

INVITATION TO

FRIENDSHIP

4TH GRADE

Crossroads Families
A ministry of Crossroads Church

Think back to who your best friends were in elementary school. Does that thought bring back good or bad memories? I know I can remember those people and all the crazy times we had in school. I still have not forgiven one friend for always getting me in trouble in 4th grade! Enough about our memories though. Your child is building significant friendships this year, and we want to help you navigate that particular issue.

This year, we are inviting your child to the Family Experience called “Invitation to Friendship.” Why this year? 4th grade is a huge marker in friendship development for kids. For the first time, many children form a deep relationship with a “best friend.” For the first time, many keep secrets from their parents that only their friends know about. Some of your children are going to secretly notice that boy or girl across the room and not really know what to do about it. Also, with technology at their fingertips, many 4th graders can now stay in contact with friends outside of school through texting. This is the year to process the power of friendship with your child.

We are going to invite your child to see the influence friends have on their day-to-day life. We will do this by giving you 3 Kickstarters that will help you build a foundation for you to begin this year’s Family Experience. These Kick-starters are expounded upon in our Kick-starter Guide. They will have questions and activities for you to do with your children that set up the Family Experience. These Kick-starters will include discussion on what loyalty, respect and encouragement looks like in friendships.

In 4th grade, you are going to see a new level of maturity so expect the dialogue with each experience to go to a different level. The goal this year is not only to help your child connect to strong friendships but also discover what it means to be a good friend.

These three family talk experiences will lead you to a powerful Family Experience Ceremony which will include a special Piece of Artwork to be displayed in their room. Your Parent Guide will give you step-by-step instructions on how to carry this out. This year, we want to ask your child’s closest friends at church and school one word that describes them. Collect these words and then collect pictures of your child and their friends. We want you to create a collage they can hang in their room to always remember the power of friendship. You can do this by buying a simple pre-made picture frame from Wal-Mart, or if you are creative, make it on your own.

You know your child and what will work. Never forget that friendships shape our child’s story, so help them choose those friends wisely.

An Invitation To Friendship

4th grade is the peek year for relationships. Many 4th graders are beginning to express interest in the opposite sex. **Your child is beginning to listen to their peers.** Many children this age develop an intimate relationship with a best friend. We can be wise in helping our children choose their friends well since friends are the biggest influence in the life of a child after parents.

Kickstarter 1: Loyalty in Friendship

The story of David and Jonathan is the “go to” story in the Bible for friendship. David and Jonathan were extremely close. Read about their special friendship in 1 Samuel 18:1-4.

David finished talking with Saul. After that, Jonathan and David became close friends. Jonathan loved David just as he loved himself.

From that time on, Saul kept David with him. He didn't let him return to his father's home.

Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him just as he loved himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David. He also gave him his military clothes. He even gave him his sword, his bow and his belt.

What does Jonathan give David to signify he cares for him? Why do you think Jonathan chose these items to give to David? These items were things very close to Jonathan. Jonathan was a prince, so he was giving David a prince's robe. Jonathan was also a soldier, so to give up his sword, bow and belt meant he was giving things he valued away.

Ask your child who she/he considers to be a close friend. What is something special that your child owns that he/she would be willing to give away to a friend in a gesture similar to Jonathan's, as a way to say thank you for being my friend. Help your child name the person, the item, and the time for them to give this item away.

Kickstarter 2: Respect in Friendship

Have your child write down characteristics of the type of friends they want. Then read Matthew 7:1-2:

In everything, do to others what you would want them to do to you. This is what is written in the Law and in the Prophets.

Take a serious look back at the list of characteristics your child wrote, and one by one, ask your child if he/ she exhibits these characteristics as a friend. We say we want our friends to be a certain way, but are we being that for them? If there are a couple ways that your child knows he/she could be a better friend, pray with them that God would help them develop those traits.

Kickstarter 3: Encouragement in Friendship

So cheer each other up with the hope you have. Build each other up. In fact, that's what you are doing.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

As a friend, we should be building up others or encouraging them. This is a good time to help your child think through his/her friends. Is there someone in his/her life who isn't encouraging. If so, take this opportunity to help them see that a good friend is one who encourages and builds up.

Encouraging words build people up and make them strong. Think of a brick wall. Each brick stacked with another and another will eventually create a strong wall. Ask your child to think of a close friend and write his/ her name or draw a picture of him/ her on a brick wall. Have them write encouraging words about their friend in each of the bricks. What makes him/her special? What does your child appreciate about that friend? Etc. For some kids it may be super awkward to give this to their friend. However, if your child is brave enough, have them go for it. It's not often that we take the time to tell people why they are special to us. This could be a significant start of transparency and honesty in your child's life.

Art of Friendship

We want to help you present your child with a piece of art that signifies who they are as a friend. Ask several of your child's friends and friends' parents and/or family members to give you 2 to 3 words that describe your child. Please see the sample message as a point of reference for making this request. Then use these words to create a piece of art for your child's room. Depending on how "artsy" you are, you can personally make this item, hire a professional, or pay a talented teen to do your child's art piece. Here are several ways you can create art using the words:

1. Words painted on canvas
2. Words etched in wood
3. Words sketched on paper and framed, calligraphy or graffiti art
4. Use a collage frame and put pictures of friends as well as words into the frames
5. Decorate a poster board with the words
6. Words seared into metal/iron

There are tons of options for making this cool piece of artwork that is sure to be special to your child. Designate a time to give your child the gift. At the scheduled time, you can use the planning guide script as a guide for the presentation.

MESSAGE FOR FRIENDS' PARENTS

Dear _____,

We are doing a special project for our son/daughter. We'd love your feedback since your child and our child are friends. Can you please ask your child to tell you 2 or 3 words he/she would use to describe my child? We're going to use these words to create a cool gift for him/her because we've been talking with them about friendship. Thanks so much!

FRIENDSHIP PRESENTATION SCRIPT

You are such a great friend. We've talked about friends showing loyalty, showing respect, and giving encouragement. I've seen you do these things with your friends, and I'm very proud of you. Through doing the Kickstarters together, we've seen the qualities to look for when choosing a friend and the kind of friend to be to others.

I asked your friends to give me a couple words that describe you, and this is what they came up with. We created a piece of art for you so that you can remember what your friends think of you and remember the kind of friend God wants you to be. This is what your friends said:

Read the words to your child.

Hopefully, this piece of art will remind you to be a good friend by being loyal, showing respect and giving encouragement. These are the traits that God wants us to have in our friendships.

The biggest change in development for 4th graders is the change in friendships. All of a sudden, they care what others think of them and want to fit in. Your child probably has at least one very close friend this year that they enjoy spending time with.

Physical

- Are ready for competitive and cooperative games
- Are physically maturing (Girls physically mature faster than boys.)
- May engage in habitual movements like nail biting, hair twisting, etc.

Social and Emotional

- Attempt to resolve conflict before involving adults; understand that not everyone views things the way they do
- Are no longer egocentric
- Have a high level of emotional intensity
- Can be self-critical
- May worry

Relational

- Gravitate toward certain friends
- Need encouragement
- Begin to care about social issues
- See adults as fallible, realizing their inconsistencies
- Have a strong desire to fit in
- May begin to show interest in opposite sex
- May become deeply attached to a best friend

Spiritual

- Are concerned about being right or wrong and being fair
- Have a strong tension between being a child and pushing toward independence
- Benefit from some freedom to exercise their growing independence
- View fairness and justice as big themes in their lives

Our hope is that during the past year, you have been able to teach your fourth grader how to choose their friends.

In order to encourage other parents, we would love to hear about your your journey teaching your child about friendships and how that experience has impacted your relationship with God and your family.

Feel free to send us an email, make a video, or send us a copy of your story, Bible verse, song, or prayer so that we can better encourage other parents. Thank you for taking this journey with us and we pray that God continues to work in your life and the life of your child.

SEND RESPONSES TO:

Kiki McDaniel

Director of Children's Ministries

k.mcdaniel@xroadschurch.net

