

Week 1 - Getting to Know Your Players

(Optional Game to go with the Devotion)

Basketball/Icebreaker:

Come up with a game/exercise that allows players to get to know each other's names. For example, you could split your team into one or two groups and have them form a circle in each group. With one basketball in each circle, a coach calls out the name of a player and then the ball must be passed to that player. Another name is called out and then the ball is passed to that player. So on and so forth. Coaches can even be a part of the circle to help the kids learn your names.

Water-break Time:

- Why did you sign up to play basketball?
- Why do you like to play?
- Do you have a favorite basketball team/player?
- Have every kid answer these questions.

**As you can see, the first week is very much an introductory week. The goal for week 1 is just to get to know your players and have them become comfortable with you as well as become comfortable sitting down and doing a devotional time.*

Week 2 – “What’s the point?”

Purpose: Basketball, like everything else, is a place to glorify God.

(Optional Game to go with the Devotion)

Drill you can use –

Split your team up into two groups and choose a game for them to compete against each other in. Perhaps you could do some sort of dribbling relay race or shooting competition. Do NOT declare what a team has to do to win the competition. Communicate that it’s a competition and the rules but don’t declare what it takes to win. As the game is played, pay careful attention to how the players play. After the game is over, see how the players reacted to “winning” or “losing” the competition.

Basketball Lesson - (emphasize the numbered points below after the game)

-What was the point of that game?

-Was the point to win? In sports, we often assume the point is to win but what if I told you there’s a different point? Winning and losing is important but I think there’s more to sports/basketball than just those two things.

-What could be some other things that are important in basketball?

Devotion:

Now let’s think about school for a moment - What is the point of school? Making good grades? What else? How about learning? How about learning to give yourself to something and gaining confidence in life? If you don’t know the point or the wrong point, you are confused or pursue the wrong thing in life and in basketball.

Biblical Truth:

In the Bible, 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (Ask questions about the verse.) I think what God is saying is that there’s nothing too small for God. Everything is to be done for him – for his glory. For his glory means to make him better known or more famous. With that in mind, what

are some ways you could glorify God as a student in school? Or how could you glorify God at home? When we do everything the way God would do it, we show Him off, make him more famous for others to see what he is like. Your homework for next week is to think about ways we can show God off in the way you play basketball. What does that look like? Come prepared to answer those questions next week.

Week 3 - "Shoot for the Net!"

Purpose: We need the right target to score.

(Optional Game to go with the Devotion)

Basketball Skill:

Drill you could use –Line them up on the free throw line and talk/demonstrate these points – then ask them to show you.

- The basic basketball shot is simple and beautiful but by no means simplistic.
- Everyone shoots the basketball differently. Yet, there is a general procedure that all good basketball shooters more or less follow.
- Half-bend your knees before shooting a basketball for more potential power.
- Your dominant hand should have its fingers spread out.
- Only the fingertips should be gripping onto the ball.
- Your other hand should support the ball on the side.
- The ball should be brought above the head in one motion.
- At this point, the angles at your armpit, elbow, and wrist is at 90 degrees.
- While extending your knees, extend your forearm and snap your wrist. Make sure you follow through with your wrist movement.
- If it feels natural to jump upon release, do so.
- Ask them – “Where should I aim the shot?” After they answer, ask them, “Where do you want the ball to end up?” (In the basket) If so, then aim for the basket. Tell them you want them to aim at the inside diameter of the rim – what you will call “The Nest.” Imagine a bird’s nest on top of the rim. You want them to land a ball in that nest that is resting on or inside the rim.

This encourages a soft shot and gives them the best target for the maximum shot making.

Basketball Lesson (emphasize the numbered points below while doing the drills):

- Every time you shoot the ball, you have a target whether you realize it or not.
- You need to pick the right target, something to aim for.
- Since the aim of basketball is to score, then your target needs to be the basket, where your target and the point of the game line up together.
- Not the front of the rim, not the back of the rim, but the diameter of the rim.
- Why? Because where you aim is where the ball will ultimately go.
- If you want the ball in the basket, you need to aim at the basket.

Devotion:

- Just like in basketball, you need the right target in life, something to aim for.
- Think again about school.
- What is your target in school?
- What about in your friendships?
- What should your target be in school? In friendships?
- Last week we talked about the point of basketball, school and life.
- From basketball, we learned that when your target and the point of the game line up, you are aimed correctly. So with life, you are aimed correctly when your target is the point or reason for school or your friendships?

Biblical Truth:

- Last week, we said the point of all things is to “glorify God.” Anybody remember what that means? (make him famous)

- So if this is the point, then we are aimed correctly when our target is to make God famous in all we do.
- The Nest in school, at home, in all of life is to glorify God. This is what we are to shoot for. We need to make this our target.
- With the right target in basketball, we score. With the right target in all our life, we score.
- So let's shoot for the nest, let's make it our target to glorify God in all we do.

Week 4 - "Seize the Moment!"

(Optional Game to go with the Devotion)

Basketball Skill: Free Throws

Drill you can use – Gather everyone at the free throw line and instruct/demonstrate

- LINE UP WITH THE BASKET-when lining up, your lead foot (right - if you are shooting right-handed) should be directly lined up with the center of the rim. On most courts there will be a small dot on the very center of the line. Set your toe on it. This will make it easier to line up for a straighter shot. The biggest mistake I see players make is to straddle the dot instead of put their toe on it, this usually will send the shot a little to the side.

- GO THROUGH THE SAME ROUTINE-every time you step up to the line, go through the same routine. Bounce the ball a few times, spin it in your hands. Be creative; when you find a routine that works for you use it over and over and over, it will help you feel more comfortable for the shot.

- Set up to shoot just as you would to shoot a set shot – went over last week.
- Feet spread about shoulder width.
- Slight knee bend.
- Lead hand on the ball with fingers spread and in fingertips.
- Lead hand's arm should be perpendicular to the floor – and as in shooting, your armpit, elbow, and wrist is at 90 degrees.
- Aim for the NEST.

- Shoot by flexing legs and extending arms, and snapping wrist at the same time (try not to leave your feet if can).

Basketball Lesson - (emphasize the numbered points below while doing the drills):

- When you watch basketball, watch how the players shoot free throws. What is their routine? What is their form? Are they good at it?
- Shooting free throws in a game is about establishing good form and routine in practice; then, doing it over and over.
- So when it is game time, you are just going through the routine and form from practice.
- Preparation in practice makes for good free throw shooting in games.
- The more important the free throw, the more important it is to focus on your routine.

Devotion:

- You will come to important points in your life where you need to deliver, you will need to come through, like making a free throw at a key point in a game.
- This may be a test at school. This may be standing up during class for a special presentation. There will lots of times like this over your life. What might be some other important times where the pressure will be on you to deliver?
- How will you seize that moment and come through?
- Just like with free throws, preparation is what is important. Finding a form and a routine and then going over that form and routine again and again.

Biblical Truth:

- We have been talking about glorifying God in all our lives – school, family, even here in basketball. What does this mean again?

- Just like at school, there will be times, special times where you will be tested to deliver. Tested to see if you will bring glory to God or not. Whether you will show off God or someone else.
- One of those times will be when you do well, when you succeed. Others may come up to you after a time in a game, at school, with your friends, where you have done well and congratulate you. Tell you what a great job you did. Tell you how awesome you are. What will you do? How will you come through in that key moment? Will you show off yourself at that point or will you show off God?
- The key is just like shooting a free throw. Preparation. With a form and a routine. The form we have talked about - taking aim at the right target – glorifying God. The routine is thinking about how you will handle that moment.
- Anybody know who Tim Tebow is? How does he handle it? What is his routine?
- Thank teammates – they are the ones who make possible any individual success.
- Thank God for the ability to perform.
- Thank God for the opportunity to use the ability he has given.
- In other words, focus the attention on others and be grateful. This shows off God as the one who made it all possible rather than focusing the attention on yourself.

Week 5 - “Feel for the Ball”

Purpose: You learn to trust by purposely letting go of your ability.

(Optional Game to go with the Devotion)

Basketball Skill: Dribbling

Instruct/Demonstrate

- To dribble, push the ball down by spreading the fingers and flexing the wrist. You don't need to push it down hard. Light pressure is enough. Also, keep your legs flexed and your back bent slightly forward, ready to make a quick move.

- All players should learn to dribble equally well with both hands. This ambidextrous ability will open up your offensive game. Practice with both hands one at a time and then back and forth.

- Contrary to what many young players actually do, dribbling is not done while staring at the ball. You dribble with your fingertips and pads of the hands without looking at the ball. Keep your head up at all times. Keep your eyes focused on what's happening on the court.

Drills you can use -

- Dribble to a target with one hand and then back with the other. Can do relays here.

- Dribble in a “zig-zag/S” pattern – using cones or other players to zig zag around. Using your right hand when going right and your left when going left. Try to get faster and faster.

Basketball Lesson - (emphasize the numbered points below while doing the drills):

- Feel where the ball is with your fingertips.

- Don't look at the ball. Look at where you are going.

- Go as fast as you can while keeping control of the ball.

- You need two things to be a good dribbler – control of or feel for the ball and eyes for where you are going.

- Can't just look at the ball – someone will steal it and you don't know what is going on.

- Can't just look at where you are going – you'll lose control.

- Need both – feel for the ball and eyes ahead to see where you are going.

- To get that feel for the ball and eyes up, you need to learn to trust your hands over your eyes.

- To do that, you purposely put aside another sense – your eyes. You force yourself not to look down. I have known guys who practice dribbling blindfolded.

- You need to dribble over and over with eyes up – until you learn to trust how your hands feel.

Devotion:

- Now take this idea to life. Let's think about learning to trust our feel for the ball as learning to trust someone else in life.
- How do we learn to trust them? Same as learning the feel for the ball - by purposely putting aside one ability and picking up another. When we are feeling overwhelmed, afraid, worried, instead of thinking we can do it, we can handle it, we purposely put aside our trust in ourselves and instead trust others. We ask for help.
- This is the way we learn to trust others – our parents, our brothers and sisters, our friends. When we need help, we ask for it.

Biblical Truth:

- Sometimes there are situations that overwhelm us, worry us, make us afraid, make us so angry we want to hurt someone, so discouraged we want to quit, that are more than any person could help us with.
- Fortunately, not only do we have friends and family to help us, we have a God who wants to help us in our times of need.
- In Isaiah 41:10 God says, "So do not fear for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."
- When we ask God for help in those times of need, we learn to trust him.
- So the next time you feel really....(fill in the blanks), instead of thinking it is all up to you, ask for help and learn to trust in God like you learn to feel for the ball.

Week 6 – “Pass It!”

Purpose: Sharing gives us joy.

(Optional Game to go with the Devotion)

Basketball Skill: Passing Drills you can use –

- Play Monkey-in-the-Middle (probably better for JV teams). In groups of four, you could have 2 offensive players and 2 defensive players practice passing. One offensive player starts with the ball and cannot dribble and is guarded by a defensive player. The other offensive player's job is to get open from their defender and receive a pass. Rotate through the players.

- Another drill is to work on fast break situations. One dribbler starts at half court and has to make a long pass to another player for a layup. If you do not like any of these games, feel free to make up your own.

Basketball Lesson (emphasize the points below while doing the drills):

A couple of things to remember when making passes:

- Aim between the waist and the chest of the player you are passing to—this allows for your teammate to catch the ball well.
- When making the pass, be sure to not only pass it to your teammate but also to pass it away from the defender. We do not want the defense to steal the ball.
- If you're passing to a teammate that is running, be sure to "lead" your teammate. In other words, pass the ball in the direction of where the teammate is running to.

Passing is an integral part of the game of basketball. Being a good passing team creates more opportunities to score and makes basketball a true team sport. To be a good passer, though, you must be willing to give up the ball and let your teammates score.

Devotion:

Sharing is a part of all of our lives. If you have brothers or sisters, you've learned how to share—right? What are some of things you've shared before? Toys? Games? The reason we share is not punishment or to not have fun. It's the opposite. We should share not only so other people enjoy what we give them but also because we can enjoy giving. If you do not give or share, you are selfish and that brings no joy. Greater joy comes from sharing rather than keeping for ourselves.

Biblical Truth:

We have talked about playing basketball in a way that shows off God, that glorifies him. This idea of passing and sharing is one of those ways we show off God. Mark 10:45 says, “The Son of Man [Jesus] didn’t come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus is calling us to serve just like he did. Jesus served us because he loved us and he wanted what was best for us. In the same way, we should love our teammates and share with them. Jesus didn’t live his life to keep what he had, to keep dribbling the ball so he could score. He passed the ball, shared what he had—his life—so we could experience the great joy—having a relationship with him. We show him off when we also serve like he did – take what we have and share it with others.

Week 7 - “Go for it!”

Purpose: Growing requires great effort.

(Optional Game to go with the Devotion)

Basketball Skill: Rebounding

Drill you can use - A simple drill to do for rebounding (and this may be better for JV than Varsity) is to have 2-3 kids at a time near the basket and have a coach shoot the ball at the rim (purposefully missing) and have the kids practice rebounding the ball. You could make a game of this by splitting into teams and counting the number of rebounds each team has. Or, with one team at a time, you could count how many times the ball hits the floor without being rebounded vs. the number of times the ball is rebounded.

Basketball Lesson (emphasize the points below while doing the drills):

A couple of things to keep in mind while rebounding:

- Jump and grab the ball at its highest point. Don’t allow the ball to come to you but instead go and get the ball.
- Don’t ever assume a shot is going to be made. Always assume it’s going to be missed and position yourself close to the basket to get the rebound.
- Rebounding is about effort. The best rebounders in basketball haven’t necessarily been the best players or greatest athletes but were rather the people who gave the greatest effort (You may also want to emphasize “boxing out” however, this is a tough skill for the kids to learn).

Being good rebounders allows our team to shoot more shots and the other team to shoot fewer.

Devotion:

Much like rebounding, success in life can often be attributed to hard work. Very few kids are gifted naturally where they don't have to make an effort at school. So, in order to get good grades at school, you must work hard: do your homework, listen to your teachers, etc. The same will be true when you work at a job as an adult. Whether it's school or work or anything in life, a person must work hard to achieve.

Biblical Truth:

The same is true for us with God. God saves us by his grace and our faith, not because of work. However, he wants us to work hard on our actions. James 2:17 says, "...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." In other words, our faith in God drives us to good work. Working hard to rebound in basketball helps our team win. In much the same way, if we keep God at the center of our lives and allow our faith to drive us to good works, we will grow in our relationship with God.

Week 8 - "Play your part!"

Purpose: Playing my part is important to others.

(Optional Game to go with the Devotion)

Basketball Skill: Defense

Drill you can use – Instruct and demonstrate:

- Line the players on the baseline.
- Have them all spread their feet at shoulder width or a little wider.

- Ask them to lower their core – butt down and out, knees bent, chest forward.

- Arms, hands up and out at shoulder width.

- Have them move in unison left and right.

- Shuffle feet, don't cross over.

- Now, pair up the players – one will be defense, one will be offense.

- One at a time, have the offensive player dribble with the ball and move along a line on the court (baseline, half court, sidelines) in front of the defensive player. The offensive player is trying to get by the defensive player. Start with just walking back and forth. Then allow them to speed up. The defensive player is trying to move and stay in front of the offensive player so he or she can't get by him.

Basketball Lesson - (emphasize the points below while doing the drills):

- Keep your hands up.
- Keep yourself between the man and the basket.
- Keep low with your core and feet apart. Talk about keeping your hands up and being in a good stance.
- Shuffle your feet to move – don't cross over.
- Your part is to not let them by you.
- When you are on defense, your job is to keep yourself between the basket and the player. If he has the ball, you keep him from going by you. This is your part. This is your role on the team. If each player does his part, then we will play good defense. If one player doesn't, it doesn't matter how good everyone else plays, the defense breaks down and the other team scores.

Devotion:

Just like you have a role on defense in basketball, you have a role in your family, in your friendships, in your church. When you do your part in those places, your family, your friendships, your church succeeds. However, just like in basketball, if one person doesn't play his or her part, if they let others down, it hurts the whole family, your friends, or your church. Each person is important and needs to play his or her part wherever they are.

Biblical Truth:

In the book of the Bible called Ephesians, the writer, Paul, says that the church is like a physical body. People are like different parts of the body – the hands, the feet, the eyes,

the ears. He says that we all grow as “each part does it work;” plays its role, and does its job like being on defense.

Another way we glorify God or show him off is when we play the part he has given us to play in life. How do we do that? By being ourselves. He made us to play a specific part and we show him off as this wonderful creator designer when we play the way that only we can play. Fully engaged not just in the game but in life. When we do, growth happens. When we don't, others around us are hurt.

Quite an important role to play, don't you think?

Week 9 - A Compassionate God!

Purpose - For the players to see that God is full of compassion and wants us to be as well.

(Optional Game to go with the Devotion)

Basketball Skill – Shooting a jump shot

Drills you can use – demonstrate the right form for shooting and then have the players show you without the ball.

Have them shoot with balls while you observe.

Play a couple of games of ‘Knock Out’ (aka Lightning). The kids love this game.

Comments

- Those of you who won, how did it feel?
- Those who didn't win, how did it feel to lose?
- Did anyone, at any point, encourage someone in the game who was struggling?
- Did you even notice those who were struggling?
- Does anyone know what the word compassion means? Compassion is a very strong word that means to “co-suffer.” In other words, it means to suffer with someone else as if it were you that was feeling the pain. It means to feel a deep sympathy for another person.
- What would it have looked like to have compassion in the game we just played? Would it have meant letting someone else win? (NO! Make sure you emphasize this. Letting others win means you don't perform at your best which dishonors God)
- I think it would mean noticing your teammates' struggles even when you may be having success individually. It means working together, helping each other achieve their best.

Devotion: – We need compassion from others and others need compassion from us.

- Just like we all need compassion on the basketball court, we also need compassion in life.
- Can you think of a time, outside of basketball, where you would have like to receive compassion?
- Can you think of a time where it would have been good to give compassion?
- What would it look like to have compassion at home with your parents/brothers/sisters/family? What about at school? What if you didn't have compassion there?

Biblical Truth – God is full of compassion for us.

- If we are honest, we know that we often fail to show compassion. We can be so content with our own accomplishments that we don't even think about how other people are feeling.
- God though does not have this problem. Psalm 116:5 says that, "The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion." Psalm 145:9 says, "The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made." We know from these verses that God is full of compassion for all the earth.
- Because he is compassionate, God wants us to be too: full of compassion and have compassion for all. Your homework for this week is to look for ways to show this compassion (in basketball, at home, at school, etc.) but also to see where God is showing compassion to you. We will talk about this more next week.

Psalm 85:15: "But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."

Bottom line: God is full of compassion and wants us to be as well.

Week 10 - A Gracious God!

*Purpose – To recognize that God shows us grace through Jesus.
(Optional Game to go with the Devotion)*

Basketball Skill – Dribbling – with one or both hands

Drill - After demonstrating and practicing, divide the team into two. This is a dribbling relay race – you can have them go in one direction with one hand and come back with the other.

Before the competition begins, tell the kids that the losing team will have to do 30 pushups or some other type of “punishment” (running laps, sprints, etc.)

However, after the competition, have the coach(es) “pay” the punishment for the losing team. (i.e. the coach(es) will be the one(s) performing the pushups for the kids.)

Comments –

- How did it feel if you were on the losing team when the coach did the pushups for you?
- Why do you think the coach(es) did the pushups instead of the losing team?
- Why did he/they have to do the punishment?
- Did the coach(es) deserve to be punished?

Devotion: – Grace is not getting what we deserve.

- Can anyone tell me a time when you deserved to be punished but weren't? Perhaps at school or at home? Pretty unusual, huh?
- Do you know what ‘grace’ means? It means to give something that is undeserved. Before the game began, I said that the losing team would have to do pushups—that was the rule. Not having the losing team do pushups gives them something they do not deserve. That’s grace. Receiving something you do not deserve.
- How can we, as a team, show grace to one another as we practice and play?

Biblical Truth – God gives us grace in Jesus.

- The reason we are to show grace on the basketball court, and in all of life, is because God is a God of grace.
- God created us and asks us to follow his guidelines for life. These guidelines are for our good.
- However, rather than follow them, we often disobey him.
- In our disobedience, we deserve to be punished.

- But instead of punishing us, God gives us grace. The Bible says in Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” That may be a little hard to understand but what it means is that God would be right to punish us for our disobedience but instead, through Jesus, He showed us grace.
- Instead of death, God in his grace gave us life in Christ Jesus.

Psalm 85:15: “But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”

Week 11 - A Patient God!

Purpose – For players to learn *God is slow to anger because He loves us and wants to redeem us.*

(Optional Game to go with the Devotion)

Basketball Skill –

Have your team line up at the foul line, or 3-point line, or somewhere on the court where it won't be too easy to make shots. Tell your team that they have to make a certain number of shots (it can be shots in a row or within a certain time limit). Remember to make the goal almost reachable yet slightly impossible (don't make it too crazy where your team will never be able to reach it, or else they won't try but don't make it too easy that it doesn't work). The idea here is that you do not want your team to reach the goal. You want them to get close, but never actually meet it.

We learned last week what it means to show grace to someone. We also learned what it means to deserve punishment, yet have someone take your place in order to pay that punishment for you. Today we're going to talk about being slow to anger.

- With the shooting competition that we just had, how did you feel when you heard what you had to do?
- How did it make you feel that you weren't able to reach the goal? Did anyone get a little frustrated with anyone else on the team because they kept missing shots? Did anyone think, “Man, I wish he/she wasn't the one shooting this shot”? Did anyone think, “I wish they could shoot like me”?

Devotion – We need to show patience with others.

- Can anyone tell me a time when they remember something happening that

made them really angry? What happened? What did you do?

- Have you ever been really angry with someone because they weren't doing something that you thought they should be? Have you ever been really angry with someone because you thought you were better than them, because you do what's right and they don't?

Biblical Truth – God is patient with us.

- Over this last week, has anyone thought of how God shows us grace through Jesus Christ?
- Did anyone show grace to anyone else this past week?
- Did someone show you grace this past week?

There are many things in your life that will happen that could cause you to get angry. Most of the time, we get angry with other people because they're not doing what we want them to. We don't get what we want so we become angry. We fail to realize that, though we may be further along in some things than other people, we're not perfect. We are all sinners and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23)! We learned that we deserve to be separated from God for all eternity, because of our sin (Romans 6:23). The Bible tells us that God cannot even look upon sin (Habakkuk 1:13). He would be justified in His anger over our sin. Imagine if God was *not* slow to anger! Imagine if He got so angry that He destroyed anyone who did something wrong, right away. Worse yet, there would be many more people who would not be in heaven. We are part of God's plan to make us holy...to make us just like Him. God wants us to be patient with those who may not be where they're supposed to be. He wants us to love them just as He loves them.

Psalm 86:15: "But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."

Bottom line: God is slow to anger because He loves us and wants to redeem us.

Week 12 - A Saving God!

Purpose – For the players to understand that they can have a relationship with God.

Basketball Skill – Passing – Bounce and chest

Have them do a passing drill where they pass back and forth moving from half court to the basket with one person finally shooting a layup. See who decides to shoot. See who doesn't. Repeat this several times. Watch to see what happens. Look for who is selfish, who gives up the ball.

Comments

- In this drill, only one person got to shoot. How did you decide who would shoot? (Look for examples of selfish reasons – i.e. I am the better shooter, I wanted to shoot – as well as conditional reasons – i.e. he shot once so I got to shoot the next time.)
- Did anybody allow their teammate to shoot every time? Why?
- Tell of a time when you saw passing not done because of selfishness. My story – “Recently I asked one of the players on this team, ‘Why didn’t you pass the ball to the other player who was open?’ He replied, ‘Because he never passes it to me.’”
- What would happen to the team if everybody had this attitude? (Show that no one would pass. Wouldn’t win many games because the first person that got the ball would just dribble and shoot, never pass.)
- To break that tendency, someone has to take the lead. To do something regardless of what someone else does, without depending on how someone else acts. To do something good that is unconditional – not dependent on what others do.

Devotion – We all want friends who like us unconditionally.

- Now think about your friends for a moment. Why are they your friends? Are they your friends because you were friendly first? (Sometimes, sometimes not)
- Which type of friend would you rather have – a friend who liked you because you were nice to them or if you gave them stuff (conditional) or a friend that liked you even when you weren’t nice to them or gave them stuff (unconditional)?
- Why? (because we are not always going to be nice) We all want friends who will be our friends and like us regardless of how we act.

Biblical Truth – God’s love is unconditional and he wants to have a relationship with you.

- Unfortunately, while we may hope for friends like that, no friend will always be that way. We will never have friends that love us so much that they actually die for us.
- God is different. He loves us regardless of how we act and then died on the cross for us.
- We can’t do anything to make God love us less, nor can we do anything to make God love us more. He wanted to make sure we that the payment for our sin was perfect.
- All we have to do is realize that we are not perfect and God is. God loves us and if we accept his love and believe that he died on the cross for our sins, we can know him and have a relationship with him.
- When we believe that He died on the cross for our sins, his love covers all of our sin and we are made right with God.
- Then we can take the love that God loves us with and love our friends, family and even our enemies.

Psalm 85:15: “But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”