

# Friendship

SAMPLE



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downloadable curriculum

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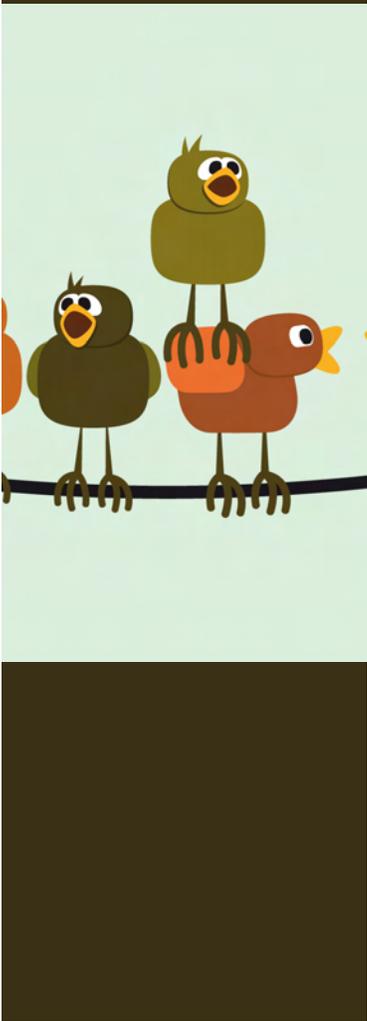
# Real Friendship

As the years of adolescence and college days pass, “real life” leaves less time for nurturing friendships and certainly hinders the building of new ones. Careers move friends across the country. Family life takes precedence over nights out with the gals or guys. Yet the Bible tells us relationships—friendships included—are essential to a healthy spiritual life, which trickles down to all aspects of one’s life.

This study searches the Scriptures to understand the role of God as friend, the importance of friendships, what true friendship looks like, and how to be a friend to the friendless. Study sessions will also evaluate practical ways to grow and care for godly friendships.

Face it—“friends forever” isn’t just for junior high girls. It’s for you—the adult pursuing a career, raising kids, and making life work. You don’t have to do it alone. Friendship is for you. Below are some invitations for you to use to encourage participation. You should announce this study in various ways: church bulletins, announcements, newsletters, emails, and social networking. The invitations below are short enough for text messages and social networking statuses.

<b>Session 1: The Best Friend</b>	In our first session we will discuss our best friend—God.
<b>Session 2: True Friendships</b>	In our second session we will discuss qualities of a true friend.
<b>Session 3: Fake Friendships</b>	In our third session we will discuss fake friendships.
<b>Session 4: Redemptive Friendships</b>	In this final session, we will discuss and determine how we can be instrumental in sharing God’s love with our non-Christian friends.



# Session One

Be aware of and sensitive to the different way men and women approach friendship as you lead the sessions for this study. Remember, women like to verbalize feelings, while men engage in friendship more by doing things, being together, etc. Take this into consideration as you ask questions and the environment you create for those study sessions.

## Our Best Friend

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bibles
- Copies of student handouts
- Extra pens or pencils
- White board or poster

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

Group members will examine God's example of and mandate for friendship, while analyzing what applications can be made to their lives.

### CONNECT

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Begin this session by providing group members a copy of handout, "WANTED." Allow two minutes for participants to write down a description of an ideal friend. Next, ask for volunteers to share their lists. (If your group is primarily female, break up into smaller groups for sharing. If your group is primarily male, use a white board or poster, instead of the handout, to discuss the criteria for a perfect pal. And if your group is both male and female, stick with the handout and discuss what an ideal friend would be and do. Because men and women often evaluate friendships differently, it may be interesting and insightful for both genders to learn what elements of friendship are important to the opposite sex.)

Segue into CONSIDER by saying: *If I asked you to eat a bowl of worms to prove your friendship, how would you respond? If I asked you to eat a bowl of worms for \$100 million, would your answer change? As you look over your description of an ideal friend, you may discover the qualities listed fall under the category—what that friend can do for me. Honestly, don't we often operate under that mantra—consciously or subconsciously? So, how can we find true friends or be a true friend—and why should we even care about having friends? Thankfully, the Bible has something to say on the subject.*

### CONSIDER

As with every relationship in life—child, parent, spouse, sibling, enemy, or friend—the example of that relationship is God. He is the ultimate Father, Son, Husband, Brother, Friend, and for some, Foe. By examining how God interacts as a friend, we can learn what true friendship looks like and acts like.

Ask volunteers to read the passages below. Discuss what you learn about God as a friend.

- Isaiah 41:8-10
- Psalm 25:14
- Exodus 33:11
- Judges 5:31

- James 2:23
- John 15:13-15
- Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34
- Matthew 26:50
- Luke 12:4-8
- Luke 15:6, 9, 29
- John 11:11

From these verses we see God's role as a friend. Not only has God created us to be in friendship with Him, but He also made us to need relationships with others.

Ask group members: *At this stage in your life, is it hard to make new friendships? Maintain old friendships? Why or why not?* (If your group is comprised of male and female participants, divide the group into two sections: a female group and a male group. Then, pose the questions above for each group to discuss.)

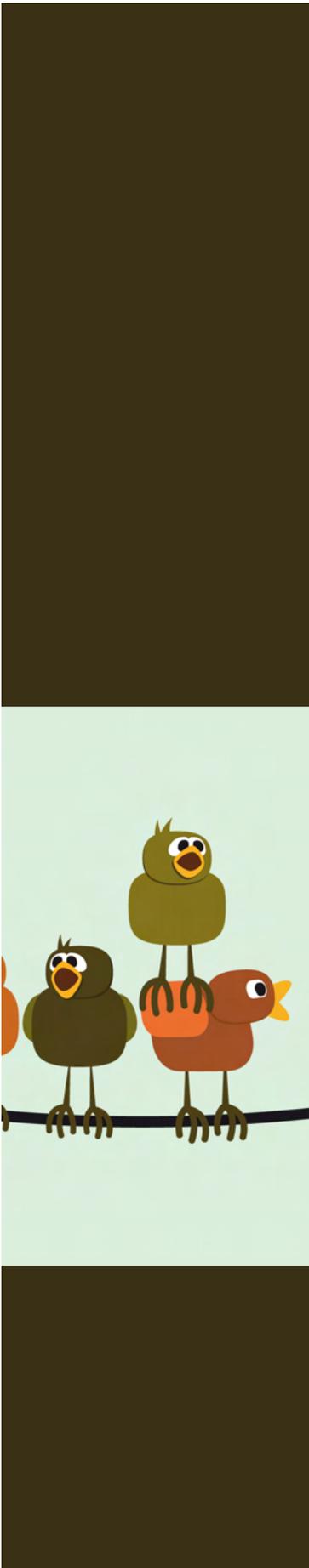
Read the verses below and discuss what the Bible teaches about the necessity of human relationships.

- Genesis 2:18
- Proverbs 17:17
- John 13:34-35
- Romans 12:9-10, 14:17
- 2 Corinthians 1:1-3, 13:11
- Ephesians 5:19
- Colossians 3:16
- Philippians 2:4

Ask group members to read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 silently. Then, ask a volunteer to read the passage. Based on these verses, what are the "rewards" of friendship?

(POSSIBLE POWERPOINT MATERIAL BELOW)

- A friend can help you when you fall (verse 10). Not only is this true in a practical sense, but it is also true in an emotional way—depression, sin, disappointment, etc. Ask: *How has a friend helped you when you experienced a "fall"?*
- A friend can keep you warm when you are cold and alone (verse 11). Again, this is literally true! Sharing body warmth can make a difference between life and death in dangerous, wintry conditions. However, a friend can also "warm" your spirit during a lonely, cold time.
- A friend can help you prevail against an enemy (verse 12a). If you are attacked in a dark alley, a friend can be a real help. But a friend can also help you fight a different kind of enemy—addiction, abuse, temptations, etc.



With the popularity of social utilities such as Facebook, how have these new technologies enhanced friendships? Hurt friendship? Does Facebook create more opportunities for loyal, involved friendships? Or does it promote more surface-level relationships? Or both? Explain your answer.

Throughout the course of this study, set up an online discussion forum, blog, Facebook group, etc., where group members can discuss the topic of friendship throughout the week, especially the work from their take-home handouts. This is also a good way to create community among your group, even building (gasp) friendships.

- A friend can make you stronger (12b). A threefold cord is tough to break; thus, Christian friends can make you stronger in your walk with Christ, in your other relationships, even in your career. Ask: *How has a Christian friend made you stronger?*

Discuss this: *As the years pass, it seems more and more acts of random violence occur. From Columbine to the D.C. sniper, such incidents are an all too frequent story on the news. Do you think friendship (or the lack of) has anything to do with these violent acts?*

## COMMIT

In a day when so many people struggle with loneliness, this lesson has special significance. Not only do believers possess the good news of God's friendship, but they also should offer the hand of friendship as well.

As this session ends, remind group members:

- Who says we need friends? God says we need friends! Human relationships are a gift from Him to be treasured, sought after, and cared for.
- Who is God's friend? You are! While He doesn't necessarily need your friendship, God has chosen you to be His friend. He is the perfect, faithful Friend.
- What's in friendship for me? The rewards of friendship far outweigh the dangers. God designed humans for relationships with one another. Take the risk. The rewards are worth it.

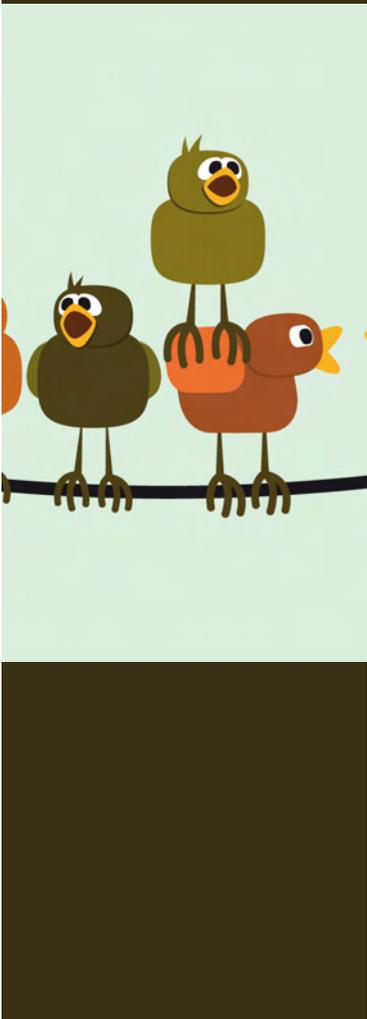
Give each group member a copy of handout "Friends." Challenge members to use this handout during their devotional time this week.

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# Handout

## WANTED

If you could pick your perfect friend, what would he or she be like? Describe your ideal friend below.



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## FRIENDS

During your devotional time this week, think through the questions below.

What does God's friendship mean to you?

Read the lyrics to the old hymn, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" by Joseph M. Scriven, written in 1855. Add a fourth verse, describing how God shows His friendship to you.

List three friends' names:

What makes you alike? Different? Why do you enjoy these friendships?

How has God ministered to you through these friends?

Write a prayer of praise:

*God wants to be your friend!*