

# Small Group Discussion Outline



This is the second in a series of studies looking at the subject of Christian Friendship.



**Read: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8**



**1. What is the main mark of friendship in this passage?**

How can you tell if someone is a good friend? You know that they're always there for you, and that they love you—no matter what. Maybe they went out of their way to help you when you got sick, or listened and empathized when tragedy struck. Perhaps they're the one who drove you home after you got your wisdom teeth pulled, or the one who rushed you to the hospital in an emergency. They're the one who prays with you, gives you gentle advice when you ask for it, and points out kindly when you're wrong. The mark of friendship is demonstrated love.

Now that's a friend to be trusted—the kind of loving friend that the apostle Paul talks about in these verses.

If you want to health-test your relationship with a friend, try reading verses 4-8 aloud, inserting your friend's name in place of each mention of the word love. Is this true about your friend? Is his or her concept of friendship at least similar to what's in this passage? Then try inserting your own name. How do you measure up in your practice of friendship love toward him or her? Where do you need to improve? In what areas are you doing well?

If you want to have godly, healthy friendships, memorize these words. They'll help you—and your friends—become better friends!

Good Words to Remember: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (The Message)

*Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.*



**2. Think through your friendships. Are they healthy and godly?**



**Read: James 5:13-20**

The English poet John Donne wrote this famous quote: "No man is an island." A friend is someone you can lean on and someone whom you will support as they lean on you.

As we watch the old-fashioned friendliness of small-town life transform into the anonymity of urban life, we're starting to discover just how true that statement is. We need other people in our life. Not just a few family members or select group of friends, but neighbours, co-workers, and the people we run into on the streets of our community.

## Friendship What Are the Marks of a Good Friendship? (Part II)

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God designed us to be social beings.



**Read: Genesis 2:18**

Our need for others is especially strong in the church. When the first followers of Christ found themselves persecuted by society, they banded together, finding strength and encouragement in each other. In James, we see that our need to have friends extends to our daily Christian walk as well. Strong Christian friendships are marked by shared times of worship, joy, suffering, prayer, confession, and accountability.



**3. In your group, discuss some practical, real-life ways in which the following can be shared. For each element of your Christian life, try to identify at least one example of where it occurs in a corporate (Church meeting) setting and an opportunity where it could occur on a one-to-one basis.**

- (a) Worship
- (b) Joy
- (c) Suffering
- (d) Prayer
- (e) Confession
- (f) Accountability



**4. Which elements from the list above are relatively easy to share?**

**5. Which are not so easy to share with someone?**

**6. Can you think of any ways in which those that are not so easy can be made easier?**

Looking at the list above, every single one of those elements is vital to our Christian walk, however, we can quite comfortably 'exist' as Christians without necessarily sharing them with others. The ones most people are less comfortable with are 'Suffering', 'Confession', and 'Accountability.' It is these things, though, which - when shared with a good, Christian friend will encourage our Christian growth.



**7. Why do you think SUFFERING, CONFESSION & ACCOUNTABILITY are harder to share with others?**

**8. What is it about these three elements of life which, when shared, lead to growth?**

To 'exist' is relatively easy, to grow is an entirely different matter.

Without friends to share the ups and downs of life, you're stuck on a very lonely island indeed.

Good Words to Remember: James 5:19-20 (The Message)

*My dear friends, if you know people who have wandered off from God's truth, don't write them off. Go after them. Get them back and you will have rescued precious lives from destruction and prevented an epidemic of wandering away from God.*



**4. How do your friends lean on you and you on them?**

**5. How can you develop good friendships which can cope with these burdens?**

Good friendships take time to develop but are absolutely vital to a healthy and growing Christian life. Next week we will be looking at some ways we can find new friends and develop these into good friendships.

This week, choose to be a friend who can be leaned on.

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