



FRIENDSHIP *for* GROWN-UPS

What I Missed & Learned Along the Way

LISA WHELCHER

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

CHAPTER ONE: I NEED FRIENDS

1. In what ways do your grown-up friendships still feel like junior high?
2. Do you ever find yourself bonding with a friend by talking about another one?
3. What kind of friendship would feel ideal to you?
4. What lessons of friendship, both positive and negative, did you learn growing up?
5. Where would you like God to take you on this journey of friendship? Ask big.

CHAPTER TWO: THE FACTS OF MY LIFE

1. Are there darker chapters in your childhood story that you are reluctant to explore?
2. What in your childhood environment could have set up unhealthy responses from you?
3. What is one of your earliest childhood memories and what message did it write on your heart?
4. How would you describe the difference between being transparent and being vulnerable in your own life?

5. Have you ever experienced that feeling of Plexiglass in relationships?

CHAPTER THREE: IT'S OKAY TO BE NEEDY

1. What would you long to experience in a community of believers?
2. Have you ever gone through a time in your life when you felt like you were being hit from all sides? In hindsight, what do you think the purpose of that stormy season was?
3. How does the thought of being needy feel to you?
4. Can you identify with the illustration of a wall of self-protection built around your heart? Why do you think it is there?
5. What busyness is preventing you from having the time to invest in intimate relationships?

CHAPTER FOUR: A MERCIFUL BREAKDOWN

1. What are some so-called acceptable addictions you have turned to over the years?
2. Do you have a secret that you've never voiced to another person?
3. How does the thought of sharing in a group setting feel to you?
4. Were there any of the signs of codependency in friendships that sounded familiar to you? Which ones and how so?

5. Have you ever experienced the loss of a close friend? Did you allow yourself to fully grieve? How so? If not, where have you put the pain?

CHAPTER FIVE: WHERE DO I BEGIN?

1. What are your thoughts and feelings about intimate friendships with the opposite sex?
2. With which member of the Trinity do you relate more easily: God the Father, Jesus the Son, or the Holy Spirit?
3. Are there areas of your life where you feel as if you are walking in the dark?
4. If you could pray for sight, what would you ask for specifically?

CHAPTER SIX: NEW FRIENDSHIPS WITH OLD FRIENDS

1. Are there friends you've known for a long time with whom you'd like to go deeper? What can you do to initiate this new level of vulnerability?
2. What are three questions you can ask or conversation prompts you can use to deepen talks with friends the next time you gather?
3. Think of your own circle of relationships. What can you call out and appreciate in each person?
4. Who in your life would you describe as your closest friends, really close friends, and just friends?

5. How can you more intentionally keep in touch with your close friends in the midst of your busy life?

CHAPTER SEVEN: WOMEN OF FAITH

1. Is there an area of your life where you know Satan is trying to discourage you? How can you fight him and the discouragement?
2. Do you have an “Emmitt”? If so, tell what you love most about her; if not, pray and ask for your “Emmitt” right now.
3. What does it mean to you to receive someone?
4. Think of your friendships. Is there healthy reciprocity in most of them?
5. Which friend might you write to on a regular basis—someone who could also double as a journaling partner?

CHAPTER EIGHT: WHO ARE SAFE PEOPLE?

1. Have you ever been betrayed by a friend? Have you been able to trust again?
2. Who would you like to be able to forgive—if you knew that you didn’t have to forget and that it would take time for this person to earn your trust again?
3. What are some warning signs you’ve learned to pay attention to before giving your heart and trust to someone?
4. Think about friends whose words you hear but

whose actions you maybe ignore. What real message have you missed about your relationship?

5. How is your thinking distorted based on childhood experiences, and what might these distortions look like in your friendships?

CHAPTER NINE: AFRAID TO BE FREE

1. Are you more comfortable with rules or freedom? How so and why?
2. Does the idea of loosening the grip on Law and falling into grace sound exhilarating or frightening to you?
3. Do you think God will catch you if you let go of clinging to Law rather than to grace?
4. What person do you feel safe enough with to bring into the light a secret sin? Where and with whom are you that kind of person?

CHAPTER TEN: LET'S GET REAL

1. What might cause you to be hesitant to explore open, authentic friendships?
2. Think through your friends. Who feels real? Who feels safe?
3. How does the thought feel of inviting someone into your messy house or going out without makeup to meet them?
4. What response from a friend would you most desire after confessing your less-perfect side?

5. What do you usually do with your feelings? Express them or stuff them or something else?

CHAPTER ELEVEN: CONFLICT CAN BE A GOOD THING

1. Do you lean more toward being a people pleaser, a no-needer, or queen of everything?
2. Can you think of a brick in any of your current relationships that could morph into a wall? How can you tend to the issue that might block a friendship?
3. Have there been times in your relationships when you felt strong emotions about an issue that turned out to be merely an imagination balloon? How can you dare to pop such an imagining if one bounces up again?
4. To you, what is the goal of conflict resolution?

CHAPTER TWELVE: FROM HEAD TO HEART

1. How can you tell when a friend is really there, really present, with you?
2. What keeps you from reaching out and asking a friend for help?
3. Do you ever find yourself performing to earn or keep someone's love? When and how so?
4. What do you think God would say to you in the middle of a struggle with sin?
5. Which aspect of friendship discussed in this book has been most helpful to you?

Appendix One

You Gave Me a Friend

Sometimes we need help articulating our longings and desires. Allow me to share a prose poem I wrote and maybe it will help you put words to some of your desires for friendship.

Thank You, Lord, for this husband of mine.

We are growing old together, and he gets sexier with each curly gray hair. His gentle love heals my daddy-wounds. This one-flesh thing transcends his touch and mates my soul to his. Was I a computer geek before I met him? Is there any more peaceful place than lying snuggled within his spoon as I drift off into lesser dreams?

But he's a man, a good man, but just a man. And I'm a girl, a woman, with a little girl's heart. I need to giggle and be silly and, when my feelings get hurt, to cry. Other times, I don't know what I'm going to do about this matter or that, or what I think; I have to feel it, and I don't even know how I feel about it. There are rooms of my feminine soul where a man wouldn't want to go. But I don't want to be alone there. When my husband's patience has grown thin

and his ears are full of my waxing philosophical and still I have leftover words . . .

You gave me a friend.

We can talk about the same four subjects from fifteen different angles and then question every conclusion and start all over again. My friend fills the emotional gaps left by a brilliantly analytical man. She knows how to listen with her eyes and talk with her heart. The oneness was there from the start because you have knit our hearts together, a tapestry of friendship.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for the breath and life of my kids.

Flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone, heart of my heart. Somehow, the more I love from a reservoir I never knew I had, the greater my capacity to hold even more . . . to hold ever closer. Each child is nuzzled up within my soul, and I will nestle in theirs as they cuddle my grandchildren. With them I pray severely, hurt profoundly, love sprawlingly, and exhale thanks with every waking breath. My days are filled pouring out my life for them.

But they are children, precious gifts, for sure, but still little ones. And I am a little one too. Looking for one to care for me . . . care about me. Be my number one cheerleader. Ask me how I'm feeling and really care and then surprise me with a card or, better yet, candy . . . chocolate candy . . . dark chocolate candy . . . with nuts and chews . . . because

she knows my favorites. When I'm tired of being tired and all "give out" . . . I exhale again that I'm so thankful . . .

You gave me a friend.

She gets down on her knees and helps me clean up the messes I alone have made. She has both eyes closed but both ears open if I call in the night. And somehow she always knows how to turn on the Light when I'm afraid of the dark. If I act like an insecure, immature child, she simply smiles and loves me anyway. I can be a whiny baby, and she will mother me and hold my heart until the hurt is all cried out. When I fall down, she picks me up and breathes refreshing words on my skinned needs.

Sweet Jesus, thank you for a gaggle of girlfriends.

Fun. Chocolate. Shopping. Coffee. "Just called to say, 'hi.'" Someone to go on a diet with and then go off with in the same day. Nothing blesses me more than knowing her kids are as bad as mine and her floors are stickier. A million recipes traded, cookies exchanged, in-home parties attended, casseroles delivered, kids babysat, husbands complained about, conversations interrupted, and laughter shared.

But they are just girlfriends, delightful every one, but all together not enough. In the deepest places only One can fit. In that tiny space, I keep my unspoken fears, shameful failures, the need to be needed, the want to be wanted,

to know and be known. Just when I was afraid I wanted too much, asked too often, loved too big . . .

You gave me a friend.

A bucket to a hundred thimbles. Able to contain my overflow, no matter how much I gush . . . with room for more. Her capacity to receive is exceeded only by her capacity to give. I believe her when she reassures me that there is no such thing as loving too much. I feel safe. Safe enough to be seen by her without self-protection. She stands beside me, close enough for the salt from my tears to sting her own wounds. Yet she doesn't wince and run. She remains and allows my pain to cleanse hers too. She sees me. Really sees me. Into-Me-See . . . Intimacy.

Thank You, Heavenly Father, for the gift of Your Son.

There are no words. I have tried to express my love, but words fail me. It is like trying to build the Eiffel Tower with toothpicks. Descriptions of the gratitude I feel seem flimsy, miniature, reproduction. No lowercase word will ever define the uppercase Word. But I try nonetheless. I know you know, Lord. Even as a tiny ten-year-old girl, I wrote a school report on my best friend . . . it was you. It has been you all my life. My BFF, my Best Friend Forever . . . and eternal.

But you are up there . . . or in here . . . or everywhere at once . . . but someplace I can't see you or touch you or

hear you. I want to look into your eyes and see myself . . . my true self. I want a hug, a real one, one I can really feel. I want to audibly hear the words "I love you," not just sense them or know them. The reality is you are infinite, beyond words, but I am not. I am finite, and I need words. Mercifully, You heard mine when I asked, and . . .

You gave me a friend.

A visible demonstration, physical manifestation, tangible incarnation of your love! Oh, thank you! Thank you for sending your Spirit to be with us, and thank you for sending your beloved daughter to be . . . with . . . me. Thank you for sending your Spirit to "come alongside" and thank you for sending my dearest friend to walk this journey beside me. Thank you that it is "I in you and you in me," and thank you that I can experience the connection I crave here on earth. This friendship is truly Heaven on Earth. Greater love has no man than this . . . First, you gave your life. And then you gave me a friend . . . for life.

Appendix Two

Practical Steps for Developing and Growing Friendships

I know that I sometimes read a book and think, *Okay, I know what to do, but I have no idea how to do it.* It is my hope that God has spoken to you through my personal story and that he is already speaking to your heart about specific steps toward more intimate friendships. At the same time, sometimes we need a friend to take our hand and walk beside us step-by-step to get started on our journey. With that in mind, I've created an appendix in more of a "how-to" format. I hope that it is a helpful reference for you as you take baby steps toward mature friendships.

CHAPTER ONE: I NEED FRIENDS

- ▣ Come up with some responses ahead of time to say when a friend starts talking negatively about another friend. Example: "Yes, I did notice that about her. I am so grateful for the mercy of God and my friends who

love me even when I'm not perfect, either.” Or: “I’d like to give her the benefit of the doubt; maybe there is another reason behind her behavior we just can’t see.”

- ▣ If you need someone to talk to and you don’t have a safe friend, consider finding a counselor or pastor whom you can trust enough to share some of your secrets and fears and hurts.
- ▣ Make a list of your old friends. Take a risk and make the effort to contact them and perhaps rekindle a wonderful friendship from the past.
- ▣ Take a minute and remember that Jesus is the most perfect friend you can imagine. Now, pour out your heart to him, as if he were sitting across the table from you. Tell him where you are in your heart and what you’re longing for.

CHAPTER TWO: THE FACTS OF MY LIFE

- ▣ Think of the wisest woman you know. Make an appointment with her to have coffee or tea and talk. Make a list of questions to ask her or topics to discuss.
- ▣ Think about your childhood. What are your earliest memories? Now, think about your whole life. What are some of the “messages” you may have written on your heart during a time of heightened or deepened emotion? Write these messages down. Are they Truth? If not, what would God have said to you in the middle of those memories?

- ▣ Contact three friends and invite them over for lunch and to play a game or talk.
- ▣ I wrote a book entitled, *Taking Care of the Me in Mommy*. I observed that moms (most women, for that matter) give and give and give, but if we don't take time to receive then we burn out. Friendships are refreshing for many women. Give yourself permission to invest in yourself by investing time in developing and sustaining friendships. Ultimately, you will have more to give to your family and work because you will give out of the overflow, rather than the dregs. Ironically, it is when we are the busiest that we need friends the most. Don't let busyness or "taking care of others" or too much responsibility keep you from tapping into the life source of friendships.

CHAPTER THREE: IT'S OKAY TO BE NEEDY

- ▣ Find a personalized gift to exchange with your circle of friends to remind you to pray about three specific things for one another for a set number of weeks. Then meet for lunch to talk about how God has chosen to answer those prayers.
- ▣ Find a church that is offering a Bible study class. Invite a friend to sign up with you.
- ▣ Invite a couple of friends on a weekend getaway. Mark the calendar in advance and start saving and planning.

- ▣ Set aside a day to talk in depth and pray with a handful of friends.
- ▣ Call a friend and share something you have been turning over and over in your mind, rather than remain isolated with your inner experiences.
- ▣ Take an overview of your life and find three responsibilities that you can eliminate in order to make room for developing friendships.

CHAPTER FOUR: A MERCIFUL BREAKDOWN

- ▣ Call a friend and set up lunch or dinner or coffee. Don't put it off or wait for the perfect opportunity.
- ▣ Dare to share a secret with a safe and trustworthy friend.
- ▣ Call three friends for a three-minute "touch base" conversation. (Don't talk longer.) Start the conversation with, "I only have a few minutes, but . . ."
- ▣ Or call a friend and say, "Hey, I just called to say hello and I've been thinking about you and I would love to get a date on the calendar to meet you for a longer 'catch-up' talk."
- ▣ Eat a piece of chocolate and/or listen to a song with a friend. Pay attention and be aware of every sensation or emotion. Share your observations and reflections with each other.
- ▣ Go through the codependency checklist in this chapter and see if you can identify similar traits in yourself. If so, read a book about it.

- ▣ Join a group. You will find many different kinds: divorce, grief, addiction, codependency, adult children of alcoholics, sexual abuse, and eating disorders. I am currently in a group that is simply made up of women wanting deeper healing and emotional wholeness.
- ▣ Have an honest but probably difficult conversation with a friend about something that has been weighing on your heart and mind regarding the friendship.
- ▣ Bring your friendships before the Lord and ask if there are any relationships that aren't healthy for you. Sometimes the honest and best thing to do is to end a friendship. If someone needs more than you have to give and the relationship is draining you beyond what you have to offer, take care of yourself and trust God with the other person.
- ▣ If you have needed to end a friendship, or perhaps you are the one who has been "let go," give yourself permission and time to grieve the loss of what was good in the relationship.
- ▣ Think back over your life. Has there ever been a time when you lost someone or something but didn't allow yourself the freedom to fully grieve it all the way through? The hurt is still buried deep within your soul until you let it out. Find a friend with whom to talk it through, or cry with, or vent your confusion and anger with. Maybe you could write a letter to God and

read it aloud to him. As my friend Marilyn Meburg says, “You have to feel it to heal it.”

- ▣ Do you know someone who is going through a hard time? Take a moment to send a card or a bar of chocolate or an uplifting CD. If you have time, put together a “box of comfort” with things you know would lift her spirits or warm her broken heart.
- ▣ If someone you know is in the middle of a trial or crisis or heartache, call her every day for a period of time just to let her know you are there. Give assurance that there is no need to respond, you just wanted to reach out and give a hug over the phone or by e-mail.
- ▣ Maybe you could call this friend every morning at the height of the crisis and say a quick prayer over her or send a prayer by e-mail every night so she can find comfort throughout the next day. (You may want to just call a friend and pray over her day regardless of whether she is in an obviously difficult time.)
- ▣ Give your friend all the time she needs to process her emotions: grief, anger, confusion, and sadness. Ask her if she’d like to talk about it and then just listen. Give her an opportunity to talk about the person or dream she lost.
- ▣ If you don’t know what to say or do, be honest and say, “How can I be the best friend for you during this time? What do you want or need from me?”
- ▣ Look for tangible ways to love your friend during tough seasons. Pick up her laundry and return it washed,

dried, and folded. Borrow her car and fill it up with gas and have it washed. Offer to keep her kids overnight. Think about what would bless you and do that for her.

CHAPTER FIVE: WHERE DO I BEGIN?

- ▣ Do you know someone who has gone through an experience similar to yours? Ask this person to consider being your “sponsor.” Call this person when you need to talk about something rather than turning to less healthy ways of dealing with negative emotions.
- ▣ When you experience a current distressing feeling, ask yourself, “When have I felt this before . . .” Chances are, the hurt you are feeling today feels out of proportion to the current situation. That may be because it is tapping into deeper, past hurts. Deal with and process the original hurt, and it won’t be as likely to resurface as often in your current friendships.
- ▣ When you experience an emotion, ask yourself “What is this emotion trying to tell me about something that needs attention under the hood?” Example: you feel compelled to turn to food or alcohol or shopping when deep down you know that you are attempting to feed or numb or distract from a deeper hurt.
- ▣ Think about and assess any friendships you might have with a man. In your heart of hearts, you will know whether you are “playing with fire” or whether

this is a safe friendship. Take time to honestly think about this. If there is cause for concern, then talk about it with a friend, especially if you are ambivalent about ending the relationship.

- ▣ Find a friend who is in the same situation you are (for example: homeschool mom, pastor's wife, mom to a special needs child, single mom, a person struggling with weight, and so forth). Reach out to her to see if there could be a friendship there.
- ▣ The next time you experience something worth writing down, send it to a friend in an e-mail and then also save it in a "journal" file on your computer.
- ▣ Be intentional about making new friends. That seems so simple, but it may be the most practical tip in this appendix. If you don't make developing and sustaining friendships a priority, they won't happen.
- ▣ When looking for new friendship possibilities, nothing is more welcoming than a sincere warm smile with eye contact. Practice this. Bestselling author Andy Andrews says, "Smile when you talk!"
- ▣ Remember that timing is important when making new friends and for taking steps toward closer friendships. Pay attention to a patient pace.
- ▣ Take the risk to reach out, knowing that you may get hurt or be rejected. Realize that not everyone desires to add friends into their lives at this time. Don't take this personally. Keep reaching out.

- ▣ Keep an open heart and an open mind. Look for friends who are different from you in background, race, socioeconomic status, faith, politics, or stage of life. Purposely foster a friendship with someone whom others might reject for one reason or another.
- ▣ Be the social coordinator. Take the initiative. Plan an event. Put something together. Step out. Be the leader.
- ▣ Maybe you could start a “MomTime” group. Refer to my book *How to Start Your Own MomTime* from Focus on the Family.
- ▣ Plan a Bunco party. (Look on the Internet for rules and instructions.)
- ▣ Christmas is a good time to meet your neighbors. Host an Open House. Organize a Christmas Coffee. Host an after-Christmas party and exchange gifts that you’ve bought on sale.
- ▣ What do you love to do? Cook? Paint? Sew? Scrapbook? Exercise? Shop at a consignment shop? Track down garage sales? Either find a friend to join you or use your gifts to bless a friend with what you’ve created or found.
- ▣ Set a weekly or monthly time on the calendar to call a friend. Maybe Saturday mornings while the kids watch cartoons or Wednesday night after the kids are in bed or Tuesday mornings when they are at school. The key is consistency and intentionality.

CHAPTER SIX: NEW FRIENDSHIPS WITH OLD FRIENDS

- ▣ Ask a couple of friends to write an e-mail to you describing how they experience you. This might feel embarrassing, but your friends will probably enjoy this, and it will encourage you. While writing this book, I asked some friends to do this for me. Their words were treasures I will keep in my heart forever. They also encouraged me that I was farther along the friend road than I thought I was. I needed that affirmation to keep going.
- ▣ Think of a handful of friends and then write down what each of their particular personalities or lives has taught you or how it has blessed you. Send it to them, maybe in a pretty note card.
- ▣ Drive to see an old friend or reconnect with a childhood buddy.
- ▣ Dare to share a doubt or a question about life you have with an old friend.
- ▣ The next time someone calls to connect with you, unless it is simply not possible, try to make time for this.
- ▣ Make a list of your three really close friends and twelve close friends. Don't attempt to have twelve really close friends. It really isn't possible, and it will only frustrate you and them.
- ▣ Keep in touch with old friends. Facebook is a great way to do this.
- ▣ Create a "Milestones" calendar. Fill in the dates with

your friends' birthdays and anniversaries but don't overlook other important dates. I once sent a balloon bouquet on a friend's one-year-sober birthday. I sent flowers to a friend on the date of her child's death. The day a friend's divorce is final is often a very lonely day. Make notes of special or difficult dates, and let your friend know that you haven't forgotten by sending a note or e-mail on that day. You can also set up reminders on your computer calendar for upcoming special dates.

- ▣ Create a Happy Birthday or Just Thinking of You e-mail template and save it as a file on your computer. Now, all you need to do is insert your friend's name with a personal greeting and hit the "Send" button. (You may want to change it each January 1.)
- ▣ Keep a box of assorted occasions and blank cards on hand.
- ▣ Do a project with a friend: paint a room, rake the leaves, go on a mission trip, visit a homeless shelter, or run/walk in a 10k race, like one for breast cancer awareness.
- ▣ Join something together: choir, evening college class, craft lessons, cooking lessons.
- ▣ There is nothing like just taking time to send an old-fashioned handwritten note to a friend for no particular reason. My friend Bridget is a master at this. I don't think she has any idea how often she touches hearts at just the right time.

- ▣ Pay attention when you start thinking of a friend out of the blue. It could be God prompting you to reach out.
- ▣ Work at being a good friend. Learn about friends—it is worth the effort. Ask them to share their photo albums or favorite books, movies, or music.
- ▣ Take a personality test together. (You can find them online.) Learn each other’s love languages. (See *The 5 Love Languages* by Gary Chapman, Northfield Publishing.) Talk about how you can be more understanding friends.

CHAPTER SEVEN: WOMEN OF FAITH

- ▣ Make plans to attend a Women of Faith event (find out details at www.womenoffaith.com) and invite a friend. Better yet, gather a group of friends and become a group leader.
- ▣ Consider being a mentor to someone younger than you. Reach out, invite her to join you for coffee, and encourage her to ask you questions or share her heart.
- ▣ Write to a friend tonight and tell her all about your day. Invite her to do the same if she has time. Be intentional about receiving her e-mail by replying back with comments to things she has shared about her day.
- ▣ Start an ongoing e-mail exchange with a friend. Begin with, “Today I am grateful for . . .” Send one sentence and invite your friend to return the e-mail with her

gratitude sentence. Keep this up daily. It is a great way to keep an attitude of gratitude while also learning about your friend.

- ▣ Start a Circle of Friends journal. Buy a blank journal and write in it for a week. Then send it to a friend and ask her to do the same. Then she can send it to the next friend. Keep the circle to no more than four friends. Each person has a week to record her thoughts and feelings, and then you get the gift of seeing inside the heart and lives of three other friends.
- ▣ Pray and ask God to show you how you can be a better friend to someone in particular.
- ▣ Send a random text message to a friend telling her how grateful you are for her and why.
- ▣ Become a “Secret Pal.” For a month, send encouraging cards without signing the cards. Or leave a little gift in her mailbox or on her doorstep. Encourage her to simply practice receiving without any way of returning the favor. This is a fun way to give and receive unconditional love.
- ▣ Reach out and ask someone to pray for you.
- ▣ Pray about it, and then find a friend with whom you can commit to meeting intentionally on a weekly basis.
- ▣ Read a book with a friend and then trade books so you can read each other’s highlighted notes. Get together and talk about what touched you or taught you.
- ▣ Be intentional about growing closer to a particular friend.

- ▣ Next time you are together, ask the question, “How are you in your soul?”
- ▣ Be a sleuth. Notice what your friend likes and dislikes. What she wants and needs. What she loved growing up. Her favorites: coffee drink, candy, musician, author, and so on.
- ▣ Use eBay in a fun way to surprise a friend. For example, I recently bought two mugs for a friend. One had Anderson Cooper’s picture on it, and the other one was from Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream factory—two of her favorites! She responded with my favorite thank-you note ever: “Far surpassing any tangible gift you gave, is the enormous gift that you *knew* me . . . knew what would be meaningful to me. For that I thank you beyond measure.”

CHAPTER EIGHT: WHO ARE SAFE PEOPLE?

- ▣ Think through your friends: identify the ones who gossip or talk about other people. Now, think through your friends and take note of the ones who speak positively about others. Also, be on the lookout for “perfect people.” Be careful about being too vulnerable with them. They may not understand or be able to tolerate imperfection.
- ▣ Observe the fruit of a person’s life over time before allowing her into your heart.
- ▣ Give friendships time; don’t go too deep too fast. Take

time to tiptoe into deeper conversation and more intimate areas of disclosure.

- ▣ Learn and rehearse a phrase for when someone asks a question that feels too invasive. Something like, “I appreciate that you want to know me better, but I just don’t feel comfortable sharing that yet.”
- ▣ Write a note forgiving a friend, but first tell God exactly how you feel about the situation.
- ▣ If you are the person receiving forgiveness, then receive it fully. Trust that you are forgiven and try not to act awkward or ashamed. Start over with a clean slate.
- ▣ Illustrate your emotional bank account. Where are the areas and who are the people withdrawing from your reserves? Now, from which sources are you being replenished? Is your emotional bank account balanced? If not, consider making some “budget cuts” or investing more time in areas or people where there is the highest return.
- ▣ Identify “buckets, cups, and thimbles” in your friendships. This exercise is not to stand in judgment—there are very understandable reasons why some people do not have the time or capacity to offer much. But it is good to take an honest, realistic survey so that you don’t expect more than is possible and then set your friendship up for disappointment.
- ▣ Pay attention to what someone does, not just what she says. For instance, if a friend says, “Call me,” and

when you do she is never available, you may want to wait for her to reach out the next time.

- ❑ On the other hand, be honest and up-front with what you offer of yourself. Ney has taught me to start with a “receiving statement” like, “Thank you so much for inviting me to ____ (*fill in the blank*). Unfortunately, my calendar is full, and I know myself well enough to know that I must also schedule in plenty of downtime. I better not overcommit myself. But, it means a lot to me that you would think of me.”
- ❑ The next time a friend confesses a weakness or fear or mistake to you, don’t give a scripture or advice. Find a way to empathize. If she asks for your opinion, then gladly share from your experience if a Bible verse or solution has helped you. If you haven’t been through a similar experience, consider reminding her how big God is or how much he loves her.
- ❑ Are you taking on too much responsibility for a friend? Consider reading *Boundaries* by Henry Cloud and John Townsend and *Changes That Heal* by Henry Cloud if you desire emotional healing and growth.

CHAPTER NINE: AFRAID TO BE FREE

- ❑ We have seasons in friendships. Staying connected through different seasons of friendships often requires grace and understanding.

- ❑ One of the more difficult seasons to weather is when one or both of you have small children. It is very difficult to find extra time to nurture relationships outside of the family. Here are a few practical tips that might help a little. (There is also an entire chapter on friends in my book *Taking Care of the Me in Mommy* with many more suggestions.)
- ❑ Multitask by using a cordless headset phone to talk to a friend who is doing the same while washing dishes, sorting laundry, or doing other household chores.
- ❑ Whenever you find yourself waiting in a bank line or car pool line, send a quick “Thinking of you in the midst of our busy lives” text.
- ❑ Keep a speed dial list of your friends in your cell phone. The next time you find yourself with a minute of alone time, call up a friend for a quick chat.
- ❑ Wait until the kids are in bed and dad is watching a favorite show. Steal away to your local Starbucks or bookstore for a cup of decaf and close conversation with a friend.
- ❑ Find opportunities to spend time with your friend while also including the husbands and children: park play dates, Saturday afternoon community pool and BBQ, spaghetti dinner and DVD night.
- ❑ Invite friends to join you on an errand you both need to do: grocery store, Target, gym, and so forth.
- ❑ Take a “virtual” shopping trip with a friend. Take

advantage of your cell phone camera and snap pictures of cute shoes you see, a yummy piece of chocolate cake you are eating, or a smile-producing item you discover and send the picture to your friend right then.

- ▣ Download and send a song that will inspire a friend or say what you are feeling or what you'd like to say.
- ▣ Check into using Skype to video chat with a friend from your home.
- ▣ Sign up for my free “Personal Mom Coaching” (www.LisaWhelchel.com) service from my Web site and allow me to be a virtual friend.
- ▣ During lean financial seasons of life, make an extra casserole for a friend or shop warehouse clubs together.
- ▣ Can't afford to meet out for coffee or lunch? Invite a friend over to your house for a donut and coffee or chips and a soda.
- ▣ Take advantage of online greeting cards to stay in touch with friends and remember them on their special days.

CHAPTER TEN: LET'S GET REAL

- ▣ Invite a safe friend to join you in an authentic friendship.
- ▣ Choose a safe person and tell her how you are really feeling, the way it really is, who you really are.
- ▣ Be up-front about what you are wanting/needing in a friendship.

- ❑ Tell a friend if you are in trouble: financially, in your marriage, spiritually, or with your children.
- ❑ Ask a friend the question, “Where are you emotionally right now?” Concentrate on listening without feeling the need to respond. Simply say, “Thank you for trusting me enough to share your heart with me. It is a privilege.”
- ❑ Ask your friend how you can pray for her. This shows you care. Then you can give the priceless gift of prayer. Write a prayer and send it in a note or an e-mail.
- ❑ Some people just don’t prefer intimate conversation or conflict resolution. If the friendship is worth it, press in but don’t push.
- ❑ Some people won’t open up unless you ask. If you discern a concern, gently ask but give grace if she is not ready to share. Remind your friend that you really want to know how she is feeling. It isn’t a burden or a rote question. Some people need convincing of your interest because of past hurts and disappointments.
- ❑ If someone has shared something personal with you, ask her about it at a later time. She will know that you paid attention, valued her feelings, and still care how she is.
- ❑ Most importantly, listen, listen, listen. When it is time to respond, speak from your heart first and then from your head.
- ❑ The other day, I let out a heavy sigh. My friend

Marilyn immediately said, “Put words to that sigh and share with me what you are feeling.” I loved that.

- ▣ Ask a friend the three questions Jennifer and I asked in this chapter: 1. “What do you see in my life that encourages you?” 2. “What do you see in my life that you would caution me about?” 3. “What else would you like to say?”
- ▣ Ask a friend the two questions I asked Marilyn:
1. “What do I do that draws me to you?” 2. “What do I do that pushes you away?”
- ▣ As a fun getting-to-know-you game, gather a few friends and write on a piece of paper two true things about you and one lie. Have them guess which one is the lie. This makes for enlightening conversation and surprising self-disclosure.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: CONFLICT CAN BE A GOOD THING

- ▣ The pastor of my church has a wonderful phrase he repeats often, “Change leads to conflict, which leads to growth. This is the cycle of success.” This is also true of successful friendships.
- ▣ If you are experiencing conflict with a friend, the first thing to do is pray. Nothing breaks down barriers faster. Next, give each other the benefit of the doubt. Don’t discuss your feelings with everyone else first. Go directly to your friend. Try to resolve conflict as soon as possible. It is too easy for it to fester or “go

under” only to pop up later disguised and more difficult to unmask.

- ▣ Are there any unspoken bad feelings or miscommunications that could benefit from a “brick at a time” conversation? Granted, not everything warrants bringing up for discussion since love does cover a multitude of sins. Only you can determine whether leaving it unvoiced could create a wedge between you. For instance, I have a friend who is always late. This doesn’t bother me. I understand that she has three small children, and it is difficult to get out the door on time. So, I’ve learned to pack a book to read while I wait. On the other hand, I have another friend who takes it as a personal affront if I am late to meet her. I am grateful that she took the time to explain to me that her time is valuable and that when I cancel at the last minute or am late to meet her, it feels like I am not respecting her schedule.
- ▣ The next time you realize you are having an imaginary dialogue in your head about how you think a friend is feeling, invite her into the dialogue and allow her to speak for herself. You may just need to pop an imagination balloon.
- ▣ Are you experiencing a disagreement or misunderstanding with a friend? Have a “Pepsi Can” conversation and share each of your perspectives. Work to understand her point of view and come together with a win/win solution.

- ▣ If you are having a difficult conversation with a friend, strive to listen with your heart, not just hear her words. She may be angry because she feels so invested in this friendship or because you have touched a deep hurt from her past.
- ▣ In any conflict, ask God to show you what you can learn. Even if you determine that only one percent of the problem is you, own that and apologize. This creates an atmosphere of openness and reconciliation.

CHAPTER TWELVE: FROM HEAD TO HEART

- ▣ Practice being present with a friend. Stop everything and be there. Put your cell phone on vibrate. If possible, don't multitask, even if you feel like you can do something else and listen at the same time. Let her know that you are there by your body language and eye contact. Ask follow-up questions.
- ▣ Practice being present with yourself. When possible, drive in the car without the radio on. Sit still without reading or watching television. Start small, but become comfortable with longer periods of silence and solitude.
- ▣ Practice being present with God. Pour out your heart but then take time to listen. Or simply imagine you are leaning up against Jesus like his disciple John (John 13:25). Breathe out your worries and breathe in his peace.
- ▣ Imagine yourself stepping to the throne of grace with

all your feelings of shame and unworthiness. Now, picture him smiling and delighting in you because you are his beloved daughter.

- ▣ Call someone just to talk through your feelings.
- ▣ Call someone and ask for specific prayer.
- ▣ When people ask you to pray for them, offer to pray with them right then.
- ▣ Send a card, text, or e-mail that says, “I have prayed for you.” That is so much more comforting than, “I will pray for you.”
- ▣ Collect your friends’ Christmas card photos and put them on the fridge or a bulletin board nearby. Whenever your eyes land upon a family, send up a quick prayer for them.
- ▣ If a sermon touches you at church, buy the CD and send it to a friend. If a book helps you grow, buy one for a friend. (Maybe this one. 😊)
- ▣ Send a box of “withness” to a friend. Collect a handful of little gifts, wrap them individually, put a sweet note on each package, box them all up, and deliver it to a friend who needs a friend to be with her during a lonely or hard time.
- ▣ Consider attempting to reconcile a broken friendship.
- ▣ Think of the kind of friendships you would like to have and ask God to provide that kind of friend.

Appendix Three

Conversation Prompts



One of my very favorite things to do with my friends is ask questions. Here are random questions I have asked over the years. Typically, you won't need to ask more than two or three because they have the capacity to open up conversation that can last for hours. Start with a question and then allow the conversation to go where it wants to go. Follow its lead and discover the thrill of intimate friendship.

- ▣ What do people say you do best?
- ▣ Describe an ideal day for you.
- ▣ What, if anything, would you like to be different in your life?
- ▣ What do you hope your life will look like in one to five years?
- ▣ Tell me a couple of high points and a couple of challenges in your day/week/month.
- ▣ I'd love to hear your story. Start from the beginning and don't leave anything out.
- ▣ Describe some key relationships in your life. How have these influenced you?

- ▣ Describe where you are in your heart/life in three words.
- ▣ If you could go to Disney World with any celebrity alive today, who would it be?
- ▣ What's your favorite breakfast food?
- ▣ If you could have a super power, what would it be? And, who is your favorite superhero?
- ▣ What is your favorite childhood memory?
- ▣ What is your favorite Bible verse? What's your favorite proverb? What's your favorite psalm?
- ▣ When you get to heaven, what is the first thing you're going to say to God?
- ▣ What is something you've done that has been over the top?
- ▣ If you could have dinner with anyone from the Bible, who would it be and why?
- ▣ Tell me about your first kiss. Or your first date.
- ▣ If you were an animal, what would you be?
- ▣ What quality do you admire most in another individual?
- ▣ What do you value most in a friendship?
- ▣ What is the hardest commandment to keep?
- ▣ What did I not ask you that you wish I had?
- ▣ What is your favorite nursery rhyme?
- ▣ Who was your favorite childhood TV star?
- ▣ What is your dream of happiness?
- ▣ What's the one sound that drives you crazy?
- ▣ What is the first job you ever had?
- ▣ What is one thing you wouldn't want to live without?
- ▣ If you could have any animal in the world as a pet, what would that be?

- ▣ If you were going to be in the Olympics, in what sport would you compete?
- ▣ Who was your first celebrity crush?
- ▣ What is your favorite book?
- ▣ What do you like to do on a rainy day?
- ▣ What movie could you watch over and over again?
- ▣ If you could change something about yourself, what would it be?
- ▣ What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?
- ▣ What is your favorite smell?
- ▣ Who is your favorite actor/actress? Why?
- ▣ What is your favorite thing to do?
- ▣ If you could only subscribe to one magazine for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- ▣ If you were a vegetable/fruit, what kind would you be?
- ▣ Who is considered to be your hero?
- ▣ How do you relieve stress?
- ▣ What quality do you most admire in a man?
- ▣ Do you have a motto?
- ▣ If you could play any musical instrument, what would it be?
- ▣ What is the best advice anyone has given you?
- ▣ What is your favorite place in the world?
- ▣ What is your favorite guilty pleasure?
- ▣ What do you think people remember most about you?
- ▣ What do you often daydream about?
- ▣ What in nature do you find most beautiful?
- ▣ What scares you the most and why?
- ▣ Who is your favorite Disney character?

- ▣ What would you attempt if you could not fail?
- ▣ What is your favorite song on your iPod?
- ▣ What is your favorite food?
- ▣ If you could be someone else for a day, who would it be?
- ▣ Do you remember your favorite teacher?
- ▣ Do you have any bad habits?
- ▣ What is your first thought when you wake up in the morning? What is your last thought before you go to bed?
- ▣ Do you have any hidden talents?
- ▣ If the whole world were listening, what would you say?
- ▣ What is the best song to describe your life?
- ▣ What is your favorite holiday?
- ▣ What is one thing you love about being an adult?
- ▣ What is one thing you miss about being a child?
- ▣ What is the best band of all time?
- ▣ Where did you take your last vacation?
- ▣ When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- ▣ When people look back on your life, how do you want to be remembered?
- ▣ What sound or noise do you love?
- ▣ If you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be?
- ▣ What is your favorite wardrobe accessory?
- ▣ What is one thing about you that people would be surprised to find out?
- ▣ Who are your two most trusted friends? Why?
- ▣ If you could do anything at all and money were no problem, what would you love to do with your life?
- ▣ What's standing in the way of what you'd like to be or do?

- ▣ What keeps you up at night?
- ▣ How would your friends/loved ones describe you?
- ▣ How would your competitors or critics describe you?
- ▣ What do you hope to accomplish in the remainder of your life?
- ▣ What do you wish you had known or done ten years ago?
- ▣ How did you decide to _____?
- ▣ May I ask your advice about _____?
- ▣ What can I do to make your day?
- ▣ What do you need most right now?
- ▣ What concerns do you have?
- ▣ What emotion(s) are you least comfortable experiencing?
(anger, anticipation, anxiety, boredom, confusion, disgust, fear, joy, love)
- ▣ When you feel these uncomfortable emotions, how do you respond? What do you feel, think, and say?
- ▣ What's your favorite Dr. Seuss book?
- ▣ If you could live in any home on a television series, what would it be?
- ▣ What's your favorite Web site?
- ▣ What's your favorite school supply?
- ▣ What's the best bargain you've ever found at a garage sale or thrift store?
- ▣ What's the most interesting biography you've read?
- ▣ What's your least favorite word? Your most favorite word?
- ▣ Describe something that's happened to you for which you have no explanation.
- ▣ What is the most incredible experience you've ever had with God or heard of someone else having?

- ▣ Was there ever a time in your life when you know that you would have died if not for the grace of God?
- ▣ If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be?
- ▣ Where do you go for advice?
- ▣ What's the sickest you've ever been?
- ▣ What's your favorite form of exercise?
- ▣ What's the biggest lesson I might be able to learn from you?
- ▣ What's the biggest lesson you think you can learn from me?