



# FRIENDSHIP

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HeartLine  
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## LESSON 1

WHAT MAKES A GOOD FRIEND--REALLY?

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# Get Healthy: Friendship

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## Lesson One: What Makes a Good Friend--*Really?*

*"Friends are like four leaf clovers; hard to find and lucky to have."  
~ Irish Proverb*

Two little girls walk in front of me, swinging tightly clasped hands back and forth, back and forth. They look to be around seven or eight, tops. One is fair and lanky; the other is dark and petite. But they don't seem to notice their differences. Or care.

There's a freedom and intimacy in the way these girls relate. It's clear they have an uncomplicated bond older girls don't often share.

Soon, another little girl approaches, tentatively. My heart skips a beat. Part of me wants to call out, "Please, be nice!" but I'm merely an onlooker, so I remain silent. All I can do is hope.

Tiny smiles morph into broad grins. One of the two reaches out her hand to the third, and as effortlessly as breathing, they allow her to break into their circle of friendship. No one rolls her eyes. No one protests, "but I just want it to be us". No one questions the decision.

She is there, so she is in.

*When does it happen?* I wonder. At what moment do we stop holding out our hands, and in doing so, stop holding out our hearts? When do we stop enlarging our circle of friends, and start tightening it? When do we stop feeling comfortable being who we are, and start feeling compelled to be who we think we should be? At what point does comparison with friends replace confidence in our self?

***When do we stop giving ourselves away, and start guarding the way we give?***

The way these girls interact with one another is pure. Comfortable. Accepting. Genuine. Their way is the way God intended friendship to be. Of this, I am certain.

- 1. Have you observed this same type of acceptance in early childhood friendships? Why do you think young children make friends easier than grown women?**
- 2. Describe an experience where you were the outsider, desiring to break into a friend group. How did you feel? How did the experience affect**

**your attitudes about friendship with women? How did it affect your actions?**

**3. What do you hope to gain by being part of the *Get Healthy: Friendship Bible study*?**

We crave connection (at least, most of us do!), and that's a good thing. But we don't need more filtered versions of friendship we find on Facebook and Instagram. Nor do we need more, "How are you?" "I'm fine," acquaintances. We need real, honest-to-goodness, authentic human friendships. It's no exaggeration to say good friends are *essential* for emotional, relational, spiritual, and even physical, health.

But what makes a good friend, *really*?

Here's the simple answer: **A good friend propels you to be the best version of you—the one God had in mind when He created you.**

So, just for fun, let's take a short quiz and assess how our current friendships measure up to the above definition of a good friend. I realize you may have more than one friend group (work friends, church friends, neighborhood friends, etc.), or you could be between friend groups, right now. That's OK. Just answer as accurately as you can. The idea behind the quiz is to pinpoint areas your friends might be influencing you in ways you've never considered, until now.

***After spending time with my friends I generally feel...***

- a. Encouraged
- b. Guilty
- c. Discouraged
- d. Nothing

***I can count on my girlfriends to...***

- a. Listen to me, as much as I listen to them
- b. Talk my ear off
- c. Give me unwanted advice, even when I simply need to vent
- d. Close girlfriends? I don't have any

***Being around my friends makes me want to follow God...***

- a. More
- b. Less
- c. I've never even considered how my friends influence my relationship with God

***If I'm about to do something stupid, my closest friends will....***

- a. Be honest with me in a loving way
- b. Think my decision is wrong, but never say anything
- c. Support me, right or wrong
- d. Shrug their shoulders and figure my life is mine to do with as I please.

***If I'm going through a difficult season of life my friends will...***

- a. Pray for me faithfully
- b. Pitch in to help in ways that will lighten my burden
- c. Say they care, but then disappear until my situation gets better
- d. Encourage me to escape my problems through alcohol, drugs, sex, excessive shopping, etc.

***If I experience success--or my family member does--my friends will...***

- a. Be almost as excited as I am
- b. Find some way to dismiss or diminish the success
- c. Try to “one-up” me
- d. Get jealous

***My friends are reliable...***

- a. Always
- b. It’s hit or miss

**I have at least one friend who (honestly!) knows me well, and with whom I can totally be myself.**

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So, what did you learn about your current friendships? Do you have friends who support your desire to follow God, or friends who hinder your desire to follow God? Do your friends propel you to be the best version of you, or discourage it? Do you have friends who *actually* know you?

These are crucial questions to consider. Our closest friends are more important to our spiritual, emotional, and relational health—or lack of it—than we might have previously considered.

**4. Look up Proverbs 12:26 (preferably NIV). Why is it necessary to choose our friends carefully?**

- a. **How do you think this relates to being a spiritually and emotionally healthy woman?**

- b. **On a scale from 1 to 10, how intentional are you about choosing your closest friends carefully?**
  
  - c. **How have your friends affected your spiritual life in the past? In the present?**
  
  - d. **How have your friends affected your emotional, relational, or physical life in the past? In the present?**
5. **Keep your Bible open to the book of Proverbs, and note what God's Word teaches about good friends. After reading each verse, answer the two questions listed below.**
- a. **Proverbs 17:17**
    - 1. What does it say?
    - 2. What does it mean, for *me*?
  
  - b. **Proverbs 18:24**
    - 1. What does it say?
    - 2. What does it mean, for *me*?
  
  - c. **Proverbs 27:6**
    - 1. What does it say?
    - 2. What does it mean, for *me*?
  
  - d. **Proverbs 27:9**
    - 1. What does it say?
    - 2. What does it mean, for *me*?
  
  - e. **Proverbs 27:17**
    - 1. What does it say?
    - 2. What does it mean, for *me*?
6. **Which of the above verses resonates with you most? Why?**

- a. **Do you see any areas lacking in your current friendships? If so, which one(s)?**

Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” This is the essence of true friendship--the kind of relationship where each person propels the other to be the best version of herself. Spiritually. Relationally, Emotionally. Mentally. Physically. Professionally. And just about any other “...ally” you can think of.

Here’s where it gets sticky, though: no *one* friend can sharpen us in all these ways. When we depend on one friend (even our closest friend) to meet all our needs, we set the relationship up for failure.

We’ll talk about this more in future lessons, but for now, I want you to know that this, sweet friend, is why God gave us the body of Christ, the community of believers. This is also why our connection to a community of healthy believers *will determine*--not maybe, not might, not possibly--*will* determine our level of spiritual, emotional and relational health.

**7. Read Hebrews 10:23-25. What are we told *not* to do in verse 25?**

- a. **What are we told to do?**
- b. **Let’s apply these verses to our definition of friendship. Do you think it’s possible to become the best version of yourself without friends who encourage you? Is it possible to become the best version of yourself without friends who spur you on toward love and good deeds? Is it possible to hold onto your faith without godly friends? Discuss.**

Studies show people become like their five closest friends. For instance, one study found people increase in willpower if they surround themselves with self-controlled friends. Another study found people tend to make salaries similar to their five closest friends. I suppose this could be an argument to find five really rich friends.

Kidding. Totally kidding.

What these studies do tell us, though, is our closest friends influence our lives, for better or for worse. Doesn’t it make sense, then, to align ourselves with spiritually

rich friends (rather than spiritually bankrupt friends), emotionally rich friends (rather than emotionally draining friends), and relationally rich friends (rather than relationally stunted friends)?

**8. On a scale of 1-10 (one being rarely, 10 being always) how positively do your closest friends influence you? Give an example.**

**9. On a scale of 1-10, how positively do you influence your friends? Give an example.**

**10. How connected are you to a healthy body of believers, *currently*? Check the one that most applies:**

- **Not at all connected.**
- **Somewhat connected, but I could benefit from more connection.**
- **I want to be connected, but I'm finding it difficult.**
- **Strongly connected.**

**a. How do you feel about your answer above?**

**b. Is there any way God wants you to increase your level of connection to spiritually, emotionally, and relationally healthy people? If yes, what practical step will you take?**

*"Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future."*

## **Lesson One Life Application:**

- 1. Can you recall our working definition of a good friend? If not, review the definition on page two, and write out the definition below.**
  
- 2. Review your answers to the quiz in this week's lesson. In what ways would you like to see improvement in your friendships? Write it down.**
  
- 3. List one specific way you will seek to be a better friend this week. Be ready to discuss with your group next week.**
  
- 4. Review question 8b. What practical step will you take to increase your level of connectedness to spiritually, emotionally, and relationally healthy people? (Hint: you've already taken one step by being in this study! Commit to come every week, whether you feel like it, or not.)**

## **Optional: Further Reading, Reflection and Bible Study**

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- 1. God is the ultimate friend: He'll never leave you. He'll never forget you. He'll never forsake you. Look up the following verses about being friends with God. Write down any insights or encouragement from your reading.**
  - a. Exodus 33: 7-17**
  - b. John 15:1-17**
  - c. James 2:23**