Interacting with God’s Story and Vision

A. Bible search

Use concordances to find references about friendship. (Some examples are Proverbs 17:17; 18:24; 27:6, 10; and John 15:12-15.) Read the texts and share your insights on how they might inform your friendships.


» What made this a solid relationship?
» Jesus referred to his disciples as friends. Do you consider yourself a “friend” of Jesus or a “disciple”?
» Do these terms have different meanings for you?
» What do you need to deepen your friendship with God/Jesus?
» How can spiritual companions or friends benefit your spiritual journey?

B. Qualities of a true friend

Refer to the chart completed earlier. Review the list, prioritizing what is most important to sustain a deep, committed friendship. Think of ways or rituals that would mark your friendship as a covenant.

» What gifts could you give each other to signify your commitment?
» What does it take to sustain a strong, healthy, close friendship?
» What is needed to develop a deeper, more intimate friendship if that is what you desire?

Options: Based on this chart, create a litany of gratitude for loyalty and friendship. Or write an acrostic for FRIENDSHIP.

C. When friendships end

What would have happened if Jonathan had taken Saul’s side in the dispute with David? What happens when it takes too much effort to balance loyalties or maintain a friendship? What do you do when you “outgrow” a friend? Or have you been betrayed or deceived by a friend? How can you bring closure to a friendship with honesty and integrity?

Share your experiences of “unfriending” someone.

» What feelings did you encounter?
» What counsel would you give to someone who is in an unhealthy or unsatisfactory friendship?

With a partner, role-play a conversation in which you “let go” of a friendship. Think of a ritual that could be used to mark the end of your friendship.

D. Make new friends

Refer to Living God’s Story and Vision (ABS, pp. 60–61). Through situations beyond our control, such as moving to a new location, we find ourselves looking for new friends. We may seek new friendships because we enjoy meeting new people, want a deeper friendship than our longtime friends offer, or desire more variety in our relationships. We change and so do our friendship needs.

» Where do we look for friends?
» How do we “put ourselves forward”? Share your personal experiences and your suggestions.

Option: Create a few scenarios to begin the conversation. For example, how would you go about befriending someone who is of a different socioeconomic status, in a different age bracket, or who is from another race or culture? What are the benefits and cautions in friendships that may appear unequal?

E. Intimate, nonsexual friendships

This session highlights a close, loving friendship between two men. Who knows if this was an unusual kind of relationship in biblical times? In our times, such a relationship may be questioned. Yet this friendship is honored as a covenant, similar to the promises God made to God’s people.

Form two groups for a discussion of each of the following questions. Have one group argue for, the other against the question. Assign which side of the argument each group is on, so folks have to move from their comfort zone.

» In our highly sexualized culture, is it possible to maintain, even encourage, same-sex intimate friendships? Give reasons.
» Are intimate friendships between women more acceptable than between men? Give reasons.
» Is it possible to have close male-female friendships that are not sexual? Give reasons.

Debrief.

» Did folks become emotional about this topic?
» Does being a Christian make a difference in how you view such friendships?
» What counsel do you think Jesus would give?
» What covenantal agreements would be helpful in these kinds of friendships?