given you?**
- **Write down a time when a friend kept you from making a fool of yourself.**
- **What is the most scared you've ever been with a friend?**
- **Write down that one thing a friend borrowed from you that they still haven't given back.**
- **Write down the best meal you've ever eaten with a friend.**
- **Write down the worst meal you've ever eaten with a friend.**
- **What is the most embarrassing thing that's ever happened to you with a friend?**
- **What is the hardest you've ever laughed with a friend?**

NEXT, when you've had your fun, have a student turn over to page 25 and read the introduction out loud. When they've finished, say something like:

- **We're about to read a really cool passage from the apostle Paul where we see the role that friends played in his life and ministry. As we do, I want you to take a step back and think, maybe for the first time, the role that your friends could play in your life of impact. It's a powerful concept. Let's jump in.**

If there are no more comments or questions, transition to the *Digging In* section of your lesson.

Digging In

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize pages 26-27 in the *Make It Matter* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - You'll want to make sure students have something to write with, and a Bible or Bible app.

FIRST, remind students that you're continuing to look at narrative passages from Scripture and asking what the stories teach us about living a life that matters.

For this narrative, have students turn to Romans 16 in their Bibles or Bible apps. While they are finding it, provide some context for where you're picking up the story. Say something like:

- **Where we pick up the story, Paul is writing about five years before he would be killed for his faith in Jesus. Shortly after writing this, he will be imprisoned in Rome and will write Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. But where we pick up, he has just come off a five-year missionary journey, his third such trip that we know of. He has been working hard! He has been pouring himself out for the Gospel. But what we're about to see is that he is not alone.**

THEN, before you read the narrative, explain to students that they need to listen carefully for any specific details that jump out at them. They'll have a moment to write these down once the story has been read. Read Romans 16 aloud. (*NOTE: This passage is FULL of really hard to pronounce names. It's OK! Push forward. You can make light of it when you're done, but try not to get too light-hearted about it during the reading. It can*

take away from the moment.) When the passage has been read, give students about a minute or so to write down any detail or point that really stood out in the space provided on page 26. Once you've allowed them to do so, jump into a brief discussion of the story. Ask something like:

- **OK, what details or important points jumped out at you?**
 - Allow students to share. Engage in discussion as you go, asking students, "Why do you think that is important?" or "Why did that stand out?" or offering your thoughts or observations as you go. (*Continue with the rest of the questions below, omitting any that you've already covered based on your students' responses.*)
- **How many names does Paul mention? Take a guess.**
 - *Answer:* It's 37 people, though he references multiple households, so the number is higher than that.
- **What impression does the leave with you? What is the takeaway from a list like this?**
 - Answers will vary. But there is something really, really cool here. Paul lived a life of impact. But he SHARED this life with so many. So many people's lives intersected with his life as they all served the Lord together.
- **Paul gives this warning in verses 17-18. What is the nature of his warning?**
 - *Answer:* To watch out for people who cause divisions and create obstacles.
- **What does this warning imply about all the people Paul had just mentioned?**
 - *Answer:* That the opposite was true about them. The people Paul listed in verses 1-16 were people who were unified with Paul and on the same page with him.
- **Look at some of the descriptions of the people who served with Paul. Which ones stand out as the most significant descriptions?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What do you think it made these people feel like to hear Paul speak about them this way?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **In your own words, what impact did Paul's friends seem to have on his ministry?**
 - Answers will vary. But Paul expresses a profound amount of affection and love and appreciation for these people. Paul seems to know each one so well and express joy in the role they all played together in living lives of impact.

As you wrap up this section, consider saying something like this:

- **Could Paul have made an impact without his friends? Sure. He most definitely could. But we'll never know how much more impact he made because he had some great friends alongside him. And let's be honest: it's not a stretch to say that with his friends he probably ENJOYED ministry so much more! You can sense it in the tone of how we described his friends. So, yes, Paul would still be an awesome guy if he was flying solo. But that wasn't God's plan. And that's not God's plan for you. Scripture is clear: friends are an important part of living a life of impact. Let's see where else we see this.**

NEXT, have students turn to page 27. Have a student read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. Give some context for the passage using the Bible Background if you choose. Then ask:

- **Overall, what are these verses trying to say?**
 - Answers will vary. But this ancient, Old Testament wisdom literature sums up what Paul knew in the 1st Century and what we know today: life is more meaningful with friends. We are able to make a greater impact when we move forward with likeminded people at our sides.
- **Can you think of some examples of how a 21st-century teenager may "fall." What about some examples of how a friend can lift them up when they fall?**

- Answers will vary. Allow your students time to really consider this question because of how relevant it is to their daily lives.
- **In your own words, what does it mean that “a threefold cord is not quickly broken”?**
 - Answers will vary. But help them understand that the analogy is how strong we are together (a rope made of three strands) as opposed to how weak we can be alone (a rope of one strand).

Help students see that it should be clear at this point that the picture the Bible paints of the value of friendship is a strong one. But we're not done yet. Explain to students that you're going to look one more place to see what Jesus Himself had to say about living our life on mission with our friends.

THEN, have students read John 15:12-14 before leading them in a short discussion. Ask:

- **How did Jesus love us? Give some examples.**
 - Answers will vary, but help students see that Jesus' love for us was selfless, sacrificial, trustworthy, honest, and so on.
- **What does it look like to love your friends in the same way Jesus loved us?**
 - Answers will vary. Allow your students to share their responses and to really think about what this looks like in their context.
- **You likely will not ever be called to literally give up your own life for your friend's life. But what does it look like to sacrifice your own needs or wants to put others first?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, when you've finished, say:

- **It should be abundantly clear to us at this point: we were meant to do life alongside friends. We can live a life that matters apart from our friends. But when we link arms with others who are on the same journey as us, we increase our impact. We multiply it. We hold each other accountable. We pick each other up. And let's be honest, we have a lot more fun. Let's wrap up by seeing exactly how we can practically apply this in our lives.**

Ask if anyone has any thoughts or questions, then transition to the *Wrapping Up* portion of your lesson.

Wrapping Up

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize page 28 in the *Make It Matter* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, explain to students that you're going to take a few minutes and have students think about the role their friends have played in their lives, and specifically, how committed they are to these friends.

Start by having students look at the prompt at the top of page 28. Have them take a few minutes and think about the friends who have been helpful to them in living out their faith. Instruct them to write these friends' first names or initials in the space provided. When you've finished, consider asking students to share some examples of how these friends have helped. Then, transition to the next part of this activity.

NEXT, explain that it's easy to be friends. But it takes more to be friends who are committed to living a life of impact together. Instruct students to look at the two additional prompts on page 28. Say something like:

- **I want to challenge you as we wrap up our time in this session to consider two specific commitments. The first is that you would be more committed to lifting others up. That you would be an encourager. That you would be someone who can be counted on to pick other people up and help them on their journeys. In the space provided, I want you to take a few minutes to write down what this looks like. How can you do this practically?**

Allow a few minutes for brainstorming, then allow students to share.

THEN, do the same for the second commitment. Say something like:

- **Here's the truth: we don't like to tell people we need help. We don't like to look weak or like we don't have it all together. But the truth is that we need to be lifted up in the same way that we need to lift up others. So how do we communicate to others that we need help? What are some ways? Think about that for a second, and then let's share some of your thoughts.**

After giving students time to process and write down their responses, allow some time for discussion. Close by challenging them to commit to being better friends, and to let others be better friends to them. Remind them it's a vital part of living a life that matters.

FINALLY, ask students if they have any questions or additional comments. Inform students of the *Encounters* devotions located on pages 38-45 in their Student Books. Provide them with a schedule or some structure as to when you would like for them to work through them. (The first devotion is on page 38.)

If there are no more questions, close in prayer for your group.