

THE GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP

by Gary Moran

PURPOSE

To explore aspects of Christian friendships and to strengthen relationships within the youth fellowship. To sponsor an event and invite other youth.

PREPARATION

Prepare the Attractive Qualities and Quality Questions handouts in the "Meat" of the Meeting.

Gather a record player, 30 pieces of string for each person, pencils, paper, chalkboard and chalk.

Find a song that has a message concerning friendships or relationships and prepare a brief devotional based on the song. Some suggestions are: "You've Got a Friend," by James Taylor; "You Needed Me," by Anne Murray; "Bridge Over Troubled Water," by Simon and Garfunkle; or "Thank You for Being My Friend," by Andrew Gold.

OPENING

Play I Have Never . . . Give each participant 30 pieces of string. One person begins by saying, "I have never . . . (something he or she has never done)." Everyone who has done what the speaker has never done gives the speaker a string. If no one in the circle has done it, the speaker gives each player a piece of string.

The winner is the player with the most pieces of string.¹

THE "MEAT" OF THE MEETING

Have the youth sit in a circle and give paper and pencils to each.

Instruct the youth to title the paper "Pleasing Traits." Tell the young people to look around the circle and jot down some of the pleasing qualities and personality traits of the other members. No names should be listed—just descriptive words such as punctual, sense of humor, friendly or reliable. Have the youth study their own lists to see how many of the traits could be applied to themselves.

Ask: How can you improve your less pleasing traits? Have you told your friends in the group any of the things that you like about them? Why not? Remind the youth it's the traits in many people they don't like, not the people. The information on the papers should remain confidential.

Distribute the Attractive Qualities list:

Attractive Qualities

- _____ sense of humor
- _____ adventurous
- _____ common interests
- _____ "neat" family
- _____ easy to talk with
- _____ popular
- _____ trustworthy
- _____ outgoing
- _____ talented
- _____ other

Ask the youth to rank these characteristics in order of importance in regard to how they choose friends. Divide into groups of six and discuss the sheets.

Distribute the Quality Questions handout to the groups and have them discuss it:

Quality Questions

- Why do you come to this group?
- What are some of the good things about our group?
- How is this group different from a group of friends at school?
- Which school friends could you invite to come to our group activities?
- What kinds of activities would you like our group to sponsor for our church, other churches and other friends? (Such as lock-ins, speakers or field trips.)

Share some of the insights from the small groups with the large group. On a chalkboard, write the activities suggested from the last question on the sheet. What events would be fun to sponsor as a youth group? Who could help with the planning? Who would we invite?

RESPONSE (OR CLOSING)

Choose one of the activities from the list and form a special event committee to organize it. Be sure to include publicity (posters, flyers), set-up, program and refreshments.

Form a circle and listen quietly to the song about friendship and share a few brief remarks about its message.

Close with individual prayers thanking God for friends.

¹Lee Sparks, ed., **Try This One . . . Too** (Loveland, Colo.: Group Books, 1982), p.26.