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Printed in China, March 2024 12 3 4 5 6 7 · 28 27 26 25 24 Is any pleasure on Earth as great as a circle of Christian friends?

-C.S.Lewis





I would rather walk with a friend in the dark than walk alone in the light.

-Helen Keller

Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. For if either falls, his companion can lift him up.

-Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

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298 What a Friend We Have in Jesus

For the friends who've changed us

Taylor and Savannah

Annika and Rachel

London

Emma

Kati Anne and Abigail

Veronica

Kayley

Kaitlyn, Camryn, and Olivia

Abigail

Introduction

hey FRIEND

So, you've picked up a devotional about friendship. You may wonder, Does the Bible have much to say about friendship, anyway?

Turns out, the Bible has a lot to say about friendship, and it started at the very beginning.

God created Adam and set him in the garden of Eden. There was no one like him. Adam was lonely, so God created Eve. Eve was Adam's wife, but she was also his companion—someone he could relate to, tend the garden with, and walk with God alongside.

Their companionship was just as it was supposed to be at first. Then sin broke their relationship. They felt shame around each other and started playing the blame game almost immediately. They were cursed with hostility between them, and that curse extended to every person born.

Cain murdered Abel; Sarah betrayed Hagar; jealousy brewed between Leah and Rachel; the list goes on. Ever since that first friendship fell apart, people and their sin have been breaking relationship after relationship.

Still, there is an innate longing for companionship with other people. We long for friendship to be what it's *supposed* to be. And, even though sin broke our relationships with God and one another, God didn't do away with friendship.

When He sent Adam and Eve out of the garden, He sent them together. When God called Abram to follow Him to a new land, Abram brought his nephew Lot along. The Lord called Aaron to help Moses complete the mission of bringing the Israelites out of slavery and into the promised land. The Bible tells the story of David and his best friend Jonathan, who encouraged David when he was running for his life.

When God the Son came into the world as a human, He chose to walk the earth in intimate friendship with twelve other men. Eleven of those same men went out together to share the gospel and build the church after Jesus ascended to heaven. The epistles—letters written by some of Jesus's disciples—are mostly written to communities of people following Jesus *together*. And when believers are with Jesus for eternity, we will worship Him *together*. Our relationships with God and one another will once again be exactly what they are supposed to be.

But what about now? What are we to do with our friendships that remain broken because of sin? How do we build and keep real and good friendships with one another?

In this devotional, we will look at what God has to say about being friends on this side of heaven. We will read the Bible's stories of friends, warnings for friends, encouragement for friends, and directions for friends. No matter what your friendships look like right now, this devotional is for you.

It's for the friend who is looking for friends.

The one whose friendships feel shallow.

The girl who has been abandoned.

The envious friend.

The friend who has an abundance of friends and still wants more.

The one who needs to end a friendship.

The girl who feels unsatisfied in her friendships.

Each devotion was written by girls who have been (or are) in your shoes right now. Each writer has walked with Jesus alongside friends. They live in different cities, come from different families, have worshipped in different denominations, and are living in different life stages. Some are in college, some are single, some are married, one is engaged at the time of writing, some are moms, some have been Christians their whole lives, and some started following Jesus recently.

Like you, they have been helped by friends and hurt by friends. They have seen what friendship is and what it isn't. They'll show you that friendship isn't mostly about happiness, though it can bring great joy. It isn't mostly about codependency, though it can give us people to lean on. They will remind you that though best friends won't always last our whole lives, the friendships between Jesus-followers will endure eternally. They will help you see that friendship is about sanctifying us—making us more like Jesus—and giving us people to follow God alongside.

Like everything else, friendship will one day be exactly as it was always supposed to be—like it was at the beginning. Except this time, it'll be better.

If I take offense easily;
if I am content to continue in
cold unfriendliness, though
friendship be possible, then I
know nothing of Calvary love.

-Amy Carmichael





WHERE IT BEGAN

Our God Is a God of Friendship

was five years old when my mom snapped a picture that lives rentfree inside my head.

My best friend Kelsey had recently moved across the country. For months, I missed her, and I longed to be close to her again. I was giddy the first time my mom took me to see my friend and her family after the big move. You can see joy written all over my face in the picture. We were sitting side-by-side on a couch. I was nestled next to her, arms wrapped around her slender shoulders, lips planted on the side of her face in the most passionate five-year-old kiss you can imagine.

There's only one problem.

While my lips curled into a puckered-up smile squished into my friend's face, hers formed a straight line. While my arms squeezed her body as if they might never let go, hers were immovable boards plastered to her side.

Kelsey and I have laughed about that picture for decades, but I have always felt a little embarrassed by what that picture communicates about me.

Am I desperate for friendship—pathetic even?

I've never been able to deny it: my heart aches for friends. It is written on my heart, and it is written all over my face and body language in that picture. The longing followed me to three different schools in three

years of middle and high school. It stayed with me when I was thrust into a new community in college, when I moved to a different city for the first time, and in every changing stage of my life.

While that longing may have made me feel awkward and embarrassed at times, it was never pathetic. It points me to one way I reflect my Creator.

Read Genesis 1-2 and John 17:1-5 and then check out the verses below.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures

that crawl on the earth."

So God created man

in his own image;

he created him in the image of God;

he created them male and female.

-Genesis 1:26-27

Our God is a God of friendship, and He created people for friendship too. Look at the pronouns used in these two verses: us, our, his, and he.

Moses, the writer of Genesis, wanted the original readers to know there is one God. He used singular pronouns like "he" to describe the Creator. But if God is one God, why does He also describe Himself with words like "us" and "ours" in verse 26?

This is one of the first places in the Bible where God reveals Himself as a Trinity. Through the rest of Scripture's pages, He makes Himself known as three Persons in one God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Our God is a God of friendship, and He created people for friendship too.

Yet for us there is one God, the Father. All things are from him. (1 Corinthians 8:6)

For to us a child is born, to us a son [Jesus] is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God. (Isaiah 9:6 ESV)

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." (John 15:26 ESV)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19 ESV)

Since before God created the world, He has been a God of friendship. He had perfect community within Himself as the Trinity, which means He is both three Persons and one God. God created everything and everyone from an overflow of love. Before God created skies and seas, fish and birds, light and darkness, He loved. The Father loved the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit loved the Father and the Son, and the Son loved the Spirit and the Father. Jesus affirms this when He prays in John 17:24, "Father... you loved me before the world's foundation."

LET'S CHAT

Genesis 1:27 reveals that God created us in His image. Friends, that means our longing for friendship comes from the God who created us to be like Him.

Our hearts want community because we were made to reflect a God *whose nature* is community. He created us for friendship with Himself, and He created us for friendship with other people.

When we are tempted to believe we don't need anyone other than ourselves, let's remember we were made by a God who is three-in-one. Should we be tempted to feel pathetic in our longing to be known and loved by someone else, let's remember that God Himself etched that longing into our hearts.

If you look at the picture of my best friend and me, you'll see two little girls who needed and wanted friendship in their lives. Those girls didn't yet know where that desire came from, but it already lived in their bones. It was innate. God created people to be together.

Your desire for friendship might look like mine or it might look like my friend's. It may be out on display for the world to see or hidden and kept close to your heart. Over the next thirty days, we will open God's Word together and see His design for friendship. We will see examples of beautiful friendships, and we will see examples of broken friendships. We will challenge our culture's expectations of friendship and learn how to find joy in friendship. We will seek to forgive, pray for, and stick close to our communities.

When we do friendship well here on earth, we reflect the God of heaven.

Our hearts want community because we were made to reflect a God whose nature is community.

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

| What are some insecurities you have when it comes to friendship? |
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| What does your community look like right now? |
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| How does knowing that God is a God of community change the way you thin about your friendships? |
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JOURNAL YOUR PRAYERS

| Thank God for being a God of community. Praise Him for being a Goo who has been loving since before the foundation of the world. | | |
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| Ask God to show you where you ne | eed friendship in your life. Pray | |
| that He will provide friends who p | | |
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| you to have friendship with Himself and with other people. Ask Him | | |
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| you to have friendship with Himself and with other people. Ask Him | | |
| you to have friendship with Himself and with other people. Ask Him | | |
| Confess any feeling of self-reliance. Acknowledge that God created you to have friendship with Himself and with other people. Ask Him to help you believe that. | | |
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TAKE IT FURTHER TODAY

Grab a Bible concordance and find references for the word *friend*.

Read those passages to prepare your heart for this devotional.

Text a friend and tell her why you are grateful for her friendship.

Create a screen saver on your phone that says "God is love" to remind yourself that before God created anything else, He was the God of love.

GOD MADE YOU FOR FRIENDSHIPI

Hey Friend is a tool for togetherness in a lonely world. Each devotion is written *for girls*, by girls and offers relatable stories of friendship, Bible verses, journaling questions, and practical friendship tips. While reading, girls will learn how to

- Handle drama
- Navigate Ioneliness
- Resist gossip
- Celebrate others
- Find friends
- Love like Jesus

Writers Cambria Joy Dam-Mikklesen, Lauren Groves, Kolby Knell, Alexus Lee, Gabrielle McCullough, Alena Pitts, Yvonne Faith Russell, Tara Sun, and Tega Faafa Taylor want girls to know that God made people to be with people, and He wants our friendships to flourish.



