



MONTHLY OVERVIEW: Finding Community is an important part of a students' life however, many times students struggle to find friends that bring out the best in them. For the month of September, United will be in a series called Rivals where students will learn how to find and be a Christlike friend.

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

WEEK ONE:

“WINNING VIA SURRENDERING”

The Story of David and Goliath is a crowd favorite. However, have we been reading the story through the wrong lense? We all have giants in our lives (anxiety, depression, a sin habit, poor self image, etc) that stand in our way of having a strong relationship with God, but we aren't the ones that are going to defeat our giants. We aren't David.

In 1 Samuel the Israelites and the Philistines are at war in the Valley of Elah. The Philistines send a giant named Goliath, who stands nearly ten feet tall, into the valley to taunt the Israelites and their God.

1 SAMUEL 17:8-11

Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, “Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us.” Then the Philistine said, “This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.” On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

The Israelites were terrified and wouldn't move. They were defeated before the battle even started. There was no man willing to fight Goliath... Until David showed up on scene.

1 SAMUEL 17:32

David said to Saul, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.”

1 SAMUEL 17:45-46, 48-49

David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands. As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

Many of us are in a battle with a giant. A battle with depression. A battle with anxiety. A battle with a sin habit. And we are losing. I believe it's because we are trying to be David. We are trying to fight it ourselves when in reality we weren't built for that. David in this story is actually a picture of who Jesus is for us. When our giants are mocking us and beating us into the ground, we must surrender our fight over to the only who can win the fight. Jesus.

And what I love about Jesus, is that he often fights our battles by surrounding us with the right people. He uses our friends, our United leaders, our pastors, therapists, and many others who want to help us. Listen, if we were supposed to do everything on our own, there would have been no reason for Jesus to come and die. Don't do life alone. Surrender your battle to Jesus. Seek Help. Don't Give Up, Look Up.

THINK IT THROUGH AND TALK IT OUT!

1. Now that small groups have officially started, what are you hoping to get from this group this year?
2. What are the biggest giants in your life right now?
3. What is your normal battle plan when it comes to fighting your giant? How is it working for you?
4. Who do you think God can use in your life to help you defeat your giants?
5. How can we as a group apply this message tonight? This week? This school year?

Growth path: Write down the groups “giants” and keep each other accountable on these things for the year.

BONUS MATERIAL:



“Talking to Jesus”
Elevation Worship
Music Video



“What Kind of
Friend Are You?”
Message Video



5-Day
Bible Reading
Plan

WEEK TWO:

“CHECK YOUR CIRCLE”

Jonathan chose to do the right thing even when it was difficult. These are the types of friends that we need to surround ourselves with. Friends who want the best for you and not the friends who are just trying to get something from you. Friends who don't just want the best for you, but friends who want GOD's best for you. We need to surround ourselves with friends who bring us closer to God and not draw us further away. Look at your circle and ask yourself “who is building me up and who is tearing me down?”

Studies show that you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with. This means the people who you spend time with have such an impact on you that you begin to talk like them, act like this week, we are all going to check our circle of friends. It is so important to have friends that build us up and not tear us down. Friends who do the right thing even when it's tough. Tonight we will be in a story where a man named Jonathan befriended David and chose to be a good friend even when things got tough.

1 SAMUEL 18:1, 3-5

As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him.

Have you ever had a friend who you have made an immediate connection with? That when you met them it just felt like it was meant to be? Well this is exactly what happened here, and it wasn't a coincidence, but it was God ordained. Due to David's quick rise in popularity and Saul's insecurity, Saul started to despise David and wanted him dead.

1SAMUEL 19:1A

Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. This put Jonathan in a tricky situation. Would he listen to his father and go against his friend David, or will he do the right thing (and obey God) by protecting his friend at all costs?

1 SAMUEL 19:1-2

But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David 2 and warned him, “My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay there.

This is why it is so important to CHECK YOUR CIRCLE.

THINK IT THROUGH AND TALK IT OUT!

1. What are qualities that you look for in a friend?
2. Looking at your circle of friends, can you identify the ones that pull you closer to God and the ones that pull you further away?
3. Why do you think we tend to allow ourselves to have friends who have a negative impact on our lives?
4. When your life starts looking more like your friend's life and less like Jesus' life, you are no longer a good influence. Do you still hold the influence in all of your friendships? If not, what steps do you need to take to regain influence?
5. CHECK YOUR CIRCLE. Make a list - who do you need to spend more time with? Who do you need to spend less time with?

Growth path: Help students see that God wants them to have relationships that build them up and that their small group can be that place for them. Plan to do something outside of United to show them that this is more than just a Wednesday group.

BONUS MATERIAL:



“The Missing Link”
Message Video



“Too Many Friends”
Message Video



Bible Reading
Plan

WEEK THREE:

“HOW TO BE A GOOD GODLY FRIEND”

It isn't always easy to be a godly friend to our friends. Often times, there are rivals in our lives that get in the way. Tonight we will be in 2 Samuel 12 where Nathan confronts his friend David about the sin that David has been living in.

The last time we read about David, he had just defeated Goliath and become very popular. This made King Saul very envious and jealous of David which led to Saul wanting David dead. Fortunately for David, his friend Jonathan warned him allowing David to flee and keep his life.

Fast forward 15 years and now David is king of Israel! He has great success as king and He leads the people well. However, he also has his downfalls. In 2 Samuel 11 we get to a story where David becomes lustful over a woman. David's lust drives him to have an affair and he even has the woman's husband killed in battle. Not the best look on David. Fortunately for David, he has a good friend in a man named Nathan.

2 SAMUEL 12:1-4

The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”

We see Nathan telling a story here about a rich man taking advantage of a poor man by taking the poor man's one and only lamb. The rich man had been blessed with so much, but instead being content with all he had, he took the little of what the poor man owned. I'm sure Nathan is telling this story for a reason...

2 SAMUEL 12:5-10

David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.” Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’”

Nathan tells this story to open David's eyes to the awful thing that He did. However, David doesn't connect this story to his situation, instead, he burns with anger hearing the story of the rich man. We often find ourselves in the same situation. We look at sin that other people are living in and it angers us (as it should). However, we forget that we too are living in sin of our own. Our own sin should always anger us more than any other person's sin. This is what Jesus means when he says:

MATTHEW 7:3-5

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

We need to make sure we are addressing our own sin before we address the sin of another.

Nathan confronting David about his sin couldn't have been easy. I'm sure there was fear and pride in Nathan. And I'm sure it was hard for Nathan to be bold! At the end of the day, Nathan decided to be faithful and obedient to God even when it was hard. He knew, friends don't let friends live in sin.

Because of Nathan obeying God, David was able to find forgiveness of his sins. Although, forgiveness doesn't mean a lack of consequence. Our sins always have consequences despite having no condemnation. Without consequences, we would never learn from our mistakes.

2 SAMUEL 12:13-14

Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan replied, “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die.”

If we want to be not just good friends, but godly friends, we must have tough conversations with the ones we love. The world tells us that love is through accepting our friends for who they are and approving of their lifestyle. But when we accept our friends for who they want to be, we are neglecting the person that God created them to be. We love our friends by accepting them where they are and confronting them (with love) on the things that go against who God has created them to be (This is how God loves us. He meets us where we are and helps us get to the place where he wants us to be).

When confrontation is done right and with the heart of Jesus, it can be life giving and help save someone from their own destruction.

True love is believing that God not only has a plan and a purpose for your life, but also a plan and a future for your friends' life. BE A GOOD GODLY FRIEND.

THINK IT THROUGH AND TALK IT OUT!

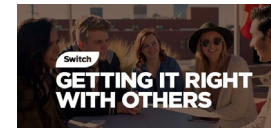
1. What is the most difficult thing you have ever done?
 2. What does a friend who wants the best for you look like?
 3. David and Nathan conversations are uncomfortable, why are we afraid of them?
 4. Read Matthew 3:5-7. Why is it easier to see someone else's sin than it is to see our own? How can we confront someone else's sin while still dealing with our own? (Answer: Be honest with the person that you aren't perfect. You are still working on things yourself and you wanted to invite them on the journey that you are on.)
 5. How can we accept people for where they are and help them get to the place where God wants them to be? (Answer: through the way we love them and by always pointing them back to Jesus.)
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Growth path: Have each student write down a name on a notecard that they need to be a better friend to this week by loving them the way Jesus loves us.

BONUS MATERIAL:



“How to Help A Friend See When They’re Wrong”



5-Day Bible Reading Plan

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:



**RIVALS Series
Spotify Playlist**



**“How Sweet The Sound”
Message Video**



**“David’s Heart of Friendship”
Message Video**



**“Support System”
Message Video**
