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BIG IDEA

Real friends help each other grow.

***WEEK 4
TEACHING GUIDE***

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

BIBLE

1 Timothy 6:11-18: Mark 9:33-37: Proverbs 27:17

VIDEO **| A Clip from Luca** — **Alberto Helps Luca**

* Welcome to our final week of Real, where we've been talking about "real" friendships. In the last few weeks, we've seen a lot of clips from some of our favorite fictional friendships, and today's no different.
	+ If you've seen the movie Luca, you know this movie is the story of a boy named Luca who is . . . well, he's a sea monster. But when he leaves the ocean for land, his fins turn into legs!
	+ Unfortunately for Luca, he doesn't actually know how to use those legs when he finds himself out of the water for the first time.
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip [like this one](https://growcurriculum.org/DisneyAndPixarsLuca2021LucaLearnWalkingScene) (0:00-1:52) from the movie [Luca](https://growcurriculum.org/LucaAmazon), where Alberto helps Luca learn to walk.
* Okay, maybe you've never needed a friend to teach you how to seem less like a sea monster, but I'm guessing a friend has taught you something before, right?

DISCUSSION

* + **Which do you like more: learning something new or teaching other people something you know? Give an example!**
	+ **What's a fun fact, skill, or habit you've learned from a friend? What's something a friend has learned from you?**

QUESTION **| "What's something a friend has taught you?"**

* Sometimes our friends teach us by:
	+ Helping us learn a new skill.
	+ Giving us information we didn't have before.
	+ Introducing us to new ideas.
	+ Helping us see things in new ways.
* **So what about you? What's something a friend has taught you?**
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.

ACTIVITY **| On-the-Spot Skill Share**

* **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, find a volunteer or student in your ministry who wants to try to teach you a new skill on the spot (or vice versa). Choose a fairly simple skill that would be fun for students to watch, like juggling, playing a harmonica, solving a Rubik's Cube, or doing a trick with a jump rope. You can either do this live or film a video in advance that you edit down for time. At the end, the people involved should share thoughts like:
	+ What was fun about the process.
	+ What was challenging about the process.
	+ What would have made the skill share more successful.

POLL **| "How do you like to learn new things?"**

* **INSTRUCTIONS:** Poll your students by asking the following multiple choice questions. Invite them to respond by either raising their hands, applauding, or moving to different areas of the room that you designate for each option. And yes, they can answer more than once!
	+ **So how do you like to learn about new ideas? Do you like to:**
		- Listen to someone explain it?
		- Have a conversation with someone about it so you can ask questions or debate with them?
		- Research it on your own?
	+ **How do you like to learn new skills? Do you like to:**
		- Watch someone's example and then try it on your own later?
		- Try it out with a friend's help?
		- Get professional training?
	+ **And although these next few things can definitely teach us things, does anyone actually like to learn by:**
		- Making mistakes?
		- Getting injured?
		- Being yelled at or corrected?
* The idea of learning from our friends might sound fun when we're talking about learning to play pickle ball or ride a hoverboard, or learning everything there is to know about a really niche band only the two of you are into. But learning from our friends gets a little more uncomfortable when you're talking about:
	+ The mistakes you've made.
	+ The ways you've hurt them.
	+ The places in your life you still have room to grow.

**SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?**

STORY **| Talk about a time a friend helped you grow in a way that was difficult.**

* I know tons of people who are funny, easy to get along with, and fun to hang out with. But those aren't the qualities that make someone a "real" friend. For me, real friends are the ones who:
	+ Have something to teach me through their example.
	+ Are willing to teach me even when it's uncomfortable for us both.
	+ And are willing to learn things from me too.
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time a friend helped you learn an important lesson, even though it was difficult. Maybe your friend called you out for something you did, gave you feedback that was hard to hear, or asked you to make a change in the way you were treating them. You might even tell a story about a lesson you learned from a friend's example, rather than their words. Share what they taught you and how they helped you grow.

DISCUSSION

* + **\* What's a lesson you learned recently that was difficult or uncomfortable? How did you learn it?**
	+ **\* When someone corrects or challenges you, how do you usually react? Give some examples.**

SCRIPTURE **| Mark 9:33-37**

* For the last few weeks, we've been talking about some of the ways Jesus modeled real friendship.
	+ When he chose to befriend people not everyone would have befriended, Jesus showed us **real friends choose each other wisely.**
	+ When he showed to forgive Saul and change his life, he showed us **real friends show each other grace.**
	+ When he mourned with his friends over the death of Lazarus, he showed us **real friends comfort each other.**
	+ But there's one more story we're going to look at today to see what Jesus can teach us with his example.
* We've talked already about how Jesus recruited twelve people to be his "disciples" — or "students." Jesus had disciples and friends in lots of different cities, but these twelve were the ones Scripture says Jesus specifically chose to be part of his crew. For three years, they did everything together. They were more than just his disciples — they were his friends.
* In those three years, the disciples learned a lot from Jesus.
	+ **They learned from Jesus' example.** They watched the way he interacted with them, with others, and with God.
	+ **They learned from Jesus' words.** They listened when he spoke to big crowds, to small groups of people, to his family members, and to them — his closest friends.
	+ **And they learned from Jesus' correction.** Let's listen in on one of those conversations.
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Mark 9:30-37.
* This story is a little funny, right? I mean, the disciples have been following Jesus for a while now, so they should understand what he's all about — but sometimes, they don't.
	+ First, Jesus tries to tell them he's going to die and rise from the dead. This is pretty big news, but they have no idea what he's talking about.
	+ Instead of asking Jesus for clarification, they change the subject and start arguing about which of them is the best.
	+ Jesus knows exactly what's going on, but gives them a chance to come clean by asking, "So . . . what are you guys talking about?"
* Clearly, the disciples still had some things to learn, so Jesus uses this moment to help them grow by giving them some gentle (but direct) correction.
	+ The message Jesus taught his friends here is really important: that God values childlike humility over arrogance and pride.
	+ But what I want to point out today is less about what Jesus taught his disciples and more about how he taught his disciples.
* In this conversation, Jesus' friends needed to be corrected. But Jesus didn't make fun of them, embarrass them, or make them feel inferior to him. Because Jesus loved his friends, he wanted to help them grow.
* If we had more time to look at some other examples of moments when Jesus helped his friends grow, we'd start to see some patterns.
	+ **Jesus invited them to grow by living what they were learning.** Jesus didn't spend all his time teaching his disciples facts or theories about God that didn't have anything to do with their daily lives. Instead, Jesus showed them how to grow by challenging them to love God and others with their everyday choices.
	+ **Jesus invited them to grow in community.** While I'm sure Jesus had plenty of one-on-one conversations with his disciples, most of the interactions we see in the Bible are as a group. That's because we grow best when we have others growing alongside us.
	+ **Jesus invites us to be patient while we grow.** It would be great if our spiritual growth had a finish line so we knew when we were all done, but it doesn't. Our growth is never really complete because learning to live out our faith is a life-long process — and that's okay with Jesus. He's patient with us, just like he was patient with his disciples.

DISCUSSION

* + **When friends try to correct or challenge each other, what are some of the ways things could go wrong?**
	+ **When Jesus corrected his friends, how did he do it so lovingly? What can we learn from his example?**

SCRIPTURE **| 1 Timothy 6:11-18**

* When Jesus was on earth, he never sat down and wrote a letter to his disciples. But we do have some letters from the leaders of the church who came after Jesus and continued spreading his message all over the world.
	+ One of those letters is 1 Timothy, written by Paul (also known as Saul, who we talked about recently) to a young man named Timothy.
	+ Kind of like Jesus modeled with his disciples, leaders like Paul often found young leaders to train and mentor, both in the ways of Jesus and in how to be a leader.
* At the end of his letter, Paul leaves Timothy with all sorts of reminders, encouragements, and challenges to help Timothy grow.
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read or summarize 1 Timothy 6:11-18.
* In this letter, Paul helps Timothy grow by encouraging him to:
	+ Run away from evil things.
	+ Live a life of integrity.
	+ Keep growing in his faith.
	+ And help others grow too.
* This might be advice given specifically to Timothy, but it's also advice for all of us today. Like Jesus did for his disciples, like Paul did for Timothy, and like Paul encouraged Timothy to do for others, we all have room to grow — and to help each other grow too.
* So when we talk about "real" friendship, we can't forget this part. Even when it's uncomfortable, difficult, or a little bit awkward, **real friends help each other grow.**

**NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?**

DISCUSSION

* + **Read Proverbs 27:17. What are some specific things you and your friends can do to help each other grow?**
	+ **If you and your friends are ever not helping each other grow, what do you think you could do to change that?**

6 WAYS TO HELP EACH OTHER GROW

* But how exactly are we supposed to help each other grow? Especially as a teenager, when you feel like you're still figuring out your own life, how can you help your friends grow too?
	+ **BE CURIOUS.** You can't help each other grow if you're not sure what's going on in each other's lives. It might feel awkward to ask personal questions. You might worry it's none of your business. But the truth is, your friend is probably waiting for someone to ask them how they're really doing or what they're really going through.
	+ **BE A HELPER.** When a friend comes to you looking for advice, you don't have to pretend to have answers or solutions you don't have. Instead, you can use the tools you have to help them find the answers they need.
	+ **BE BRAVE.** If you're serious about wanting to help your friends grow, sometimes it's going to take an uncomfortable conversation when a friend needs someone to ask a hard question or give difficult advice. It takes courage to be that kind of friend. But at the same time . . .
	+ **BE HUMBLE.** You don't know everything. Even if you're convinced your friend needs someone to call them out, don't forget to entertain the possibility that you don't have the full story.
	+ **BE OPEN.** If you want to help your friends grow, be open with them about how you're growing. Share regularly about what you're learning, wondering about, struggling with, or working on. The more you share, the more comfortable your friends will be sharing too.
	+ **BE AN ENCOURAGEMENT.** When someone tells us what they love or appreciate about us, it makes us want to work harder on the good things they see in us or encourage us to keep going when we were ready to give up. If there's something you like or appreciate about a friend, tell them! It will make them want to keep growing.
* There are so many ways we can grow alongside our friends! Don't think of this as a complete list. Think of it as a starting point with so many more ideas you and your friends can discover together.

OBJECT LESSON **| Give Them Their Flowers**

* **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, prepare a bouquet of flowers. You can either use a single bouquet as a prop, or you can purchase a larger quantity of flowers for students to take and give to each other during your response time.
* Have you ever heard this phrase, "Give people their flowers"? It's a reminder to tell people why they matter to us while they're still alive, rather than waiting until they're gone to talk about the impact they've made.
* What do you think might happen to your friendships if you decided to acknowledge the ways your friends have already helped you grow? What if you gave your friends their flowers by thanking them for what you've learned:
	+ From their example?
	+ What you've learned from the words they've spoken?
	+ From their willingness to correct or challenge you?

RESPONSE **| Thank You for Helping Me Grow**

* It's not always easy to make real friends, and it's certainly not always easy to be a real friend to others. But with God's words and Jesus' example to follow, I think we have a pretty good head start, don't you?
* This week, I hope you'll take the love Jesus has shown to you and reflect it back on each other. I hope:
	+ You'll pay attention to who's influencing you and who you're influencing in return, because **real friends choose each other wisely.**
	+ You'll be gracious with each other's mistakes and flaws, because **real friends show each other grace.**
	+ You'll reach out and support someone who needs it, because **real friends comfort each other.**
	+ And you'll look for ways to help make each other better, because **real friends help each other grow.**