

Series: From the Garden

Lesson 3: Together in the Garden

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Identify that relationships are part of our spiritual life, just like prayer and worship
- List some ways that they can nurture spiritual relationships and some ways that they can prevent them

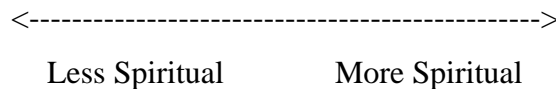
Materials Needed:

- ☐ A table or area that everyone can stand around
- ☐ Scrap paper, cut up in strips
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ String with labels on either side, according to the Lead In

Lead In:

Provide each student with three small pieces of paper and a pen (do only two if your group is larger than 12). Instruct the students to write something on each piece of paper that they consider is spiritual. Tell them to avoid the obvious answers like “praying” and “reading the Bible.” Rather, they get (fake) points for creativity, for example, “Dropping Bibles from airplanes on golf courses.” When they are done, tell them to put their strips in a pile, all jumbled together. While this is happening, put in three plant answers on identical strips of paper that say: a) talking to my friends, b) listening to my parents, c) going to visit my grandmother.

Gather the completed pile together, including the plants, and give it to the students. Place a string on the table. Label one end of the string “Less Spiritual” and the other end “More Spiritual.” See the diagram for clarity. Instruct students to work together to place the items on and around the string, discarding any repeats.



If needed, you can clarify that the task is a little bit silly and that there is no real scale of spiritual and unspiritual activities. It’s more about what *seems* spiritual and unspiritual to us.

When they agree on a placement, look for the plant answers. Tell the students that even though this was a silly exercise, you were really interested in what they thought about relationships. Are relationships spiritual or not? What do they think? Why or why not? Hint: think back to last week’s lesson (God created us to be in relationships). You may come to the conclusion that although relationships are part of God’s design for our lives, we don’t often think of them when we think of spiritual activities.

For the rest of the lesson, have students stay gathered around the table or area, in some kind of arrangement that promotes eye contact and discussion. Have one or two

volunteer scribes who will record the rest of the answers you will generate. They will need pens and lots of strips of paper.

Task One:

Ask students, *What are some of the ways that relationships could be spiritual?* Answers could include things like “friends help you identify your spiritual gifts” or “parents are there to protect you from bad things” or “people can help you through hard times.” Have one or two volunteers record these on strips of paper and add them to the line.

Task Two:

Say something like, *It is easy to identify general things that could be spiritual about relationships. I wonder if any of you has had a real experience of a relationship that was spiritual.* Solicit answers. For example, someone has a friend with whom she can always talk about spiritual things or another has a youth leader who keeps him accountable to grow in his faith. Have the volunteers add these to the line also.

Task Three:

Say to students, *If it is true that relationships are part of our spiritual life, how does that change the way we will do relationships? What can we do to nurture these relationships and what barriers do we put up to prevent them? Let me give you an example. Has anyone heard of the Amish or Old Order Mennonites? These are Christian communities who have chosen to live in simple and closed communities. It is almost as if they have tried to create a little utopia on earth. They often don't use many of the technologies that most North Americans take for granted, such as telephones, cars, and internet. You might see a Mennonite person walking or using a horse drawn carriage as opposed to*

driving a car. Some people assume that they just reject all technology. However, the truth is that before they buy a new technology, they ask the question, would buying this bring us together as a community or draw us apart?

Ask the students, *From what I've told you and from what you know, what is it about the Amish or Mennonite communities that draws them together?* Answers could include farming together, children playing together outside, being dependent on one another economically, wearing similar clothes so there is less jealousy, talking instead of playing video games, and so on. Keep on adding these to the line using the strips.

Ask the students, *What about us? What do we do that draws us together?* Answers will depend on your group, of course. Add these to the line.

Ask the students, *And now here's the hard one. What do we do that draws us apart?* Again, answers will depend on your group. Add these to the unspiritual end of the line.

Your role in these tasks is to provoke thought and guide the conversation. For example, it would be interesting to discuss something like Facebook. Is it bringing us together or apart? There aren't easy answers to some of these questions but they are worth examining.

Closing:

Bring the discussion to a close and pray as appropriate.