

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

“Emmett & Erling, Friends Forever.” These heartfelt words are inscribed on dog tags presented to a WWII combat veteran on his 90th birthday earlier this month. You might guess that the gift came from one of his war buddies or one of the guys in his poker group. Perhaps they were given by a fellow member of the American Legion or one of the players on his seniors bowling team. All these guesses would be wrong. They came from a four-year-old little boy who used to live next door—and who changed this man’s life forever.

It all started with tomatoes. Little Emmett (then 3) noticed Erling working in his garden and hollered out, “Got any ’matoes?” And the rest is history. Soon the unlikely pair were playing croquet, riding bikes, and racing lawnmowers—Erling on his John Deere and Emmett on his battery-powered toy.

When winter came, Emmett’s mom wondered if the friendship would last, now that the weather kept them indoors. “I was in the kitchen and I heard the snowblower going,” she recalls. “I opened the window and [Erling] was snowblowing a path from his back door to our back door.”

The following summer would bring big changes for the friends. Emmett’s family sold their house and moved to the country. Erling’s wife became ill and the couple had no choice but to move into a retirement community 30 miles away. Although the friends see each other occasionally, their daily visits have become a thing of the past. “He misses Emmett,” says Erling’s wife, Joyce.

So you can imagine the joy on both their faces as they were reunited for Erling’s birthday celebration. Emmett gave two matching sets of dog tags to his friend—one set for each of them to wear as a reminder of the rare and unlikely bond they share.

“You come back again,” Erling called as Emmett headed for the door.

The boy turned and answered over his shoulder, “I will . . . eventually.”

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above news story to read. After all teens have had the opportunity to read the article, discuss it in this way:

What do you think about this unusual pair of friends?

Why do you think their friendship lasts?

What qualities do you look for in a friend?

Today we’re going to look at the importance of true and lasting friendships. We’ll discover three important qualities that Christian friends should have.

To see videos of Emmett and Erling (including the birthday visit), go to youtube.com and search for “Emmett and Erling.”