



friendish

going deeper *guide*

RECLAIMING REAL FRIENDSHIP

IN A CULTURE OF CONFUSION

KELLY NEEDHAM



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*“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like
a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks
at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one
who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres,
being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”*

JAMES 1:22–25 ESV

In the above scripture, we are reminded that it is possible to *understand* how the gospel should transform our friendships yet resist any actual changes in our thought patterns and actions. James calls this “deceiving yourself,” convincing yourself that you are growing when in fact you are standing still. This guide is my attempt to prevent that.

My hope in writing Friend-ish is to see communities transformed and friendships infused with joy. To see our Christian communities so full of joy, purpose, selflessness, and humble conflict-resolution that the watching world won’t be able to ignore the reality of Jesus (John 17:21). And this won’t happen unless we become doers of the Word!

The challenge is, in the arena of friendship, the endless variety of circumstances. This means there will be no cookie-cutter way to fight for a real, Christ-centered friendship. What will be right for me may not be right for you. And what works in one season of your life might not work in another. So these questions and exercises are meant to help you think through how to fight for real friendship in your own life. Today.

If you are using this guide on your own, the **Personal Reflection** section is for you. I encourage you to not just think about your answers, but to actually grab a journal and write them down. Write your answers prayerfully, talking to God as you work through them. That will produce the most transformation because only God can bring about true transformation.

If you are using this guide as a group, feel free to encourage participants to complete the **Personal Reflection** on their own before group time. Then use the **Group Discussion** section for your times together. My hope is that you'll spend time in prayer at the end of your times, asking God to produce the changes you all hope to see.

Over the years, I've heard from pastors, coaches, campus ministry leaders, youth pastors, and even corporate bosses about the unhealthy tendencies they see within the groups they lead. You have the unique opportunity to encourage and foster health in the dynamics of the organization you lead—to help those you lead fight for real friendship and avoid counterfeits. The **For Ministry Leaders** section has you in mind. I hope you'll find those questions and exercises helpful.

This study guide wouldn't exist without the help of my friends who read the book and helped me think through specific ways it might need to be applied in various seasons and stages of life. So thank you Carly Skinner, Tony Robinson, Elise Lowe, and Tyler Moffett! Your work has made this guide truly helpful to others!

May God give you all the grace you need to fight for real friendship in your life!

Kelly

chapter one

DIGGING IN TREASURELESS FIELDS

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1.

It's a God-given desire to crave stability, companionship, and significance. Do you find yourself searching for these things? If so, where, or in whom, do you search for them?
-
2.

How do you handle seasons of instability in your life? When things are shifting, where do you turn? Do you look to your marriage or family for stability? If single, do you find yourself longing for the stability these things are perceived to create?
-

3. Have you ever looked to another person to be your savior from loneliness? How did this impact your life?

4. Is there any unconfessed sin in your life that might be keeping you from enjoying deep, Christ-centered friendships?

5. Do you find yourself comparing your friendships to those around you, or measuring your significance in someone's life? Where does this thought process lead you mentally and emotionally?

6. Especially in times of suffering, we often look to others to meet our primary relational needs. Make a list of ways you can intentionally draw near to the Lord during difficult times.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. During unsteady seasons, have you ever looked to a friend to bring stability? We often do this unconsciously, but the effects are no less harmful. How have you seen looking to others for stability play out in your life?

2. Has someone in your life tried to use you as their stabilizer during a tough season? How did this play out? How did it feel to carry the burdens of this person?

3. After Adam and Eve’s sin they both hid from God, no longer alone, but lonely. What does this communicate to us—married or single—about the true cause of loneliness?

4. When we allow Jesus to be our true Savior from loneliness, what impact does it have on our lives and on our friendships?

5. What are some ways our culture teaches us to measure our significance and importance to others? How do you personally feel tempted to measure your importance to others?

6. What does it mean to elevate a grace of God into the place of God?

Small Group Exercise:

Spend some time in prayer with a member of your group, pray that Jesus would be their joy and satisfy their soul in whatever way is needed in this season. (He’s our Bread of Life, Living Water, Light, Resurrection, and Life.) Have them pray the same for you.

FOR MINISTRY LEADERS:

- 1. What type of awareness does your ministry have for people that are on the fringe of your ministry, or are struggling with broken or lost relationships? How can you best serve those people, knowing that only Jesus can fully meet their needs?

- 2. Are there any friendships you’ve lost in ministry? What were the circumstances? How did you handle that relational loss?

3. How would you describe the relational environment and connectedness in your ministry?
How do you want to see this change?

4. Have you mistakenly presented yourself as a savior to the people in your ministry when a problem arises? What’s the difference between saving and pointing to the Savior in those situations? Make a chart to illustrate the contrast.

chapter two

MARKS OF A COUNTERFEIT: REPLACING JESUS

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. There are two ditches we can fall into when it comes to friendship: treating it as unimportant or as most important. Where do you fall on this spectrum? Place yourself on the line below. Take a moment to ask God to help you move toward a healthy view of friendship.



2. When friendship is ultimate in our lives, we tend to use our friends instead of love them. How have you seen this play out in your life?

3. What good things or relationships have become a counterfeit god in your life? Where are you currently struggling with this?

4. Is there a specific “sign of idolatry” (p. 27–32) you struggle with the most? List some specific ways this shows up in your friendships. Spend some time in prayer confessing these things and asking Jesus to return to first place in your life.

5. Do you feel resistant to the concept of friendship idolatry? Why? What might you be holding onto or afraid of?

Personal Exercise:

Consider and list times in the scriptures when Jesus experienced relational hurt just like us (*Matt 14:10–13, Matt. 26:14–16, Matt. 26:20–25 and 47–50, Matt 26:31–35 and 69–75, Matt. 26:37–40, Matt. 26:55–56, John 20:24–29, Mark 3:20–22, Mark 6:1–6, Mark 9:30–37, Mark 15:16–20, John 6:23–26, John 6:60–71, John 11:28–44*). Spend some time thanking God for his grace in relating to humanity this way.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. What language in the Scriptures shows us that community is a part of God’s plan?
Take a look back at page 21 for a refresher on specific wording.

2. How does Jesus’ life show us that he valued friendship when he was on earth?

3. What signs of idolatry do you see in your relationships (marriage, significant other, friends)? What can you do to combat these in your life?

4. Describe a time in your life when you were forced to choose between loyalty to God and loyalty to someone/something else. Who did you choose? What was the result?

5. How does our culture differentiate between regular friendship and “best friendship”? As Christians, how should we think about this?

6. What is one thing you could do this week for a friend out of a heart of giving, rather than from a consumer mindset?

FOR MINISTRY LEADERS:

1. We all need colaborers in ministry. Who is the Jonathan, Ruth, or Timothy for you? How are you resisting the temptation to work in isolation? Are there any areas you're closing yourself off from help and support?

2. What praise from people do you crave in your ministry position?

3. As someone in ministry, how can you ensure you aren't becoming someone else's savior, mediator, shepherd, or judge? What specific steps can you take to keep Jesus first in your life and others?

4. How can we avoid the mistake of pointing to community with other believers as the ultimate solution, instead of Jesus?

Personal Exercise:

Make a list of your last five ministry events. Next to each event write a “V” if the primary focus was on a vertical relationship with the Lord, or an “H” if the primary focus was on horizontal relationships with others.

What do these answers tell you? What relationship(s) does your ministry tend to emphasize? Which one might need more attention?

chapter *three*

MARKS OF A COUNTERFEIT: SELFISHNESS

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. Have you or someone you know had a friendship like Kelsey and Sarah’s that was built fast and collapsed fast? Describe the foundation of this friendship and how it contributed to the collapse.

2. What “good deeds” in your life are motivated by self-centeredness? Maybe a desire to be seen by others or to remain in their good graces? Write a prayer of confession and ask the Lord to purify your motives.

3. Is there someone in your community that you struggle to love? How does your own selfishness play into those struggles? Spend time praying for that person.

4. Have you ever been angry when a friend experienced life changes that decreased their time with you? Why is this a sign of selfishness?

5. Is there someone you need to have a difficult conversation with? Someone you need to speak the truth in love to? Write out a plan for how you will pursue this over the next few weeks.

6. Are you tempted to keep a mental tally of the actions or wrongs of a friend? How does this thought process impact your life? Make a list of steps you can take to avoid this pattern.

7. How does your selfishness come out in friendship? Are you more like the Demanding Friend, the Divisive Friend, or the Dependent Friend? Write down one way you can combat this tendency in your life this week.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. Share a time when a friendship suddenly collapsed. How did this feel? How did you react? What does this reveal about your heart?

2. Jesus isn't only concerned about what we do in friendship, he's concerned about why we do it. What has your "why" been in friendship? What motivates you to pursue friendship or avoid it?

3. How have you seen picky love show up in your friendships? What result has this had?

4. How can avoiding conflict and hard conversations actually create division?

5. Where has the constant connectivity of our social media age worked against us? What are some healthy boundaries we can put in place to foster true community?

6. Spend some time in your group praying together for God to eradicate selfishness from your friendships.

FOR MINISTRY LEADERS:

1. When's the last time you led your ministry to be sacrificially generous to others? What did you do? What impact did it have?

2. Have you been graciously honest with coworkers and supervisors in ministry? What was the impact of this? What is the impact of not doing this?

3. How are you equipping the people you lead to diagnose their heart motives and spot “self-centered good deeds”? To not simply settle for good actions but to pursue transformation at the heart level?

4. By default, we all tend toward picky love. What are some specific ways you can help others fight against that tendency? How can you work to create a culture where people feel welcomed and loved?

chapter *four*

MARKS OF A COUNTERFEIT: MIMICKING MARRIAGE

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. What aspects of relationship do you see in the Bible that are reserved exclusively for marriage? (Gen. 2:24, 1 Cor 7:3–4, 39, Eph 5:22–33, 1 Peter 3:1–7)

2. What are your beliefs about marriage? Do you believe it can satisfy or provide ultimate fulfillment? How do these beliefs impact your life?

3. If single, why might it be tempting to foster relationships that mimic the marriage relationship? Why might this put any future marriage at risk? How can you combat this tendency?

4. In what ways does our culture over-emphasize or under-emphasize marriage? How has that affected your own beliefs and feelings?

5. Exclusivity and jealousy are often celebrated as a sign of “best friendship.” Why isn’t this a good thing?

6. What comforts are available for a Christian single that is not experiencing the exclusive intimacy that the marriage relationship offers?

Personal Exercise:

Using the list on page 66, spend some time in quiet assessment of any friendship in your life that is currently mimicking a marriage relationship. Write down the ways this friendship needs to change. Share your list with a mentor and ask for support in making those changes.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

I. What messages does our culture provide about friendship? What about best friendship? What about for those who are single? Married?

2. Based on Ephesians 5:22–23, what relationship is marriage ultimately supposed to point to? How should this change our thoughts about marriage?

3. Share a time when you’ve experienced exclusivity and jealousy in a friendship. Why is this a red flag? Why are we drawn to exclusive, “just-the-two-of-us” relationships?

4. List a few appropriate boundaries that should be in place in our friendships. Why are these important and what are they protecting?

5. How can our friendships be used to celebrate and protect marriages, our own and others?

6. Disordered loves (idolatry) often leads to disordered desires. How have you seen this play out in your own life? Explain how the Bible’s explanation for this differs from the world’s explanation. Why is the Bible’s message good news?

FOR MINISTRY LEADERS:

1. What are some appropriate boundaries to have with people in ministry?

2. How should the prevalence of same-sex attraction affect and change the way we do ministry? (student ministry, accountability groups, community groups, care groups, etc.)

3. What percentage of people in your ministry do you think struggle with same-sex attraction or marriage-mimicking? What factors go into your guess? How can you serve them?

4. Are there any relationships in your ministry area that you can identify as potentially “mimicking marriage”? Do you have relationships that operate in this way? What can you do to help point this out and foster healthy boundaries?

chapter five

GOD PROBLEMS

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. Can you identify a few times you wished you were included within a group? Why did you feel left out? How could you flip the script and intentionally love and bless those around you?

2. All fears are rooted in a fear that either God is not in control or that he does not care about you. Where are you tempted to believe this lie? How has that affected your relationships?

3. How does Adam and Eve’s sin remind us that sin isn’t primarily about the action? What is the essence of sin? How does this truth affect you?

4. Reflecting on God’s proper design for friendship, is there a current or past relationship in your life for which you need to repent and make restitution? Write out a plan to make things right and share it with a mentor or friend for accountability.

5. Have you ever been in a wilderness season like Megan was? How did it feel? What purpose does God have for us in the wilderness?

- 6. Take a moment to get on your knees or take a posture of humility and repent. Express your desire to return to God in areas that you’ve rejected him. Acknowledge that you cannot fix it but need Jesus to fully restore and redeem you in this area.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

- 7. Have you ever experienced an especially lonely season? After reading chapter 5, what do you think God may have been teaching you during this season of loneliness?

- 8. We often blame our relational problems on other people. Why are they actually God Problems?

9. In your own words, in light of this chapter, what is the essence of sin? How do we sometimes misunderstand what sin is and why it's a problem in our lives? Why does it matter that we get this right?

- IO. In your own words, define repentance. How do we sometimes misunderstand what repentance is?

- II. When you think of repentance, what feelings do you have? How did your upbringing train you to think of repentance? How can you retrain yourself to see repentance as a necessary and normal part of Christian life?

12. Share a time when you had to make restitution with a friend. What are some practical ways we might need to do this?

FOR MINISTRY LEADERS:

I. Pages 71–72 say: “Sin is not so much about what we do but rather who we leave.” Why is it essential to think about who sin is against? How would your ministry look different if you and others responded to sin this way?

2. What good gifts seem to be worshiped in your ministry? (p. 72) How can you equip those you lead to see this as idolatry and encourage them to be devoted to the Giver not his gifts?

3. Do those you lead have a good understanding of repentance? Do they see it as a necessary and normal part of Christian life? What steps can you take to create a culture of repenting of sin, rather than hiding sin?

Personal Exercise:

Have you ever had an ungodly friendship from which you never repented? Take time before God to repent of this friendship. Then, take the next step of restitution and reach out to this friend.

chapter *six*

THE SAVING FRIENDSHIP

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. Like any relationship, our relationship with God may experience ups and downs—times we feel him near and times we feel more distant. In the times when God feels distant, how do you continue to pursue daily friendship with him?

2. Have you put your relationship with God on hold as you wait for solid community? Instead, what does the Bible say we should do as we seek Biblical community?

3. Often times our relationship with God feels like math. Why do we tend to see our love for God like an equation? How does that affect our lives?

4. Getting to know God has a cost. Which of the three costs listed do you struggle with the most: exposure, patience, or faith? What would it look like for you to push through your resistance and embrace this cost of knowing God? What do you think the result would be?

5. There are three primary means of making God tangible in our lives: the Word, prayer, and the local church. Which one(s) of these is lacking in your life? Write a plan for how you will begin practicing this means of drawing near to God.

6. Churches are made of sinful people, and sinful people have problems. Have you allowed negative church experiences from the past to keep you from being involved in the present? What would it look like to trust God as you step into local church community?

Personal Exercise:

Spend some time listing any fears related to your friendships. Perhaps you are concerned that someone will move away, change jobs, get married, have children, etc. Replace your fears with faith by listing ways you can cultivate your stable friendship with God.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. In friendship it is easy to struggle with comparison and competition. How does our friendship with God free us from this?

2. What is the proper order when it comes to cultivating community versus cultivating our relationship with God? Why does the order matter?

3. What does your prayer life reveal about your friendship with God?

4. Knowing God in a real way will cost us three things: exposure, patience, and faith. Which one is the most difficult for you to embrace? Why?

5. Does your relationship with God feel real? Tangible? Experiential? Why or why not?

6. Are you utilizing the primary means of drawing close to God (the Word, prayer, the local church)? Share one way you will draw close to God this week.

FOR MINISTRY LEADERS:

1. What role does community play in people coming to know the Lord in your ministry?

2. What do you boast about in ministry? What does this reveal about where your hope is for change and transformation?

3. How are you equipping those you lead to draw near to God through the Word, prayer, and involvement in a church?

4. What role does prayer play in ministry? Is prayer merely a transition or an integral part of your ministry? How might this need to change?

chapter seven

RIPPING UP ROOFS

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. Do you have unbelieving friends in your circle of friends? Do you spend time in prayer for them? Do you look for opportunities to point them to Jesus with your words and actions? What keeps you from doing this?

2. Why are we tempted to go to others to share our problems and avoid time in prayer? How are you dealing with your own neediness?

3. How does our access to Living Water keep us from being picky friends?

4. God has called us to love our neighbors, those people who are nearby. Make a list of the people he has placed around you in this season. Write out a plan to intentionally love and serve one or two of them this week.

5. Because we have Jesus, we can be open-handed, interested in others, unoffended when we're left out, and self-controlled in what and how we share. Which of these areas do you need the most work in? What is one step you can take this week to grow in this area?

6. When building friendships with others, information is naturally shared. But ultimately “the desire to have someone know all of us is met in God” (p. 107–108). Where have you taken something that is supposed to be a side effect of friendship (knowing things about your friends) and made it the foundation? What are the side effects of this? Where does this keep your focus in friendship?

Personal Exercise:

Take note this week of the times you’re tempted to turn to a friend before you turn to the Lord. Notice the patterns in your week and make a commitment to prioritize prayer.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. Knowing Jesus redefines (1) what it means to befriend, (2) who we befriend and (3) how we befriend. In which of these areas do you need the most transformation? What steps can you take to make changes?

2. Are there places in your life where you are tempted to downplay or avoid your relationship with Jesus? (workplace, neighborhood, friend groups) How does our understanding of friendship affect this?

3. Have you had the experience of sharing the gospel with an unbelieving friend? What was the impact on your friendship? Was there anything you could have done differently?

4. How can you gently point your friend to Christ when they come to you with their neediness or have an issue they may not have brought to the Lord?

5. Jesus said to love your neighbor. Do you know the literal neighbors in your community? What are some practical ways you can love the neighbors who live around you?

6. God is fully aware of everything in our lives. There are no secrets with him. Where does healthy community intersect with our God who knows everything about us?

FOR MINISTRY LEADERS:

1. Who have you befriended in your ministry that you don't naturally click with? Why is this important?

2. Does ministry make it difficult for you to get outside the “Christian bubble” and meet or befriend non-Christians? If yes, what can you do to change that? How can you encourage those in your ministry to do the same?

3. How can you encourage those you lead to love their neighbors—the people who are literally near them—instead of picking and choosing who they will love?

4. Is there anybody in your ministry that you are close-handed with? What fears are behind this?

5. What are some moments when you’ve shared too much with your ministry or a volunteer? Are there confines to what you can and can’t share? How does your friendship with God inform these decisions?

chapter eight

NOT GOOD TO BE ALONE

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

- I.

Are you experiencing aloneness or isolation in any areas of your life? Can you pinpoint any factors that contribute to this? What changes can you make to pursue friendship in a healthy way?
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2.

Sharing joy is one of God’s purposes for friendship. Does your life have a rhythm of shared joyful experiences with friends? How can you cultivate more joy in your friendships? Make plans to enjoy a shared joy with a friend this week.
-

3. Why might God ask us to expose and confess our sins to another trustworthy person? How is this an expression of his love for us? If there are sins you haven't confessed to anyone, write out a plan to get them out in the open to a trustworthy person in your life this week.

4. Is there someone in your life in a season of weakness, facing situations that are too heavy to carry alone? List a few ways you can help carry them this week.

5. If you are single, are you planted in a family of believers? If you are not single and part of a church community, how can you specifically act as family for singles in your midst? (p. 121–122)

6. Do you ever long for community but struggle with reaching out to others? Can you identify what specifically is holding you back? How can you combat this in pursuit of genuine, Godly relationships?

Personal Exercise:

We all have legitimate needs for friendship and community. Make a list of the needs you have and make a plan for how you will begin seeking out solutions. Ask God for humility and open-handedness to be okay with the solution he provides, even if it isn't your ideal.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. Do you have non-Christians in your friend group? Do you have close friends that are Christians? How can we cultivate both?

2. Describe a time when an experience was joyful because it was shared? Why is this good for our souls?

3. Share about a time you “spoke the truth in love.” How was it received? Did that friend share truths you also needed to hear? Why is this an important part of friendship?

4. If you are single, are you planted in a family of believers? If you are not single and part of a church community, how can you specifically act as family for singles in your midst? (p. 121–122)

5. What keeps us at times from sharing our needs with other believers? How can we push past this and encourage others to do the same?

6. Are there others around you who have needs? How might you be the solution to their genuine needs for friendship and community?

FOR MINISTRY LEADERS:

1. Do you experience loneliness in ministry? What are the factors in why you experience it? How can you change this?

2. Does your ministry regularly have people show up who are not Christians? If you answered “yes,” how have you cultivated that? If you answered “no,” what does this say about your ministry?

3. What would you consider to be your greatest ministry moment? Who was with you when it happened?

4. How well does your ministry foster community that carries other’s burdens well? What are three ways you can see this grow?

5. On page 120, Kelly quotes Matthew 12:46–50 where Jesus essentially says: “I have all the family I need right here.” Does your ministry see the body of Christ this way? How should that truth affect your ministry?

Personal Exercise:

Who is your “speak the truth in love” ministry partner? Spend some time writing down the truths have they shared with you that you needed to hear. What were the benefits of their words? If you don’t have this kind of person in your life, spend some time praying for God to provide that.

chapter *nine*

FAITHFUL ARE THE WOUNDS

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. Who are the friends in your life that have spoken the truth, even in a way that wounded at times? Are you thankful for that looking back?

2. Have you ever backed away from a relationship in a passive way instead of having a direct conversation that could have allowed for resolution? How has this chapter changed your perspective on that situation? Spend some time asking God to expose any sin in your own heart that played into your decisions. Consider reaching out to this person to make restitution.

3. Do you feel you had healthy conflict resolution modeled in your home growing up? How has this affected your friendships? How does scripture teach us to think about this?

4. Have you ever embraced falsehood in the belief that it was loving? What were the results of your actions?

5. What fears do you have about conflict? How does our friendship with God speak to these fears?

6. Is there a friend in your life you need to speak up to? Use the steps on pages 135–137 to write up with a plan to walk this out. Pray over your plan and ask for God’s help.

Personal Exercise:

Every one of us will face times when we have a blind spot and are in need of confrontation. What steps can you take to make sure others feel comfortable approaching you when and if this may be needed? Make a list of ways you can become a wise person who welcomes rebuke (Prov. 15:31–32).

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. We live in a culture that glorifies a “non-judgmental” attitude. How has that affected your thoughts about friendship? What are some occasions when it is appropriate for Christians to confront their fellow believing friends?

2. Can you think of a time when a friend confronted you in a godly way? Looking back how did the Lord use that interaction in your life?

3. How is speaking the truth in love a pursuit of unity?

4. Sin, ours and others, is the true enemy of healthy friendship. What other things do we mistakenly view as the enemy of friendship? What are the effects of that?

5. How has embracing falsehood—being a fake friend—affected you? Have you been a fake friend? Has someone been that to you? How does this affect our communities?

6. How does speaking the truth in love protect our communities from gossip?

FOR MINISTRY LEADERS:

1. What do you expect out of the friendships you build in your ministry? Your coworkers? Your supervisors? Are these right expectations?

2. Does your ministry seem “judgmental” to the world? Is this a good or bad thing in your opinion?

3. What wisdom or rules of thumb would you give to others in ministry when it comes to gossip?

4. How can you equip those in your ministry to avoid falsehood and fake friendship?
How can you help them see that speaking the truth in love is “the immune system of healthy community”?

Personal Exercise:

What blind spots may you have as a ministry leader? What blind spots does your ministry have?
Create a feedback form for the people in your ministry can fill out and turn back into you.

chapter *ten*

ETERNITY IN OUR EYES

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1.

Have you felt the impact of “social media burnout”? List the ways you struggle with it specifically. What steps can you take to fight for health in this area?
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2.

In what ways are you believing the lie that you are limitless? That you can have as many deep friendships as you want? What are the effects of this?
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3. Do you need more “flesh and blood” relationships in your life? Are too many of your friendships long distance or digital? Write out a list of steps you can take to make space for these new, real friendships to form.

4. Is there anyone outside your current circle of friendship that God is calling you to invest in relationally? Make a plan to make space for that.

5. Our mission is to know God and make him known. How are you doing at staying on mission? In what ways do you need to refocus on what matters most? Write out the ways you know God is calling you to live on mission today and list any obstacles that get in the way of that.

6. Who are your “comrades for the Kingdom” right now? Those you are linking arms with to see God’s mission on earth come to pass? Send them a text or write them a note this week to say how much you appreciate them. If you don’t have these kinds of friends, spend time praying for God to provide them and ask him to help you be this kind of friend to someone else today.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. Do you prioritize proximity in your friendships? If not, what are the barriers that keep you from making local friends? Why does this matter?

2. Staying on mission can mean saying “no” to “good” things. Are there specific areas that come to mind in your own life where you may need to begin saying “no”?

3. Even Jesus disappointed others when he came to earth and took on human form. (Mark 1:34–38.) Why might it be so hard to accept that we will also disappoint others as we live on mission?

4. How does living with an eternal perspective free us from being preoccupied with our social life?

5. On page 148 it says, “comrades are truly closer than friends.” How have you seen this to be true in your own life?

6. How does staying on mission make our friendships better? Are there any friendships in your life that have gotten off course? What tweaks might need to be made to get back on mission?

FOR MINISTRY LEADERS:

7. Have you ever experienced burnout as a ministry leader? How do you think technology might have contributed to that?

8. What do you need to say “no” to right now in order to be healthy in your personal and ministry life? Are there things you should consider saying “yes” to?

9. Our mission is to know God and make him known. Is your ministry staying on mission? What are the top three things that tend to get your ministry off course? Do you have a plan to prevent that from happening?

IO. How can you help your ministry see themselves as comrades for the kingdom?

Personal Exercise:

What appropriate boundaries with technology should you set up as a ministry leader? Work through a weekly planning exercise to begin planning hours of your day/week when you are connected and disconnected from technology.
