

Jesus' Friends

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Theme: Jesus' Friends

Jesus shows us God; what He felt, said and did show us what God feels, says and does. A glance at the Gospels show that Jesus' teaching and healings attracted big crowds. However, He prioritised relationship, often opting to step out from the crowds to talk and spend time with His disciples and other individuals.

Jesus chose to live alongside His disciples (a motley crew of fishermen, tax collectors and zealots) for three years, doing life with the twelve men. He also welcomed friendship with people outside of the twelve.

Jesus' friendships were varied and unexpected, often upsetting the religious leaders and crowds. No one was off limits because of their gender, religion, past, job, health or age. He welcomed and sought out everyone. Jesus often stopped or went out of His way to answer and ask questions, challenge and help. Somehow Jesus befriended all these different people, never compromising, and always bringing change.

Focus:

Jesus' Friends explores five of Jesus' friendships whilst unpacking the incredible reality that God still wants friendship with us today. Wherever we are on our journey of getting to know God we can all take a step closer because God still wants relationship with everyone, and no one is off limits.

Zacchaeus, little children, Mary & Martha, Thomas and Lazarus were all in different situations when they encountered Jesus. Each session will look at what Jesus said or did, unpacking what happened as a result. We all know that Jesus cares, however shockingly we will also discover that Jesus did not care!

Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10: A thief became a giver. We might be happy to just watch Jesus; we might even discount ourselves. Jesus notices everyone.

Little children, Mark 10:13-16: The ignored and pushed away became important and near. No one is too young to meet Jesus; He wants to meet with kids.

Mary and Martha, Luke 10:38-41: The worker became a sitter. Following Jesus is not a list of rules and works, it is about relationship.

Thomas, John 20:24-29: The questioning doubter became a believer. Jesus welcomes our doubts and questions, He can stand up to scrutiny.

Lazarus, John 11:17-44: The dead became alive. Jesus is still bringing life to dead things; He wants friendship with us.

The lesson resources provided can be used either as a framework for a larger group talk or for a small group discussion time. Therefore the material provided should be adapted to the setting, audience age, experience and knowledge.

We pray these resources help you as you share Jesus through football. If you have any comments or feedback, please contact us at gb@ambassadorsfootball.org

Recommended Itinerary for full day camp (please adjust to your setting)

What?	How?	Top Tips
Warm up game		
Introduction	A Football Scout on the hunt for new players will introduce each session. The scout is looking for talent. Every day they have a specific criteria that needs to be met in the player they choose. These criteria point to the person Jesus befriended. Every day an Ambassadors coach/kid fails to match up. The scout exits still looking.	Grey wig, big overcoat, clipboard/notebook.
Football		
Game		
1Verse	<i>"There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."</i> Proverbs 18:24 NIV. A game to help kids remember, and questions to help kids unpack the 1 Verse are included here.	
Game		
1Story	The Football Scout is still on the hunt for the perfect player, when they bump into the coach they dismissed in the Intro. The coach challenges their criteria using an interactive action story to show how different Jesus was with people; unpacking what Jesus said and did.	Award points/prizes for the best actions or most participation
Show N Tell	The same two points are made every day as each story demonstrates that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus does not care: He is able and willing to step in whoever/whatever/wherever. • Jesus does care: He wants to know, listen, speak to, challenge and help everyone. He can bring change. 	Use actions to remember these two points.
Response	The response takes everyone on a journey over the five sessions; unpacking the incredible reality that God still wants relationship with us today. Each day talking and listening to God will become more familiar as everyone is encouraged to watch, copy and have a go.	Practical activities and possible prayers for coaches to say are included for each day.
Lunch		
Coaches vs Kids	A challenge where you have coaches verse the kids, in the past we have done kick ups, crossbar challenge, saying the verse the fastest, headers etc. You can make up your own, but remember to keep the scores close and make the challenges easier the kids if needed.	
Hot Seat	The personal testimony of a coach will confirm that God still wants relationship with us today: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where were you when Jesus met you? (Age? Where did you live?) • What did Jesus not care about? • What did Jesus care about? • Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you? 	Additional questions linked to the daily theme are included in the leader's notes below.
Matches		

Zacchaeus: Unnoticed

What's the point? Jesus notices everyone.

Read this first:

No one liked Zacchaeus, and for good reason. He was a chief tax collector, working for the Roman enemy. Tax collectors brought their own people under Roman rule and then stole money from them (similar to the French who collaborated with Nazis in WW2). Zacchaeus was "...a collaborator, a traitor, a white-collar criminal. A scumbag..." (Glen Scrivener). Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. He was not asking for healing, he did not have a question, He just wanted to watch unnoticed. No one noticed Zacchaeus up in the tree, except Jesus. Jesus looked up and saw Zacchaeus. Everyone was surprised when Jesus then stopped and spoke to him. Jesus wanted to go to Zacchaeus' house! Zacchaeus was shocked. He was very aware of his betrayal, cheating, stealing and lies. The watching crowd were also shocked, and they muttered and complained. Why had Jesus chosen to stop, talk to and even visit the house of this sinner, a man no one liked? Today we will discover that Jesus notices everyone, even the watchers.

Intro: The Football Scout only notices tall, popular and honest people

The Football Scout arrives clutching their clipboard and on the lookout for the very best talent. Today they are looking for someone who is tall, popular and honest. A quick inspection of the coaches is disappointing. None of them look like they will do. Eventually they spot a coach who might do, pulling them to the front. First the scout uses a tape measure to check their height, before putting a large cross on the clipboard. The scout then asks what football team is the best, putting a large cross on their clipboard for honesty. The scout then asks the kids if the coach is popular? Pointing out any kid who was not responding enthusiastically the scout dismisses the coach because they are not tall, honest or popular enough. But the Football Scout will not give up hope, they exit determined to keep looking.

1Verse: "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24.

- What kind of friend is this verse from the bible describing? Do you have a friend like this? We will discover more about this verse over the week.
- Peg the words along string, kids limbo underneath and pull off a word with their hands. Shout the verse after each limbo.

1Story: What did Jesus say and do? Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10.

The Football Scout returns carrying the clipboard and still determined to find a tall, honest and popular player for their team. A coach arrives and challenges the Football Scout. Jesus did not discount people like you do. He notices everyone. Listen to this story about His friend called Zacchaeus. The kids can help re tell the story by listening for the following words and responding accordingly:

- Jesus: "I don't care!" (shout)
- Zacchaeus: "Cheat, liar, thief!" (whisper and point)

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. A tax collector was someone who betrayed their friends and neighbours by taking money from his own people and giving it to the enemies, in this story, the Roman rulers. Tax collectors would lie, cheat and steal to make extra money for themselves. Zacchaeus was a very rich chief tax collector, so he was especially good at thieving. No one liked tax collectors and no one like Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was passing through his town. He desperately wanted to see Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So, he ran ahead, climbed a tree and waited. It was a perfect place to watch Jesus unnoticed. When Jesus reached the tree, He stopped. Jesus looked up and spoke to Zacchaeus. Jesus said, "Zacchaeus hurry down, I want to stay at your house today." Zacchaeus

could not believe it! He scrambled down from the tree, hardly believing his good luck and took Jesus home with him. Everyone who saw this was shocked as well, they began to complain and mutter. Why had Jesus gone to Zacchaeus' house? Even Zacchaeus was stunned. He promised to give away half his money to the poor and pay back everyone he had cheated with four times the amount he took.

Show N Tell: Jesus did not care AND Jesus did care

- Coins: Jesus knew Zacchaeus was a cheat and a liar, betraying his own people and stealing their money to get rich. He knew no one liked Zacchaeus. Jesus did not care.
- Binoculars: Zacchaeus was watching unnoticed from the tree, but Jesus saw him and stopped. Ignoring the big crowd of people, He spoke directly to Zacchaeus. No one else noticed or cared about Zacchaeus, but Jesus noticed him and even wanted to go to his house (this all happened before Zacchaeus had given to the poor or paid people back). Jesus did care.

Response: Watching Prayers.

Zacchaeus watched Jesus from the tree, he did not expect to talk to Him! Today we can choose to just watch, or we can choose to talk. Whatever we choose to do we can be sure that Jesus has noticed us!

Have you ever talked to Jesus? It is called praying. I am going to talk to Jesus now. If you have never seen anyone talk to Jesus you might like to watch and listen, like Zacchaeus did. If you already talk to Jesus you might want to talk to Him too.

'Jesus, you noticed Zacchaeus. You knew why He was in a tree; you knew he was a cheat, a liar, a thief, and had no friends. But you did not care, you still stopped and talked to him, you even wanted to go to his house. Thank you Jesus that you notice every person here, thank you that every person here can get to know you.'

Hot Seat Questions:

- Where were you when Jesus met you? (Age? Where did you live?)
- What did Jesus not care about?
- What did Jesus care about?
- Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you?
- When did you first talk to Jesus, what did you say?

Little Children: Not important

What's the point? Jesus wants to meet kids.

Read this first:

Peter describes Jesus as angry or displeased six times in Mark's Gospel. What would make Jesus angry in Mark 10? A big injustice or shocking teaching? Surprisingly Jesus is angry because Peter and the disciples were stopping children from meeting Him. Spurgeon* suggests that they were well meaning; zealous for Jesus. Jesus' time was precious, they did not want Him disturbed. The disciples saw the value of Jesus spending time with important and powerful religious leaders, but not little children. The disciple's ignorance is a common mistake. Does Jesus want to meet children? Do children need to meet Jesus? Jesus' anger and response to His friends demonstrates the value He places on children meeting Him. Today we will discover that Jesus does not care if we are young.

Introduction: The Football Scout wants experienced over 18's.

The Football Scout arrives clutching their clipboard and on the lookout for the very best talent. Today they are looking for someone who has experience and is over 18. They notice a tall kid who might do, pulling them to the front. First the scout asks if they have experience playing football in the premier league, placing a large cross on the clipboard when the answer is no. Next the scout checks how old the kid is. Being under 18 also means a big cross on the clipboard. Desperately the scout asks if anyone is over 18? Maybe some of the coaches have played in the Premier League? Eventually the scout dismisses everyone because they are too young or not experienced enough. But the Football Scout will not give up hope, they exit determined to keep looking.

1Verse: "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24 .

- Why do you think the bible uses the word sticks? Have you ever had a friend who has stuck with you?
- Peg the words along string. Kids take it in turns to shoot off a word using a super soaker water gun. Shout the verse after each word is shot off.

1 Story: What did Jesus say and do? Little Children, Mark 10:13-16.

The Football Scout returns carrying the clipboard and still determined to find an over 18, experienced Premier League player for their team. A coach arrives and challenges the Football Scout. Jesus did not discount people like you do. He does not care if we are young. Listen to this story about His friends who were children. The kids can help re tell the story by listening for the following words and responding accordingly:

- Jesus: "I don't care!" (shout)
- Children: Stand up and point at each other.
- Disciples: "Shhhhhh!" (finger to lips and 'shoo' with hands)

Crowds were surrounding Jesus again. His friends the disciples noticed some people were bringing their children to Jesus. The disciples hurried over and shooed them away. Could they not see that Jesus was talking to some important religious leaders, He was too busy to see the children? Jesus noticed what was happening and got angry. He did not often get angry, so this was serious and important. Jesus told the disciples that He wanted the children to come to Him. No one should try and stop them. Jesus spent time with the children, even telling the disciples that they needed to learn from the children!

Show N Tell: Jesus did not care AND Jesus did care.

- No under 18's sign: Jesus' friends the disciples thought the kids were too young and unimportant to meet Jesus. But Jesus did not tell the kids to go away and come back when they were older. Jesus did not care.
- Tape measure: Jesus does not set height or age restrictions on knowing Him. He wants to meet with kids. He thinks it is very important. Important enough to get angry about if adults try and stop it happening. Jesus does care.

Response: Tape measure prayers (tape measures, blank stickers and pens)

Time everyone to see how quickly they can stand in height order. Give every coach a tape measure. Measure each child and write how tall they are on a sticker. Stick it on them explaining that it is the perfect height to meet with Jesus!!

Have you ever talked to Jesus? It is very easy. If you want to talk to Jesus you can today. We will talk to Him in our heads, so only He can hear you. Nod after each sentence to show you have finished. Everyone close their eyes.

Tell Jesus how old you are. Tell Him how tall you are (look at your sticker if you cannot remember). Jesus does not care how old or tall you are, He wants everyone to get to know Him. Tell Him what you think about that.

'Thank you Jesus that you want to meet with kids. No one is too young. You want to meet with us, here, today.'

Hot Seat: Choose a coach who started following Jesus as a child.

- Where were you when Jesus met you? (Age? Where did you live?)
- What did Jesus not care about?
- What did Jesus care about?
- Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you?

*See Spurgeon for more detail, <https://www.spurgeongems.org/vols31-33/chs1925.pdf>

Mary and Martha: Working hard

What's the point? Following Jesus is not a list of rules and works.

Read this first:

Mary and Martha were close friends of Jesus. The bible says Mary sat at the feet of Jesus listening to his teaching and Martha became *“upset over all the work she had to do...”* (v40) without any help from Mary. Martha appealed to Jesus, *“Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!”* (v40). Jesus' answer was surprising because He did not agree that it was unfair, and He did not send Mary to help. Instead He said, *“Mary has chosen the right thing.”* (v42). Martha was so busy rushing around doing things for Jesus, she had missed out on the opportunity to be with him. Following Jesus is not a list of rules and works, it is about relationship. He wants us to come to Him and understand everything He has done for us before we get busy doing lots of things for Him. Today we will discover that Jesus wants relationship.

Introduction: The Football Scout wants someone to prove they are good enough.

The Football Scout arrives clutching their clipboard (and a football), and on the lookout for the very best talent. Today they are looking for someone who can prove they are good enough. Who thinks their football skills will get them onto the team? They notice a coach who might be able to prove they are good enough, pulling them to the front. First the scout asks the coach to do as many kick ups as possible. A large cross is placed on the clipboard when they fail to prove themselves. The scout gives the coach one more chance. Can they do a few rainbow flicks? They dismiss the coach because they have not proved themselves. But the Football Scout will not give up hope, they exit determined to keep looking.

1Verse: “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Proverbs 18:24.

- What does the bible mean by closer than a brother? Do you have a friend who is closer than a brother?
- Mallets mallet. Two kids stand at front. Say alternate words following a theme. Hesitate/say wrong word and get hit on the head with an inflatable/balloon.

1 Story: What did Jesus say and do? Mary and Martha, Luke 10:38-41

The Football Scout returns carrying the clipboard and still determined to find a player who can prove they are good enough for the team. A coach arrives and challenges the Football Scout. Jesus did not discount people like you do. We do not have to prove we are good enough. Listen to this story about His friends Mary and Martha. The kids can help re tell the story by listening for the following words and responding accordingly:

- Jesus: “I don't care!” (shout)
- Martha: “Busy, work, busy, work.” (wipe sweat from head)
- Mary: “Hello God!” (place 'hand phone' to ear)

Mary and Martha were close friends of Jesus and He was at their house. Martha was very busy. She was rushing around. There was so much to do; making sure everyone was looked after and preparing the food. Mary was sitting with Jesus hanging onto every word He said. Eventually Martha got upset and she interrupted Jesus, “Don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell Mary to lend me a hand.” Jesus' reply was surprising. He did not agree it was unfair and He did not tell Mary to help Martha. Instead He said, “Mary has chosen the essential thing.” Jesus wanted Martha to sit down and get to know Him, like Mary.

Show N Tell: Jesus did not care AND Jesus did care.

- Cleaning equipment: Martha was angry with Mary. Jesus listened to her as she pointed out how unfair it was that she was doing all the work, and Mary was not helping. Martha thought Jesus would back her up. But Jesus was not interested in all the things Martha had done or all the things Mary had not done. Jesus did not care.
- List of rules: Jesus' reply to Martha was surprising. Instead of telling Mary to help her sister He said that Mary had chosen the best thing. Why? Because Jesus does not want us to prove we are good enough, He wants us to get to know Him. Following Jesus is not about rules and works, it is about relationship. He wanted Martha to sit down and get to know Him like her sister. Jesus did care.

Response: What's in the bag? Prayers

God never stops loving me, God knows me, God knows everything, God is everywhere, God is near, I can talk to God, I can ask God, God wants to talk to me, God counts the hairs on my head, I can trust God, God helps me, God has a plan, God cannot be shocked, God chooses me, God never gives up.

Write/print the words above and place in a box/bag/envelope. Everyone is on a journey of getting to know God, some of us know Him more than others, but even the coaches (who have been following Him for years) are discovering new things about God all the time. We can all get to know God a bit more today because God wants to tell everyone here something about Himself.

Pass/give out the box/bag/envelope. Everyone take out a piece of paper. Support anyone that needs help with reading. Whatever is written on our paper is something God wants us to know today.

'Thank you, Jesus, that following you is not a list of rules and works; do this, don't do that! Following you is about relationship. Thank you that we can get to know you.'

Hot Seat:

- Where were you when Jesus met you? (Age? Where did you live?)
- What did Jesus not care about?
- What did Jesus care about?
- Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you?
- What does a 'relationship with God' look like for you?

Thomas: Asking questions

What's the point? We can ask questions.

Read this first:

The resurrected Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene and ten of the disciples. When they tell Thomas, they have seen Jesus He refuses to believe them, claiming that he needs to see Jesus for himself before he will accept that Jesus is alive. Eight days later they are all together in a locked room when Jesus joins them. Almost immediately Jesus gives Thomas His full attention. He does not criticise Thomas' unbelief. Instead Jesus invites Thomas to do exactly what he said he needed to do in order to believe; touch Jesus' wounds. John does not tell us if Thomas takes Jesus up on His offer, only that Thomas believes. Thomas needed a direct personal experience of Jesus. He had questions and was not content to rely on other people's experiences. Jesus does not expect us to rely on other people's experiences of Him. Today we will discover that Jesus welcomes our doubts and questions, He can stand up to scrutiny.

Introduction: The Football Scout wants someone to sign up (no questions asked!)

The Football Scout arrives clutching their clipboard, and on the lookout for the very best talent. Today they are looking for someone who will sign up. They notice a coach who might want to sign up. The coach is reluctant. What exactly are they signing up too? The scout is reluctant to reveal anything and refuses to let the coach read the terms and conditions before they sign. They pester another coach. Eventually the scout dismisses all the coaches because they keep asking questions and are unwilling to sign up without more information. But the Football Scout will not give up hope, they exit determined to keep looking.

1Verse: "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24.

- Who could this amazing friend be?
- Stand in a circle and throw/roll/kick a ball to each other. If you catch the ball you say the next word of the verse. Which team can do it the quickest?

1 Story: What did Jesus say and do? Thomas, John 20:24-29.

The football scout returns carrying the clipboard and still determined to find someone who will sign up regardless. A coach arrives and challenges the Football Scout. Jesus did not discount people like you do. He welcomes our questions. Listen to this story about His friend Thomas. The kids can help re tell the story by listening for the following words and responding accordingly:

- Jesus: "I don't care!" (shout)
- Thomas: "I'll believe it when I see it" (fold arms)
- Disciples: "Jesus is alive!" (jump around)

Jesus had been killed on a cross and then buried in a tomb. Three days later His friend Mary Magdalene met Him in a garden, then 10 of His disciples met Him in a locked room. However, Thomas was not there and had not seen Jesus. When Thomas' friends told him, they had seen Jesus with their own eyes and He was alive, Thomas refused to believe them. He knew Jesus had died on the cross, but He needed to put his fingers in the nail holes and stick his hand in Jesus' side before he would believe Jesus was alive. Eight days later Thomas was with the other disciples in a locked room when Jesus joined them. Almost immediately Jesus gave Thomas His full attention. He did not tell him off for his unbelief. Instead Jesus invited Thomas to do exactly what he said he needed to do; touch Jesus' wounds. The Bible writer (John) does not tell us if Thomas took Jesus up on His offer, only that Thomas believed. Thomas needed to meet with Jesus himself before he would believe that Jesus was actually

alive. He was not content to rely on other people's experiences. Jesus does not expect us to rely on other people's experiences. He welcomes our questions, and He wants to meet with us himself.

Show N Tell: Jesus did not care AND Jesus did care.

- Large question mark: Thomas did not believe what his friends said. They were claiming that Jesus was alive, that they had talked to Him. Jesus knew Thomas was unsure, asking questions and needing proof. Jesus did not care.
- Large nails and sword: Jesus understood how Thomas was feeling. He did not criticize or tell him off. Jesus patiently showed Thomas His wounds. The holes in His hands where the nails had held Him to the cross and the hole in His side where the sword had pierced. Jesus wanted Thomas to believe He was alive; to know for himself. Jesus did care.

Response: Question Time (football and timer)

The last four days we have talked a lot about Jesus being alive; that we can get to know Him, even talk and listen to Him. Thomas had doubts and questions. Maybe we have doubts and questions? Question Time is an opportunity to ask ANY question.

Everyone (including coaches) sit in a circle. Form more than one circle if there are 12+ kids. Put 5 minutes on a clearly visible count down timer (phone or egg timer). Anyone holding the football can talk. Kids signal they want to talk by thumbs up. Who has a question? Who has a reply? The reply is not necessary an answer. It might be an observation, another question or a discussion point. Give opportunity to talk. Leaders step in when necessary (with a thumbs up).

'Thank you Jesus that we can believe you are alive without seeing you, but you do not expect us to believe without knowing you!'

Hot Seat:

- Where were you when Jesus met you? (Age? Where did you live?)
- What did Jesus not care about?
- What did Jesus care about?
- Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you?
- Was there a time when you did not believe people when they told you Jesus was alive? What changed?

Lazarus: Dead

What's the point? Jesus wants friendship with us.

Read this first:

Mary and Martha were miserable. If only Jesus had arrived a few days earlier they knew He could have healed their brother. But now Lazarus had been dead four days. When Jesus saw how upset they were He wept. The bible also says He was angry (v33-34, MSG). He was angry with death, and all the hurt and sadness it brought. Jesus insisted the stone covering the tomb should be moved away. He prayed to God and then shouted, **“Lazarus, come out!”** Everyone was astonished when Lazarus walked out of the tomb. Jesus was able to make His dead friend alive! Jesus still loves to bring dead friendships to life. Today we will discover that although our friendship with Jesus might look and feel dead, He can make it come alive. Jesus wants friendship with us.

Introduction: The Football Scout is desperate; he will take anyone that is alive!

The Football Scout arrives clutching their clipboard, and on the lookout for the very best talent. Today they are looking for someone who is alive. The scout has been thinking about Jesus. Jesus was not fussy, He ended up with some brilliant friends. Also, time is running out, it is the last day of football, and they have not found the players they need. So, the scout has lowered the criteria. They will take anyone with a pulse, anyone who is breathing, and anyone who can kick a football. After testing a few kids and coaches the scout announces that everyone has made the team! They exit happily, claiming that even Jesus cannot beat that, unless He has dead friends!

1Verse: 1Verse: “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Proverbs 18:24.

- Jesus is a friend who the bible says sticks even closer than a brother.
- Split into two teams and have a ‘verse-off’. Which team/individual can say the verse loudest/clearest/fastest/best accent/gargle it/burp it/backwards. Or do the verse-off with actions ONLY. Which team/individual can do the biggest, fastest, slowest, smallest, coolest actions?

1 Story: What did Jesus say and do? Lazarus, John 11:17-44.

The football scout returns carrying the clipboard and rejoicing because they have found so many players. A coach arrives and challenges the Football Scout. Jesus did not discount people like you do. You discount the dead, Jesus did not! Listen to this story about His friend Lazarus. The kids can help re tell the story by listening for the following words and responding accordingly:

- Jesus: “I don’t care!” (shout)
- Lazarus: Dead! (close eyes and do not move)

Lazarus was a close friend of Jesus and he was ill. Lazarus’ sisters (Mary and Martha from our story a few days ago) sent a message to Jesus, asking Him to come quickly. But by the time Jesus arrived at their house Lazarus had already been dead four days. Lazarus’ sisters were miserable. If only Jesus had arrived a few days earlier they knew He could have healed their brother. Jesus loved Mary and Martha, He hated to see them so sad. The bible says, **“Jesus wept”**. It also says that Jesus felt angry. He was angry with death, and all the hurt and sadness it brought. Lazarus’ body was in a tomb; a cave in the hill. The entrance was covered by a large stone. Jesus told the mourners to move the stone. Martha quickly warned Jesus. Lazarus had been dead four days, his body would be rotting, and the smell terrible. But Jesus insisted and the stone was moved away. Jesus prayed to God and then shouted, **“Lazarus, come out!”** Everyone was astonished when Lazarus walked out of the tomb.

Show N Tell: Jesus did not care AND Jesus did care.

- Peg and bandages: Lazarus was very dead. He had been dead four days. The people outside the tomb were reluctant to take the stone away because the smell of rotting flesh would have been terrible. But this did not stop Jesus shouting out to Lazarus. The people watching must have thought Jesus was bonkers. Jesus did not care.
- Tissues: Lazarus was close friends with Jesus. Jesus loved His friends and was sad when He heard that Lazarus was dead. When Jesus arrived at Lazarus' tomb the bible simply says, "**Jesus wept.**" *John 11:35*. The bible also says that Jesus was angry (v33-34, MSG). Not angry with people, but angry with death. Angry that death caused so much hurt and sadness. Jesus did care.

Response: Seed prayers

This week we have been hearing about Jesus' friends. We have seen that He did not discount people who were watching, young, busy keeping rules, asking questions or even dead! Pour/place a few seeds into everyone's hands. Examine the seeds. Are they dead or alive? They definitely have the potential to be alive. Our friendship with God is a bit like these seeds. It might not look like much at the moment but there is potential for it to come alive. Just like Jesus made His dead friend Lazarus come back to life, He can make our friendship with God come alive.

Have you ever talked to Jesus? It is very easy. If you want to talk to Jesus you can today. We will talk to Him in our heads, so only He can hear you. Nod after each sentence to show you have finished. Everyone closes their eyes.

Tell Jesus who your friends are. Tell Him what you like doing with your friends.

Look at the seeds in your hand. They do not look like much, but they have the potential for life. In the same way our friendship with God might not look like much, but it has the potential to come alive. Tell Jesus what you think about that.

'Thank you Jesus that you did not discount anyone. You were friends with people who made mistakes, were young, were busy trying to keep rules, asked questions and even dead people! You want to meet with us, here, today.'

Hot Seat:

- Where were you when Jesus met you? (Age? Where did you live?)
- What did Jesus not care about?
- What did Jesus care about?
- Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you?

Sunday Service / Awards Presentation: We love to invite parents to an awards presentations that can be held at the end of the sessions or during the service on a Sunday.

What's the point? Jesus shows us what God feels, says and does.

Read this first:

Jesus' Friends has explored five of Jesus' friendships whilst unpacking the incredible reality that God still wants friendship with us today. Wherever we are on our journey of getting to know God we can all take a step closer because God still wants relationship with everyone, and no one is off limits. Today we will recap the last five sessions; briefly unpacking the stories of Zacchaeus, little children, Mary & Martha, Thomas and Lazarus for the parents and carers. These stories are important because Jesus shows us God; what He felt, said and did show us what God feels, says and does. Today we will discover that it is only possible for God to be friends with all these different people because of Jesus; His life, death and resurrection.

Introduction: Jesus shows us God.

The Football Scout arrives clutching their clipboard, and on the lookout for the very best talent. Today they are not looking for a new team member, they think every kid who played this week deserves a place on their team. BUT they are wondering why we have spent the last week finding out about Jesus' friends. Why is it important? A coach explains that Jesus shows us God; what He felt, said and did show us what God feels, says and does. Looking at all the different people Jesus was friends with, and what He said and did with them will show us what God thinks about all these different people. The coach admits that is important and exits happily.

1Verse: "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24.

- Kids can present and explain the 1Verse to parents and carers.

And/or

- Challenge parents and carers to a 'verse-off'; adults vs kids.

1 Story:

The interactive stories this week have shown us that Jesus was friends with lots of different people. We have seen that Jesus was friends with Zacchaeus, little children, Mary & Martha, Thomas and Lazarus. They were all in different situations when they encountered Jesus. Each day we looked at what Jesus said or did, unpacking what happened as a result.

- Zacchaeus: A thief became a giver. We might be happy to just watch Jesus; we might even discount ourselves. Jesus notices everyone.
- Little children: The ignored and pushed away became important and near. No one is too young to meet Jesus; He wants to meet with kids.
- Mary and Martha: The worker became a sitter. Following Jesus is not a list of rules and works, it is about relationship.
- Thomas: The questioning doubter became a believer. Jesus welcomes our doubts and questions, He can stand up to scrutiny.
- Lazarus: The dead became alive. Jesus is still bringing life to dead things; He wants friendship with us.

Show N Tell: Jesus' life, death and resurrection make friendship with God possible.

How is it possible for God to be friends with all these people?

- Coins: Jesus could be friends with Zacchaeus who was a cheat, liar and thief, because on the cross Jesus was punished instead of Zacchaeus. Now people who have made mistakes can know God.
- Tape measure: Jesus could be friends with the unimportant little children because when He died on the cross Jesus took away all barriers. Now young/old/male/female/rich/poor can all know God.
- Cleaning equipment: Jesus could tell Martha to sit down and get to know Him because Jesus kept every rule and lived a perfect life. Now we can rest in Jesus' work.
- Questions: Jesus was not threatened or worried by Thomas' questions because He knew that His life, death and resurrection could stand up to scrutiny. Now He loves us to ask questions.
- Bandages: Jesus could bring His friend back to life because He knew that when He died on the cross He would beat death and came back to life. Now He wants to bring our friendship with God to life.

Response: Jesus does not care AND Jesus does care

We all know that Jesus cares, however shockingly we have also discovered that Jesus did not care!

Jesus does not care about:

- What other people think.
- If no one else likes us.
- If we are young and unimportant.
- All the things we have done to impress Him.
- If we are unsure, asking questions or needing proof.
- If our friendship with Him is dead.

But Jesus does care about:

- People no one else notices.
- Meeting with kids.
- Relationship with people.
- Us knowing Him ourselves, and not relying on other people's experiences.
- Sickness and death.