



Small Group Leader Guide

BEFORE GROUP

BOTTOM LINE

Being a friend means walking away friendly.

SCRIPTURE

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.' Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it was wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work (Acts 15:36-38 NIV).

They had such a sharp disagreement that they [Paul and Barnabas] parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches (Acts 15:39-41 NIV).

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help teenagers process changes in their friendships and give them healthy ways to step back from friends when needed.

THINK ABOUT THIS

Changing or ending a friendship isn't easy for anyone, but it can be especially difficult in high school. In this phase of life, friendships are huge and any kind of change can feel like a major decision or dramatic shift. Be patient with your students as they process what this means to them. While most will be able to recognize and even acknowledge relationships that need to change, they may not be ready to take the step to actually make that change. You get to provide a listening ear and encouragement along the way as they step toward any shifts in their friendships. This is a great time to introduce the idea of boundaries to your students. Some may not know what it means to have boundaries in friendships or how they can set them. Boundaries can be a hard thing for most people to understand and establish. The hope is that this conversation will help students notice when something in a friendship doesn't feel okay and give them space to think about how to respond in a healthy way. Learning how to have hard conversations is a skill they'll need for the rest of their lives, and you're helping them build that now. No matter where they land, this can feel heavy, so be extra sensitive to how they're seeing themselves and their friendships. And for a few students, this may go beyond needing space—it could be a friendship that's truly harmful. Be mindful of students who may need extra help or support stepping away from a friend who is hurting them. You can show them they're not alone and point them toward safety and care.



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DURING GROUP

LEADER NOTE

To start this conversation off, lead with your own example! Share about a time you had to make a change or even end a friendship. Make sure to keep the story and details appropriate for students in the high school phase. This will not only give context to the message, but it will open the floor for students to feel safe to respond. Remember to encourage them to avoid names and overly specific details during this week's conversation.

DISCUSS THIS

1. Have you ever seen friends go their separate ways in a friendly way? What was that like?
2. Have you ever watched a friendship end badly? What was that like?
3. What are some reasons friendships may change or shift in high school?
4. What makes separating from a friend or a change in a friendship so difficult? What about being the friend someone else has to separate from for a season?
5. What's one thing you noticed about Paul and Barnabas' shift in friendship?
6. How might shifting or changing a friendship be good for you right now?
7. Practically speaking, what's a healthy, honorable, and friendly way you can handle making a change in a friendship when you need to?

TRY THIS

Text your students to let them know you're available to discuss any friendship changes they anticipate making in the next season if they need a sounding board or a third party to weigh in.