

How Am I Doing in the Friend Department?

Week 2

Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips ~ Proverbs 27:2

Most of us find ourselves with an assortment of friends. We have those we may not have sought out as friends, but life has put us in the same church or our children at the same school or on the same sports teams. There are those we developed friendship with because of our jobs or our husbands' jobs, and there are those who are our friends because ... well, because we've known them forever. There was a point in time in our lives when we really connected and they have never left our lives even though we might not share as much in common as we once did. Then there are those friends with whom we have deeply connected — perhaps we've shared hard times or significant experiences. We respect and admire them while at the same time we are well aware of their weaknesses. They're like family. We know they will be with us when the bottom drops out of life. And that's good, because they are the ones we want right beside us when that day comes.

But most of us would also have to admit that we are lonely at times, or find ourselves disappointed with the intimacy level or experiences with our friends. We long for friends we can be ourselves with, share the journey of life with— friends who will laugh with us over the silliest things, and friends who will shed tears with us over the losses and deep disappointments of life. We want friends we can complain to without being labeled a complainer, friends we can reveal our failures and weaknesses to

without fear that those confessions will be broadcast to others or thrown back in our faces at some point.

This week, we'll spend some time taking inventory of our friendships and holding up a mirror to ourselves to examine how we are doing in terms of having friends and being a friend to others.

Day 1 – Scripture Memory Review

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

—1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

What is the context surrounding these verses and how does it help us understand the big picture of what Paul is saying?

List the qualities of love from these verses. Beside each one, give an example of how this *is* being lived out or *could be* lived out in your friendship with a specific person?

anymore. You stay in touch and are able to pick up where you left off.

Our friends also vary in terms of the needs they meet in our lives. No single friend can be expected to meet all of our friendship needs. Some friends meet our need for fun and social interaction, while others are spiritual sisters we can pray and discuss Scripture with. Some friends are good shopping partners, and some are good listeners when we need to pour out our hearts. Others are of more practical help. They are the ones who come early to the party to help set up, or pick up our children when we get stuck at an appointment.

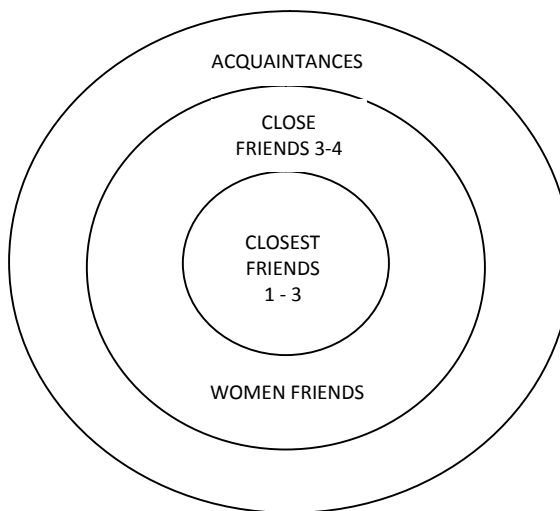
There are also differences in depth or intimacy of friendship. All of us need to realize that we have concentric circles of friendship. The closer we are to friends, the smaller the circle and the number of friends. The larger the circle, the more friends in that level, but lesser degree of closeness. We need friendships at all three levels described below, and proper expectations for and dedication to the various levels.

Acquaintances. These are friends you see regularly, you know their names and a bit about their lives. You share small talk with them about the weather or what team won the game last night. A good example of this level of friend is the barista at your favorite coffee shop, a neighbor, coworker, or someone who goes to your church whose name you know and are friendly toward, but with whom you have never had much conversation.

Close Friends/Buddies. These are the friends you play with. They're great companions for a girls' night out, a walk in the park, or just meeting for coffee. It's a group of mutual friends and their families who get together often for social events. You talk about child-raising and common marriage challenges, but you don't tend to share your secrets or confess your failures to them.

Dearest/Best Friends. Your dearest friends are the ones who have been through it all with you. She can be your best friend from childhood or a newer friend who knows and understands your adult dreams and desires. This is the friend who, to put it simply, gets you. She knows your secret fears and failures, and you trust her with both.

This diagram illustrates the differing levels of intimacy in friendships.



1. Who is/are your dearest or best friend(s)? What gives her that distinction? In other words, what qualities does she have or why do you think you are as close as you are?

2. Who fits into the next level of friendship for you? What 3-5 women would you say are your close friends?

Day 3 – Taking Stock of My Friendship Strengths and Weaknesses

Rate yourself in the following areas of friendship in terms of your tendencies with most friends, circling the number that indicates where you are on a scale between the two descriptions (i.e., if you are much more of a giver than a taker, you would circle a number between 1 and 5):

Giver	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Taker
Talker	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Listener
Initiator	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Responder
Keep Confidences	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Can't Be Trusted
Speak Truth in Love	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Keep the Peace at all Costs
Needy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Self-sufficient
Reliable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Unreliable
Accepting	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Judgmental
Forgiving, Forbearing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Easily Hurt and Unforgiving
Thoughtful/Caring	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Insensitive/Uncaring
Fun	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Drudgery
Interesting	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Boring
Encourager	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Downer
Available	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Unavailable
Easily Threatened	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Confident

As you think about your answers to these questions, what do you see as your strengths and weaknesses in being a friend? Pick out two strengths and record how you are living that out.

Pick out two weaknesses and record how you are living that out with a friend.

In what specific way(s) would you like to change and grow in terms of being a friend?

3. **Envy** – “An envious woman sickens at the sight of other people’s success.” How can the Exchanged Life help us in the temptation to envy?

4. **Gossip** – Why do you think we find pleasure in gossip?

How does gossip relate to the earlier three issues—jealousy, comparison, and envy?

When sharing “news” about someone else, how do we know when we have crossed the line into gossip?

5. **Gratitude** – What difference does gratitude make in our battle against jealousy, comparison, gossip, and envy?

Go back to this week’s memory verse and pray through it phrase by phrase, asking God to fill you with this kind of love as you also confess and ask his forgiveness for your sins of jealousy, comparison, envy, and gossip.

Prayer Concerns

List prayers that are requested by the group or needs you discerned during the discussions. Use this list to pray during the class and during the week.

 **The One Thing**

As you look back over the Home Study and the book we read this week, what is the One Thing that was most significant to you from your personal study? Why?

What will you do in the power of the Holy Spirit about this One Thing?

LEADER'S GUIDE

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THIS WEEK'S TAKEAWAY:

(5 minutes)

The importance of friendship is not how many we have but how well we love them.

MAIN POINTS REVIEW:

1. The true test of our friendship is not how much fun we have but how faithful we are in loving the way God's Word instructs us to love.
2. Our friends fall into different categories in terms of intimacy—those who are dear or best friends, close friends, and just acquaintances. Taking stock of our friendships helps us to see whether we have friends in each of these important categories.
3. Friendship should not be a passive experience, but we should be purposeful in choosing friends who can add to our lives, as well as those for whom we can be a godly influence.
4. Examining how we are doing in terms of friendship skills can help us to grow in needed areas and diminish negative traits and habits.

I. KICKOFF:

(5 minutes)

1. **Prayer:** Ask whether anyone wants to share a need for personal prayer. Have someone lead in prayer, remembering this request.
2. **Memory Verse Partners:** Pair off and review this week's memory verse.

II. REFLECTIONS ON HOME STUDY:

(45 minutes)

(Feel free to add questions that are relevant to the women in your group.)

1. Day 1: Ask each woman to share one of the qualities of love that she sees she is living out or could be living out in a specific friendship. Invite members to share examples of how they have been loved in this way (question 3).
2. Day 2: Ask each woman to share the primary discovery she made in Day 2's exercise and questions about her current roster of friends.
3. Day 3: Ask several women to share the most significant discoveries they made as they rated their strengths and weaknesses. Which aspects of friendship skills had they never really thought about before?

III. BOOK STUDY DISCUSSION:

(35-40 minutes)

***Brave Hearts* Chapters 4 and 5.**

(Feel free to add questions that are relevant to the women in your group.)

Focus your discussion on the chapter 5 questions, passing over or giving only 5 minutes to chapter 4 questions. Take time to work through each of the questions on chapter 5.

IV. PRAYER:

(15-20 minutes)

Have women get together with their prayer partners for prayer. Ask them to pray together confessing sins of jealousy, comparison, control, envy, or gossip as the Holy Spirit directs. Ask them to have their Bibles open to 1 Corinthians 13, praying through verses 4-8a for each other.

V. DEBRIEFING WITH CO-FACILITATORS:

(after the meeting)

How are your group members doing with being open to discussing such personal aspects of their friendships. Call anyone you think needs special encouragement.