

Introduction: *Stimulate your group members' thinking.*

Context is king when we interpret anything, oral or written. Ask, “*Have you ever only heard one side of a conversation and then inputted your opinion only to find out that you totally misunderstood what was being discussed?*” If anyone is willing to admit it, ask the person how he or she could have avoided the situation. The person should be willing to say that if he or she had both sides of the conversation, he or she could have provided better input.

Part 1: *Focus your group members on the subject by using an illustration.*

Ask your students to write down, in a paragraph, what they see in the classroom. After they finish, have 2-3 read their paragraphs. Discuss why there are differences in what is written. The key idea that should be gleaned from this is that each student writes from a different perspective.

Part 2: *Engage using “Think-Pair-Share” technique.*

Read the following letter to your class:

My friend,

It’s always nice to have you near and to enjoy your company and your loyalty; it’s important to have the friendship and affection of someone with whom we can share our joys and sorrows, and discuss our problems without fear or reservations.

But [...] the best part of knowing someone like you is not to feel obliged to do something when we’re together, is to be able to watch TV without saying a word, not feeling bored or wanting to be by yourself; and I miss you when you’re far away, taking care of your life while I take care of mine.

To be a friend is to be able to enjoy the best things the other person has to

offer, to recognize [his] faults but to know they are bearable and, on the other hand, to be a friend is to offer our virtues with all the generosity in the world and to live without masks or farces to hide our faults, habits or differences.

I've been thinking about writing to you for a while now, to tell you about the meaning of friendship, something that surrounds us in such a natural way that we don't even bother much to understand what it truly means. Maybe I can't really express that meaning, but it's good to know that there's someone supporting us, even if sometimes [he doesn't] fully agree with what we are thinking or doing and they don't hesitate to show [his] point of view. That's what true friends are like, because they know that a different opinion will not change a deep feeling of mutual and sincere trust.

*My dear friend, always count on me and receive a kiss from
(signature)*

Think-Pair-Share: As your group members are listening, ask them to pick two statements that stand out to them.

“**Think** for 30 seconds on the two statements...Why did you choose them? Discuss these in **pairs** with a person on your left or right who is not your spouse.” (Pause for 60 seconds.) Call on 3-4 pairs to **share** one idea.

[“A letter of friendship,” 1001 Love Letters [online], [cited 7 May 2015]. Available from the Internet: <http://1001loveletters.com/Cartas.aspx?Id=118>.]

Part 3: *Illustrate the importance of symbolism.*

We love stories that invoke our imagination through the use of symbolism. Many of the most famous works of literature employ it abundantly. Books such as *Pilgrim's Progress*, 1984, and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* are common examples.

Ask your students, “*What is your favorite symbol in a story or song? What does it teach?*”

Conclusion: *Challenge for application.*

Many Christians have never read the entire Bible or even the New Testament. Challenge your group members to commit to God to read through the entirety of the New Testament this year. Ask, *“How many of you are willing to commit to reading through the New Testament this year? Are you willing to sign a commitment before the Lord that, with His help, you will do this?”*

Teaching Tip of the Week

Anytime you try something new, like active learning techniques, there is a danger in focusing so much on the activity for its own sake that your group members miss the main point of the lesson and fail to reflect on what they are learning. The main value in active learning comes from thinking about the activities after they are completed and openly discussing their meaning with others. Ensure that your lessons use active learning techniques that include suggestions that help students reflect on what they have just experienced. If the group cannot link the activity to a point of learning emphasis, then the activity did not accomplish its intended goal.