



## FINDING MY PLACE

### A Plea for Help

January 28, 2023

#### 1 PREPARING

##### A. THE SOURCE

**James 5:16** • “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

**Philippians 2:1, 2** • “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

##### B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “FINDING MY PLACE”

The sense of belonging to a group is probably one of the most important motivating factors in the lives of your earliteens. Teens need to have friends and to feel that they belong. This is a healthy, normal desire that should be met by Christian fellowship within your church and youth group. Teens need to recognize that the desire to belong can get out of hand when it leads them to do things they believe are wrong, just to be accepted by “the group.” While strong Christian friendships should be nurtured and encouraged, teens need to discover for themselves that belonging to Jesus gives the ultimate sense of acceptance.

##### C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “FINDING MY PLACE”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Evaluate their own need to “belong” to a group.
2. Recognize the importance of having standards that can’t be compromised for the sake of popularity.
3. Explore ways to build stronger community within their church, Sabbath School, and youth group.

##### D. MATERIALS NEEDED

**Beginning** • (Activity A) slips of paper.

**Connecting** • Bibles, student lessons, construction paper, markers, scissors, glue.

#### 2 BRIDGING

##### A. WHERE WE’VE BEEN BEFORE

Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson. Give them opportunity to say their verses from memory.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

## B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for *Adventist Mission for Youth and Adult* at [www.realtimefaith.net](http://www.realtimefaith.net))
- >> Service project reports

### 3 BEGINNING

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

#### A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

**Get ready** • Have the group sit in a circle. In advance, make up as many slips of paper as there are people in your group. One slip of paper should say “Rooster.” All the others should say “Do not stand up. Remain seated and make no noise.”

**Get set** • Tell class members you are going to play a game called “barnyard animals.” **Say:** **Each person will get a piece of paper with the name of an animal on it. Do not show your paper to anyone. I’m going to count to three, and on the count of three, each person will stand up and make the noise of the animal written on your paper, as loudly as you can.**

**Go** • Distribute papers. (Keep track of the paper that says “Rooster” and make sure it goes to someone confident and not easily embarrassed.) Count to three. The intention is that the “Rooster” will stand up and shout “Cock-a-doodle-doo!” while everyone else sits silently and stares at them.

**Debriefing** • **Ask:** How did it feel for the

“Rooster” to be the only one standing and making a noise? Did the person look ridiculous? out of place? If I had given that piece of paper to someone new to the group, who was shy and didn’t know the others well, how do you think they would have liked the game? Even for a confident person, was it a little embarrassing to be the only one standing and making a noise? What does this game illustrate about trying to fit into a group of people? Have you ever had the feeling that you’re the odd one out? How did you deal with that?

#### B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

**Get ready** • As the first few people in class arrive, **say:** **We’re going to conduct an experiment today. We’re going to pick a few people at random from those who arrive later on, and treat them differently from everyone else.** With the students’ input, decide on an arbitrary standard you will use to make some people in the group feel left out. You could pick, for example, anybody wearing red, or the fifth and seventh people to enter the room, or whatever.

**Get set** • As the rest of the students enter, ignore those who are supposed to be “left out.” You and the others who arrived early can quietly explain to those who come in later what the standard is and who is going to be excluded. Keep up the activity until everyone has noticed what’s going on.

**Go** • Once everyone has noticed that some people are being ignored (you may have to make the ignoring quite obvious), end the experiment by explaining what you were doing and apologizing to the people who were excluded.

**Debriefing** • **Ask those who were excluded:** **How did you feel when people wouldn’t talk to you or include you in what was going on? Did you have any idea why they were acting this way? How did you feel when you found out it was all an experiment?** (relieved, angry,

upset, etc.) **Ask those who did the ignoring:** How did you feel about picking out people at random to ignore? Did any of you refuse to participate? Why or why not? **Ask everyone:** How does this reflect the way people are often treated in groups and cliques? Have you ever been the one left out? Have you ever been the one ignoring others?

### C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

**In your own words, tell the following story:**

Sara changes schools in the middle of the year. She had a few good friends at her old school, but now she rarely sees them anymore. Her new school is much larger, and there are very clearly defined cliques. She's not much into sports, so she doesn't fit in with the jocks. The really smart kids are extremely nerdy, and Sara doesn't want to hang out with them. She meets some girls who are very popular and seem to like and accept her, but she soon discovers they are doing things that she doesn't want to get involved in, such as smoking and shoplifting.

**Debriefing • Ask:** What advice would you give to Sara? Does everyone have to fit into a certain "group" to be accepted? What are the advantages of staying out of a group that would have a negative influence on you? In what practical ways can you resist peer pressure and have a positive influence on those around you?

## 4 CONNECTING

### A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Ask students to look at the Bible verses from Wednesday's section of the student lesson. Read through them together and ask students to paraphrase in their own words what each says about friendship. Does the Bible text reflect their experiences with friends?

Hand out construction paper, markers, scis-

sors, and glue. Invite each student to choose one of the Bible verses and write it on a card that they will give to a friend, thanking that person for their friendship. They can then decorate the card any way they want. If they do (or have done) the exercise from Friday's section of the student lesson, their thank-you letter can be sent along with this Bible verse card.

### B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

**Ask someone to read or tell the story from Sabbath's section of the student lesson.**

**Ask:** Have you ever known anyone who was bullied and ignored? What was your response? How can you make a difference when you stand up to defend a student who is being bullied, harassed, or hurt? How could you include students who are ignored and left out in your circle of friends? How can you be an ambassador for Jesus at school and in your community? Point out that many acts of unkindness happen in school every day, but it makes a difference if a kind student steps in and helps. What kinds of unseen consequences might unkind acts have? (hurt feelings, bitterness, depression, withdrawal, loneliness, etc.) How important is it to you to have supportive friends?

### C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

**Pose the following scenario:**

**Say:** You are a friend of Marcus (in the story mentioned in the student guide). You aren't one of the individuals who have been tormenting him, but you haven't been actively supporting him, either. One afternoon he phones you, tells you how miserable he's feeling, and asks for your advice. Think about how important it is to have good friends, and how you could best be a supportive friend in this situation.

**Ask:** What do you tell him?

## 5 APPLYING

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### A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Talk about how your Sabbath School class could function better as a group of supportive Christian friends. **Ask: What do we need more of in order to function better as a supportive group of friends? What do you need less of?** (gossip, criticism, competition)

Work together to plan a social activity that will bond your group together. If your group normally does a lot of social things together, plan something new that places the emphasis on inviting non-Christian friends and showing them how Adventist Christian teens have fun together. If getting together outside Sabbath School time is unusual for your group, take the plunge and plan a fun time just for your class (department).

**Debriefing** • Tailor your debriefing to the needs of your particular group. Discuss what your group has done in the past that has or hasn't worked to bring the group together socially. Talk about how you can take "fellowship" to another level within the group, or how to reach out and include others who aren't normally included.

### B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What are some negative consequences of doing wrong actions only to be accepted by a group or to fit in with your friends?

2. How can you be a positive influence in your group of friends?
3. What's the best thing a friend has ever done for you?
4. What's the best thing you've ever done for a friend?
5. Why is it important that you choose your friends wisely? Why is it difficult to have a positive influence in a group that is not inclined to do what's right? What might be the results of choosing non-Christian friends? What are the advantages of choosing Christian friends? What does the Bible advise regarding the choice of friends? (See Proverbs 12:26.)

## 6 CLOSING

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### SUMMARY

**In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:**

God wants you to have close friends. He put the need for friends, for belonging, into our human nature. But God doesn't want to see you destroy your Christian experience by having friends who are a bad influence on you. It's important to belong, but not so important that you should violate your personal standards and beliefs in order to be part of a clique. You're a Christian, so your ultimate support group should be the church, your fellow believers. Let's work together to be positive Christian friends for one another!



## STUDENT LESSON

### FINDING MY PLACE

#### A Plea for Help

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#### Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 14, Unity in the Body of Christ:** “We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 55-59

#### A PLEA FOR HELP

Marcus was born with a frail physical constitution. As a result, he could not participate in many activities that required strenuous physical effort. Although Marcus succeeded in his schoolwork, he was unable to participate in most sports with the other boys because of his weak health. Pretty soon the boys started to pick on him. They threw hurtful remarks at Marcus, and he became the target of school bullies.

One day during recess some strong boys cornered him from every side and started to harass him by shouting at him. Marcus frantically tried to escape but it was too late. The only thing Marcus could do was to back off as the

bullies advanced closer and closer, constantly sneering and throwing demeaning threats at him.

All of a sudden, as Marcus was walking backwards, he hit a wall. He was terrified to find that he had no more room to retreat and no place to turn. To his disappointment, nobody in the schoolyard seemed to notice what was happening to him. Nobody stepped in to stop the harassment. The boys began to push him around and threatened to hurt him. Just when Marcus thought that all hope was gone, a shout was heard right behind the big bullies.

“Stop it! Leave him alone!”

The intervention had an immediate effect. The grip of the bullies loosened on Marcus. In fact, they let go of him completely as they started to back off in defeat. A tall boy stepped into the circle and stood between Marcus and the bullies.

“Don’t you dare hurt or touch my brother,” the older brother of Marcus demanded boldly. “You may fight me if you want, but leave my brother alone!”

The bullies turned around and immediately left the scene.

— Pastor Robert Ross

We all face the attacks of the enemy at one time or another. But Jesus is our big brother who has defeated Satan and has provided a way of escape by dying on the cross for each one of us. He is our example, and He asks you to be a big brother to others who need protection. If you

see someone being hurt or bullied, don't hesitate to step in and protect your neighbor.

Belonging to a group of friends is one of the greatest feelings in the world. Being on the outside of a group is one of the most painful and miserable. While you may never feel as desperate as Marcus did, you have probably felt lonely at times. Maybe you've found it hard to fit in with a group—or maybe you've been the one excluding someone else.

The words of Jesus offer hope when facing life's painful situations: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Jesus can heal the heartaches you might experience. He also offers second chances to those who have hurt the feelings of others. He invites all to live in harmony with Him and with each other. Best of all, Jesus wants to be your personal Savior and Friend!

## Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Proverbs 18:24, and Proverbs 22:11, 24.
- » The need to have friends who accept and include you is important. It is equally important that you include others in your circle of friends. God's Word offers guidelines for positive friendships and for treating others with respect. How can you resist negative peer pressure and do what is right for Jesus at all times? If you know of a bully or of someone who is being bullied, what steps can you take to help? According to the Bible passages for today, how should we treat others?

## Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

- » Read John 17:20-23; Colossians 3:12-15; Galatians 3:27-29.
- » The Bible tells us that although we are all different, we are equal in the eyes of Jesus who is the Savior of all who accept Him.
- » How does being a friend fit with being one in Christ and being members of His body?

### Great Friendships of the Bible

- » Choose names from the list below the table to match the friends to the names in the first column of the table. Two names in the table will correspond with the names of three friends from the list below.

Jonathan	
Daniel	
Paul	
Jesus	
God	
Ruth	
Elijah	
Philip	

Abraham    David    Hananiah    Martha  
Nathanael    Mary    Azariah    Elisha  
Lazarus    Naomi    Philemon    Mishael

Here are Bible references to help you.

Daniel 1:6, 7    1 Samuel 18:3    John 1:45  
James 2:23    John 11:5    2 Kings 2:1-13  
Philemon 1, 19    Ruth 1:11, 16, 17

- » "In calling God our Father, we recognize all His children as our brethren. We are all a part of the great web of humanity, all members of one family" (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 105).

## Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Proverbs 12:26.
- » Sure, everyone wants to belong. It's great to have friends that you feel comfortable with. But what do you do if you don't have that? Maybe you've just moved to town or changed schools, and you're finding it hard to get to know people. Maybe your interests, your tastes, or your values make you a little different from most people you know, and it's hard to find a group that's "just right" to hang out with.
- » A lot of times we're tempted to change ourselves in order to fit in with friends. Sometimes change can be a good thing. For example, you can learn to be more tactful, more thoughtful, more outgoing, all of which will help you get along better with people. You might even take up a new sport or hobby just to make new friends. But other times change can carry very negative consequences to you and to others. When you replace good values with bad choices just to please your friends and be accepted, that is a very dangerous path that is self-destructive. Drinking or smoking because your friends do, impairs your thinking, and negatively impacts your relationships, your health, and ultimately your connection with God. Also criticizing others so you can stay part of the popular crowd is offensive to God.
- » Jesus experienced what it is like to be loved by some, but hated by others. He is a trusted friend to whom you can always turn for help. What can you do today to show your gratitude to Jesus for His wonderful friendship? How can your words and actions reflect your love for God?

## Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Match the phrase with the text. All Bible passages are taken from the New King James Version.
  1. "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." \_\_\_\_\_
  2. "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." \_\_\_\_\_
  3. ". . . we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free . . ." \_\_\_\_\_
  4. "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works . . ." \_\_\_\_\_
  5. ". . . all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." \_\_\_\_\_
  6. "Therefore comfort each other and edify one another . . ." \_\_\_\_\_
- A. 1 Corinthians 12:12-14
- B. Romans 12:4, 5
- C. Proverbs 17:17
- D. 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- E. Hebrews 10:24, 25
- F. Proverbs 27:17

## Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read John 15:13-15.
- » Review the memory text.
- » We all need friends, but friends come and go. The one Friend who will always stick with you if you accept Him is Jesus. His love is unchanging and unconditional.
- » The best friends to have are friends who will encourage and support you in your walk with Jesus—because they're walking with Him too! But what if there aren't many kids your age at church?

- » Pray about it. Talk to your parents, your Sabbath School teacher, any adult who knows you and cares. Yes, you can be friends with a wide variety of different kinds of people—in fact, it’s good for you! But to grow as a Christian, you need to find Christian friends. Maybe you need to reach out to a friend at church you haven’t gotten to know that well.
- » Maybe you can broaden your horizons and include friends who share your beliefs even if they’re a little “different” from you in other ways. God has people for you—people who’ll pray for you and build you up instead of tearing you down as a Christian. Ask Him to help you find them.

## Friday **APPLYING**

- » Read Luke 6:31; Matthew 7:12; Romans 15:5, 6.
- » “Live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold you firmly by a hand that will never let go” (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 119).
- » Think of a friend who has been helpful and encouraging to you. Take a few minutes to write that friend a letter, thanking them for the help and encouragement. Tell your friend you are praying for them. Practice here what you will say in the letter.

