

Choose Your Circle

For teens ages 12–14 · about 45–60 minutes · Moral Issues for Teens · Relationships & Identity · game **Lift or Drag?** · built on **Proverbs 13:20**, **1 Corinthians 15:33**, and **Proverbs 27:17**

Your students are not meant to live alone. God made us social (Genesis 2:18). Jesus sent disciples out in pairs (Luke 10:1). Friends bring comfort, support, and help (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10; Romans 15:1). But friendships also carry cause and effect — the people you walk with shape the person you become. This session is not anti-friends. It is pro-wisdom: choose a circle that lifts you toward God, be the kind of friend others need, and say no when a crew starts dragging you down.

Before you teach anything, pray.

Some students feel stuck in a friend group they know is unhealthy; some are lonely and will grab any circle; some will hear "choose friends carefully" as rejection of everyone they love. Ask the Spirit for hope without fear — clarity that leads to courage, not isolation. You are teaching influence, not preaching complete isolation.

The heart of the lesson

Cause and effect runs through friendships the same way gravity runs through the physical world. Proverbs 13:20 warns that walking with the wise makes you wise, while a companion of fools suffers harm. First Corinthians 15:33 is blunt: bad company corrupts good morals. That does not mean every acquaintance is dangerous — Jesus ate with sinners without condoning sin (Matthew 9:10–13; Luke 15:1–2). It does mean we are easily affected: false ideas, bad habits, and lowered standards spread through closeness.

Show me your friends — I'll show you your future.

Wrong friends have dragged people into disaster in Scripture — Samson (Judges 16:16), Amnon (2 Samuel 13:3–5), Solomon (1 Kings 11:1–6). The flip side is beautiful: be the right friend (Proverbs 18:24; 27:6, 9, 17). Speak truth in love. Sharpen one another like iron on iron. Carry burdens together. Negatively: avoid friends who corrupt (Ecclesiastes 10:1; James 4:4). Say no when they want you to sin (Exodus 23:2; Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 1:10–15; 22:24–25). Ignore rejection and name-calling when you stand for what is right (Matthew 5:11; Luke 6:22). Ultimately, friendship with God and Jesus grows through faith and obedience — not earning salvation, but walking with Him as

Lord. Abraham was called God's friend (James 2:23); Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14).

Be the friend who lifts — and choose a crew that lifts you.

PROVERBS 13:20

"Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."

1 CORINTHIANS 15:33

"Do not be deceived: **bad company corrupts good morals.**"

How the session flows

- 1 Name the power.** Cause and effect in friendships; social design. ~8 min
- 2 Teach lift vs. drag.** Influence, corruption, being the right friend. ~12 min
- 3 Play the game.** "Lift or Drag?" on screen. ~12–15 min
- 4 Quiet honesty.** Reference card, private reflection. ~5 min
- 5 Worksheet.** In class or take-home practice. ~15 min
- 6 Close with action.** Prayer and one friendship step for the week. ~8 min

Screen for the game, printed cards and worksheets, pens. You do not need to name every student by name — teach filters they can apply to lunch tables, group chats, and weekends.

Leading it, part by part

Name the power

Ask: who did you sit with at lunch this week? Who texts you most? How did those people make you feel — encouraged, pressured, ignored, sharper? Let them answer without turning it into a public friend audit. Land this: God designed friendship for good, and closeness has real pull. That is not paranoia — it is wisdom.

Teach lift vs. drag

Walk through five truths from Scripture. **Cause and effect:** Prov. 13:20; 1 Cor. 15:33 — your circle shapes your choices. **Not the same as condoning:** Jesus reached people without approving sin — but He was not molded by their rebellion. **Value of friends:** Eccl. 4:9–10; Rom. 15:1 — comfort, help, shared purpose. **Wrong friends drag:** biblical examples of pressure toward sin; gossip, disrespect, and "prove you're loyal" tests. **Be the right friend:** Prov. 27:6, 17 — honest love and iron sharpening iron; say no to corrupting pressure; ignore name-calling when you stand firm.

Teach hope: you can widen your circle, invest in church and school friendships that lift, and become the friend someone lonely needs. Friendship with God is real — obedience is not cold duty; it is how we stay close to Jesus.

Play the game

Run "Lift or Drag?" twelve to fifteen minutes. Round 1 sorts friendship habits; Round 2 anchors Bible principles; Round 3 tackles peer pressure, loyalty tests, and lonely kids at the margins; Round 4 drills key verses. Bridge afterward: points are fun; a wise circle is the win.

Quiet honesty

Hand out the reference card. Promise plainly that nobody is collecting it. Give five quiet minutes for students to name one friendship or group-chat habit they would change if Jesus saw their whole circle — without saying it aloud to the room. Protect the silence.

Worksheet

Reinforce Proverbs 13:20, 1 Corinthians 15:33, and Proverbs 27:17; T/F on influence and corruption; one friendship boundary for the week. Pairs or homework both work.

Close with action

Invite each student to take one step: thank a friend who lifts them, say no to one corrupting invite, or reach out to someone left out. Pray for students stuck in drag-down crews. Offer leaders for students who want help reshaping their circle.

Take it further

- Why must you choose friends carefully — neighbors, classmates, coworkers someday? (Prov. 12:26; 13:20; 22:24)
- Does spending time with someone mean you approve everything they do? (Mt. 9:10–13; Lk. 15:1–2)
- What good can real friendship bring? (Eccl. 4:9–10; Rom. 15:1)
- What can the wrong kind of friends lead you to do? (Judges 16:16; 2 Sam. 13:3–5; 1 K. 11:1–6)
- What does it look like to be the right kind of friend? (Prov. 18:24; 27:6, 9, 17)
- Why avoid friends who corrupt good morals? (Eccl. 10:1; 1 Cor. 15:33; Jas. 4:4)
- What must you do when friends want you to sin? (Ex. 23:2; Psa. 1:1; Prov. 1:10–15)
- What should you not worry about when you stand for what is right? (Mt. 5:11; Lk. 6:22)
- How do you become a friend of God and of Jesus? (Jas. 2:23; Jn. 15:14)
- Who is one person you could lift this week — and who lifts you?

A final word

Teens need circles better than the world hands them by default. Give them permission to want friends and courage to walk away from what drags. The goal is not loneliness — it is a future shaped by wisdom. When they learn lift vs. drag, they can still laugh loud with their crew — but the crew won't rewrite their soul.