

Relationships Rock Our World

By Cheryl Tholcke

Purpose

In this session, middle school youth understand the various types of relationships they have, what they bring to these relationships, and how relationships provide an essential foundation for their lives.

Session at a Glance

7:00 PM	Welcome and Introductions
7:05 PM	Community Builder: Famous Friends
7:20 PM	Relationships
	Extend the Session: Write a Letter (add 10 minutes)
7:50 PM	Closing Prayer
8:00 PM	Announcements & Refreshments
8:15 PM	Good Night!

Extend the Session: Write a Letter (10 minutes)

Give each participant a note card or sheet of stationery paper, envelope, and a pen. Invite each person to write a note to a friend or family member thanking him/her for the gift of friendship. Let the person know how much he/she means to them. Encourage the participants to give (or mail) the letter after the session.

Materials Needed

- Half sheets of newsprint, one for each small group of four to six
- Markers, one for each small group of four to six
- Small prizes, for the winning team of "Famous Friends" Community Builder
- M&Ms (or Skittles) candy and small baggies (see #2 in Prepare in Advance)
- Bible
- Table with colorful cloth, Bible, pillar candle, matches or lightstick
- Small polished rocks, one for each participant (have some extras on hand)
- Small basket to hold the polished rocks
- CD player
- "[Lean On Me](#)" by Bill Withers (Never Too Young, OCP) or another song with friendship as its theme
- Quiet, instrumental music

Prepare in Advance

1. Set up tables for refreshments and sign-in. Have one or two people at the sign-in table with a check-in sheet and name tags. (Skip the nametags if participants know each other and you know them. However, if they wear nametags, you wear one, too.) Hospitality is important: As the facilitator, do not use the gathering time before the session begins to take care of last minute preparations. Spend the time moving among the participants, greeting and speaking with them.

2. Divide the M&Ms (or Skittles) candy evenly into small ziplock baggies, one baggie for each group of four to six participants. Each baggie should contain at least 6-10 pieces of candy per participant.

3. Prepare a poster with the following questions. Do not post on the wall until the activity.

Red – What do you look for in a friend?

Brown – What makes you a good friend?

Yellow – What is the most common disagreement among friends?

Green – What quality is the most important to you in a friend?

Blue – What's the hardest thing about being a friend?

Orange – What's the most fun you've ever had with a friend?

4. Invite a young person to proclaim Philippians 1:3-11 for the closing prayer.

Session Outline

Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)

Greet the participants warmly as they arrive and give everyone a nametag. If there are participants who are new, allow them to introduce themselves and receive a warm welcome to the evening. Introduce tonight's session in these or similar words:

Welcome! Tonight our focus is on relationships. We'll look at the various types of relationships we have, what goes into a good relationship, and how good relationships rock our world.

Community Builder: Famous Friends (15 minutes)

Divide participants into small groups of four to six. Give each group a half sheet of newsprint and a marker. Give these instructions:

Each team has a sheet of paper and a marker. Your task is to brainstorm as many famous friends as you can and list them on your sheet of paper. When each team reports their list, the team with the most unique famous friends (those that are not listed on another team's sheet of paper) wins a prize. Special consideration will be given to biblical famous friends! Here are two examples of famous friends: Zach and Vanessa (High School Musical) and Batman and Robin.

Give the teams about 8-10 minutes to brainstorm their list. Call time, and ask each team to present their list of famous friends. Ask the participants:

What was it that made them friends?

How were they friends to each other?

Award a prize to the team with the most famous friends not listed on another sheet.

Relationships (30 minutes)

Step 1: (10 minutes) Keep participants in their small groups. Give each small group a baggie of M&Ms (or Skittles) candy. For this activity, give these instructions (colors correspond to M&M colors; adjust if you use Skittles or other small candy):

Each group has a baggie of M&Ms. Pass the baggie around your group, and take out a small handful of M&Ms. Be sure there are enough candies for everyone in your group to have at least six pieces. Don't eat them yet!

I'm going to call out a color, and everyone in the group who has at least one M&M of the color I call out has to answer a question. Post the sheet of newsprint with the questions.

As you answer the question, you can eat your candies of that color. Here we go!

Red – What do you look for in a friend?

Brown – What makes you a good friend?

Yellow – What is the most common disagreement among friends?

Green – What quality is the most important to you in a friend?

Blue – What's the hardest thing about being a friend?

Orange – What's the most fun you've ever had with a friend?

Step 2: (10 minutes) Give each participant a copy of Handout 1, Relationships Rock Our World, and a pen or pencil. Ask the young people to find a place in the room where they can be alone and not disturb anyone else. Play some quiet music in the background. Lead the participants through this time of reflection:

We've just spent some time talking about different aspects of friendship. Let's take the next several minutes to reflect quietly on three things that relationships with others add to our lives. This is something for you to do for yourself. You won't be asked to share this with anyone else.

You'll notice on the handout that there are three pictures of rocks—each one corresponds to something which relationships bring to our lives.

The first rock is our 'celebration' rock. Good relationships help us celebrate who we are. In this space, write the names of people who help you celebrate who you are. Pause while they write the names on the sheet.

The second rock is the 'anchor' rock. This refers to the relationships that are the most important to us—these relationships anchor our lives. In this space, write the names of people who are most important to you. Pause while they write the names on the sheet.

The third rock—with the goat standing on top—is our 'perspective' rock. We have people in our lives who help us with our perspective—or viewpoint—about things. Just like standing on a tall rock helps us see things differently, these relationships help us

when we need a new perspective or way of looking at something. In this space, the write the names of people who help you see things clearly. Pause while they write the names on the sheet.

Step 3: (10 minutes) Provide a brief presentation and discussion about relationships including these points:

How many of you were thinking of your parents or siblings or other relatives when you were writing down names on your handout? Why or why not?

It's important for each of us to remember that we have many different types of relationships in our life. Each of these relationships is about being part of a community.

As Catholics, we are called to be in relationship with Jesus. This is a lifelong task! We do this by belonging to a faith community, like our parish or our youth ministry community. Being part of 'the body of Christ' helps us grow in our relationship with Jesus. We learn to pray and worship together, we spend time together at events and programs, and we get to know one another.

Note to Leader: A question is often raised: 'Is it possible to have a relationship with God?' We only know the person of the Father through the revelation of Jesus. Jesus is the Person of the Trinity for whom we have direct knowledge of as a real person. Thus, it is possible to know and have a relationship with God in and through the person of Jesus. The same can be said of the Holy Spirit. Possibly the mystics are able to have a direct personal experience of God-Father and/or God-Holy Spirit. But that is not true for the average person. Thus, all relationships with God are in and through Jesus.

We're also part of a family. We have relationships with our parents, our siblings, and other relatives. They help us know who we are, teach us the values we live by, and support us throughout our lives.

We have relationships with our friends. They, too, help us know who we are. Friends journey with us through school, Scouting, sports, drama, music, and other activities.

We're also part of the larger world—or global—community. That may be a relationship that's hard to understand—but every time we pray for others at Mass, donate to a relief fund, or learn about people around the world, we connect ourselves to them.

As we close our session tonight, here are three things to remember about relationships in our lives:

We each need a variety of relationships—relatives and friends, the Trinity and our faith/Church community, and to people around the world.

We have to work at keeping our relationships positive and growing. That means we pay attention to who are friends are and select people who will be a good influence on us.

We work on being the best person we can be and offer that friendship and care to others.

Closing Prayer: Prayer Rock (10 minutes)

Gather in the prayer space in a circle around the prayer table. Invite a young person to light the candle.

Gather

Prayer Leader: (begin with the Sign of the Cross)

God of Unconditional Love,

You love us totally and call us to relationship with you through your Son, Jesus. Be with us as we continue our journey of being friends with others and learning to grow and appreciate the friendships we have. We ask for openness to others, just as we want others to be open to our gift of friendship. Draw us closer to you so that we will make good decisions about those with whom we spend our time. We pray this in your name. Amen.

Listen

Invite the reader to proclaim Philippians 1:3-11. Allow a few moments of quiet reflection after the reading.

Respond

Prayer Leader:

In this Scripture passage, we hear Paul offering a prayer of thanks for his friends and Christ-followers in Philippi. Through his letter, Paul continues to keep their relationship alive and growing. He pays attention to them and does not take their relationship for granted.

Let us take some time to recall relationships in our own lives and to offer prayers of thanksgiving for these people. Our response will be Thank you, God, for the gift of relationships.

After the prayers of thanksgiving, invite each person to take a prayer rock (from the basket on the prayer table).

As we leave tonight, I invite you to select a polished rock from the basket on the prayer table. Use this rock as a reminder of the firmness and strength we get from our relationships. Let this rock also remind us to keep our friends in our prayers every day of our lives.

Go Forth

Invite the young people to sing "Lean on Me" by Bill Withers (Never Too Young, OCP) or another song with friendship as its theme.

Announcements and Refreshments (15 minutes)

Make any needed announcements, thank the young people for their participation, and invite them to enjoy some refreshments.

This session was written by [Cheryl M. Tholcke](#), Coordinator of Youth Ministry Services, Center for Ministry Development, Sacramento, California. [Fr. Roy Shelly, Ph.D.](#), served as theological consultant on this session.

Handout 1

Relationships Rock Our World

Relationships are like a rock ...

Good ones are always there to help us celebrate who we are.

Relationships are like a rock...

Their firmness anchors us and provides a foundation upon which we build our lives.

Relationships are like a rock...

Standing on one can change our perspective.