

BIBLE STUDY: E.T.

by Brian Pike

A Bible Study about being a Friend and a Disciple

Introduction

Thirty years ago this June, we were introduced to a creature that was accidentally left behind by other members of his species from somewhere in space. Affectionately called “E.T.” by the young boy who discovered him, the two formed a friendship that went far beyond the limitations of verbal communication. Despite being hounded relentlessly by the government scientists who wanted to study this alien creature, the duo finally were able to find a way for E.T. to return to where he belongs.

It is this friendship portrayed by Steven Spielberg that still resonates with us today. This friendship is tested in a number of ways: it breaks through an extremely difficult communication barrier; it survives the constant dodging of a particular government agent who has quite a few keys; and it triumphs over death itself. Such friendship is truly a gift to be cherished, and the emotions of such a friendship are a treasure to keep forever.

With such a friendship in mind, how often do we equate discipleship with friendship? As I watch and re-watch this movie, I find that through this friendship, Spielberg paints a perfect picture of what the life of a disciple looks like. A disciple is one who is curious about something or someone; one who follows and wants to learn more about that something or someone; and one who finally risks everything to follow that something or someone. Yet, that’s what friends are, too. We are curious about each other, and want to find out more about each other, and for our best friends, even sacrifice for each other.

As leaders (and really, as Christians), we have been called to make disciples, but what if we thought of this commission as helping others form friendships with Christ? I challenge you, as a leader, to think about that during this study as you discuss friendship and discipleship with your students!

The Aims and Goals of this Study

The over-arching goal of this study is to discuss our discipleship and friendship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Some questions that can expect to be raised throughout the study would be:

- What is the definition of a disciple? What is the definition of a friend? How are they the same, or how might they differ?
- What does being a disciple of Christ look like in today’s world?
- To what extent are we willing to go to be disciples and friends of Christ?

A Few Notes on the Format of this Study

Ultimately, it was extremely difficult to pare down the discussion of discipleship into one stand-alone study that could be given in the time frame of an hour (though I did include such a stand-alone lesson at the end of these studies). Therefore, I included three studies, each of which could be undertaken in an hour’s time:

- Finding a Friend: Curiosity
- Forming a Friendship: Being Like-Minded
- Following a Friend: What Follows from Being Like-Minded?

For each study, I utilize a modified form of “liturgy” that can be found in Mark Yaconelli’s book *Contemplative Youth Ministry*. This Liturgy of Discernment allows for time to fellowship together, listen together, reflect together and share together. I have found such a liturgy to be not only useful, but very impactful as it brings a sense of order, but flexible order, to the time together.

The times for each section are approximate times, not times to be strictly adhered to. Allow plenty of time for discussion, and if your group is particularly engaged in one section, don’t force an abrupt transition.

Lastly, I suggest you watch the clips beforehand to familiarize yourself with what will be seen, plus it may spark some further discussion questions in your mind that may not even have been provided in the study.

E.T. – The Extraterrestrial

A Bible Study About Being a Friend and a Disciple

Lesson 1 – Finding a Friend

The Call to Gather Together (5 minutes)

Prayer: Lord, we come to you as people whom you have chosen to walk with and to lead. Help us to stay curious and to eagerly see what you may be up to. Continue to transform our minds to perceive where you are at work among us. Assist us and be with us as we listen to your call to follow you wherever it may lead. Be with us now as we ask all of this in your name. Amen.

The Call for Fellowship (5-10 minutes)

Ask the following question: We have all been curious about something in our lives... something we just had to find out the answer to. What is one of the things that you have been most curious about in your lifetime?

Movie Clip & Discussion (20 minutes)

Watch E.T. – The Extraterrestrial, 12:57-24:35

Synopsis: In this clip, Elliott and E.T. meet each other for the first time and the curiosity that E.T. creates in the young boy sets the stage for a lovely and strong relationship to develop between the two of them that is clearly evident throughout the movie.

The thing to notice in this clip is Elliott's curiosity about E.T. That curiosity makes Elliott want to know more about this creature and leads him to act. Some questions you could ask following the clip could be (but certainly not limited to):

- What do you think of Elliott's actions? Would you do the same? Why or why not?
- Was Elliott careless with his actions?
- Can curiosity be dangerous? What are some times that curiosity may or may not be dangerous?

The Call to Listen, Share and Reflect: (15 minutes)

Read Mark 1:16-20. In this passage, Jesus seeks out and calls disciples to follow Him. Their curiosity about this man causes them to act in a rather dramatic way.

- What is Jesus calling Simon, Andrew, James and John to do? What did they do? (Keep in mind that adjectives and descriptors in this section are very important.)
- In the same way that Elliott was curious about E.T., the disciples certainly had to have been curious about Jesus if they dropped everything to follow Him, wouldn't you think? What do you think they were curious about?
- Since they gave up everything immediately, what do you think the disciples had in mind when they began their journey with Jesus?
- Through our Baptism, Jesus calls us to follow Him and in His way. What does following Jesus involve and need?
- Is our call to be disciples today any different than Jesus' call to His first disciples? Is (or should) our response to that call be any different than that of the first disciples? Why or why not?

The Call to Cultivate and to Grow (5 minutes)

Throughout this next week, instruct the students to keep a log, a journal, mental notes or whatever they can about something that they are curious about in their walk with Christ. It could be anything from "Why do the pastors wear robes?" to "Why do bad things happen to good people?" (This could be really useful for future study ideas for your group!) Or if your students need further prompting over the week, have them read Philippians 2:1-11 and develop some questions from that passage.

The Call to Return in Prayer (5 minutes)

Prayer: Thank you, Heavenly Father, for our time, gathered together, as your people. As we depart, help us to stay curious and to eagerly see what you may be up to. Continue to transform our minds to perceive where you are at work among us. Assist us and be with us as we listen to your call to follow you wherever it may lead. Amen.

E.T. – The Extraterrestrial

A Bible Study About Being a Friend and a Disciple

Lesson 2 – Foundations of a Friendship

The Call to Gather Together (5 minutes)

Prayer: Lord, we come to you as people you have chosen to walk with and to lead. Help us to stay curious and to eagerly see what you may be up to. Continue to transform our minds to perceive where you are at work among us. Assist us and be with us as we listen to your call to follow you wherever it may lead. Be with us now as we ask all of this in your name. Amen.

The Call for Fellowship (5-10 minutes)

Ask the following question: Have you ever had the experience with a friend when you were of the “same mind?” Some examples could be that you finished each other’s sentence, you were both thinking you should go out to eat or get ice cream, or maybe you could know what they were thinking without them having to say that.

Once people have had a chance to share, ask the group as a whole to describe the type of friendship that needs to be formed for such experiences to happen.

Movie Clip & Discussion (20 minutes)

Watch E.T. – The Extraterrestrial, 1:18:32-1:33:38

Synopsis: Unfortunately, due to time constraints, we have been unable to watch this friendship unfold between Elliott (and Mike and Gertie) and E.T. But, by now they have become inseparable, even to the point of Elliott (and the others) conspiring to get E.T. to be able to phone home for help. Unfortunately, Earth’s atmosphere is taking its toll upon E.T. Mary finds Elliott and E.T. in terrible shape, forcing the authorities to take things over from here, but are they are unable to save E.T.

Some questions you could ask following the clip could be (but certainly not limited to):

- Did the adults take Elliott’s and E.T.’s friendship seriously? Why or why not?
- If the authorities had found E.T. first, do you think such a friendship would have been struck as Elliott and E.T.? Why or why not? What are some obstacles that may have gotten in the way?
- We talked earlier about being of the “same mind” as your friend. What are some signs in this clip that Elliott and E.T., are close friends, are being like-minded?
- What effect does (did) this friendship have on Elliott? Mike? Gertie? Mary (the mother)?

The Call to Listen, Share and Reflect: (15 minutes)

Read John 15:1-17.

- What does Jesus call His disciples in v. 12?
- What does friendship with Jesus involve? What does friendship with other people involve? Are they similar or quite different? How?
- Being a friend involves being like-minded with someone. What might being like-minded with Jesus look or feel like?

The Call to Cultivate and to Grow (5 minutes)

Throughout this next week, instruct the students to think about why they are friends with the people that they are friends with. Then, also being friends of Jesus, ask them to think about what that would look like in everyday life. If time allows, feel free to read v. 13-14 of John 15 again.

The Call to Return in Prayer (5 minutes)

Prayer: Thank you, Heavenly Father, for our time, gathered together, as your people. As we depart, help us to stay curious and to eagerly see what you may be up to. Continue to transform our minds to perceive where you are at work among us. Assist us and be with us as we listen to your call to follow you wherever it may lead.

E.T. – The Extraterrestrial

A Bible Study About Being a Friend and a Disciple

Lesson 3 – Following Your Friend

The Call to Gather Together (5 minutes)

Prayer: Lord, we come to you as people that you have chosen to walk with and to lead. Help us to stay curious and to eagerly see what you may be up to. Continue to transform our minds to perceive where you are at work among us. Assist us and be with us as we listen to your call to follow you wherever it may lead. Be with us now as we ask all of this in your name. Amen.

The Call for Fellowship will be forgone this week as there is a lot to get to movie-wise!

Movie Clip & Discussion (30 minutes)

Watch E.T. – The Extraterrestrial, 1:33:38-end (1:53:40)

Synopsis: A truly extraordinary event takes place that continues to shape the friendship; so much so that the family and their friends are willing to break the law to help their friend get home, where he belongs.

Some questions you could ask following the clip could be (but certainly not limited to):

- What would your reaction have been to realizing E.T. is alive?
- What are some of the laws that the kids broke in order to help E.T.? How many would you have broken?
- Why do you think the kids did what they did?
- What do you think everyone was feeling as E.T. left and the spaceship left with a whoosh?
- How might such an event change the lives of everyone there?

The Call to Listen, Share and Reflect: (15 minutes)

Read Romans 12:1-21.

- What are our lives and minds like after our encounters with the Risen One (see verses 1-2)?
- What are the results of this transformation of our lives that Christ creates (verses 3-21)?
- We all know that changing and undergoing a complete transformation can be quite hard. Paul has given us a list of what can change as a result of following Christ. Is it hard to see these effects and these changes in your life because of what Christ has done? Why or why not?
- What will be the results for us when we take active notice of this ongoing transformation and changing of our lives? For others? For the world around us?
- How far would you go to listen to the call of Jesus to follow Him and to go where He leads you?

The Call to Cultivate and to Grow (5 minutes)

Throughout this next week, instruct the students to actively look for and participate in ways to serve others and do good in the world. Did they feel transformed or renewed in the slightest as they did good? The results of this experiment may also be a great primer for students to begin praying over and discerning where God could use their group as a whole (or even the greater congregation body) to serve in the community.

The Call to Return in Prayer (5 minutes)

Prayer: Thank you, Heavenly Father, for our time, gathered together, as your people. As we depart, help us to stay curious and to eagerly see what you may be up to. Continue to transform our minds to perceive where you are at work among us. Assist us and be with us as we listen to your call to follow you wherever it may lead.

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Stand-Alone Lesson

The Call to Gather Together (5 minutes)

Prayer: Lord, we come to you as people that you have chosen to walk with and to lead. Help us to stay curious and to eagerly see what you may be up to. Continue to transform our minds to perceive where you are at work among us. Assist us and be with us as we listen to your call to follow you wherever it may lead. Be with us now as we ask all of this in your name. Amen.

The Call for Fellowship (5-10 minutes)

Ask the following question: What makes for a good friend? What qualities do you look for in a friend, or what qualities do they hope to find in you? (Or perhaps conversely, what does it take to break a friendship?)

Movie Clip & Discussion (20 minutes)

Watch E.T. – The Extraterrestrial, 1:02:52- 1:11:40

Synopsis: A plan is hatched between the kids against their mother's wishes to help E.T. phone home, leading to some touching moments between friends in the forest.

Some questions you could ask following the clip could be (but certainly not limited to):

- Describe how Elliott and E.T. were able to help each other.
- The kids put together an elaborate plan so that could make sure that E.T. was able to phone home. Yet, it went against their mother's wishes; they were willfully disobedient to their mother so they could help their friend. How far would you go to help a friend?
- What do you think was going through Elliott's head as he and E.T. approached that chasm in the woods? How about after E.T. took over from there?
- How might Elliott's future actions or attitudes change after this particular adventure? How might yours if this happened to you?

The Call to Listen, Share and Reflect: (15 minutes)

Read Romans 12:1-21.

- What does friendship with Jesus involve?
- Being a friend involves being like-minded with someone... What might being like-minded with Jesus look or feel like?
- What are our lives and minds like after our encounters with the Risen One (see verses 1-2)?
- How do you see yourself through Christ's mind or way of thinking? (verses 3-5)
- How do you see your congregation? (Note: this passage refers to the Christian as a member of Christ.)
- How do you see your gifts and abilities? Is everyone gifted the same? How do these gifts benefit the whole body (church or congregation)? (verses 6-8)
- How do the various items listed in verses 9-21 perfectly describe Jesus?
- As one who has the mind of Jesus by virtue of your Baptism, what opportunities do these verses present to you about being as Christ to others?
- Of the items listed, which do you find most difficult or challenging?

The Call to Cultivate and to Grow (5 minutes)

Throughout this next week, instruct the students to actively look for and participate in ways to serve others and do good in the world. Did they feel transformed or renewed in the slightest as they did good? The results of this experiment may also be a great primer for students to begin praying over and discerning where God could use their group as a whole (or even the greater congregation of your church) to serve in the community.

The Call to Return in Prayer (5 minutes)

Prayer: Thank you, Heavenly Father, for our time, gathered together, as your people. As we depart, help us to stay curious and to eagerly see what you may be up to. Continue to transform our minds to perceive where you are at work among us. Assist us and be with us as we listen to your call to follow you wherever it may lead.

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