

THE FRIEND FACTOR



by Shari Miller

Close your eyes and imagine you are a child again. What one face comes to mind when you remember someone who was important in your childhood and why? What quality did you value in that person?

During this Bible study, we will look at friendship and at what our Lord shares with us about being friends in Christ. We will also look at some of the characteristics of being a true friend — a sister or brother in Christ.



Opening Prayer

Dear Father, we thank and praise You for creating each one of us and giving us new life and faith in the waters of Holy Baptism. We confess the many times that we have sinned and have failed to be a true ambassador for You, as well as a true friend to our sisters and brothers in Christ. Thank You for sending Your Son to live a perfect life, suffer, and die on the cross for our sake. We praise You for your Means of Grace, the Word and Sacraments. Thank You for sending Your Holy Spirit who enables us to boldly profess our faith in Jesus and live out lives of love, service, and friendship to Your glory. Bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

My BFF (BEST Friend Forever)

Perhaps you remember these simple phrases from an old children's song: "My best Friend is Jesus; Love Him, love Him! My best Friend is Jesus; Love (Thank, Praise) Him!" The song reminds us that Jesus is indeed our best Friend. When I sang it as a child (one who had moved numerous times), it would make me smile to imagine such a best (and constant) Friend.*

According to our sinful nature, who or what is our natural friend? See **James 4:4**. _____

What is the result of that friendship? _____

Ephesians 2:1–3 gives a clue to the identity of our three worst enemies, who masquerade as friends. Who are they? _____

Who is affected by these disastrous friendships? How? See **Romans 3:23** and **6:23a**. _____

God, our Creator, had pity on His own. He solved the sin-problem of the world by sending His Son Jesus to be the Savior of the world. Read and discuss God's salvation plan in **John 3:16**; **John 15:13**; and **1 Corinthians 15:57**. _____

Faith Talk

Share with a partner or the small group what God's salvation plan — Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection — means for you personally. Be specific.

Read **Isaiah 41:8–10**; **John 14:26**; **John 15:15–16a**; and **Ephesians 2:4–9**. What reminders are given to all believers in Christ in these Scripture passages? _____

My Friends (Sisters) in Christ

Faith Talk

Read again Jesus' words in **John 15:12–17**. Share with a partner or the small group why Jesus calls all believers His friends. What does Jesus command His friends to do in this passage? _____

How is friendship among sisters and brothers in Christ defined in the following passages?

Proverbs 7:1–5 _____

Proverbs 17:17 _____

Proverbs 18:24 _____

2 Corinthians 13:11 _____

An acronym of the word SISTERS (Sisters in Christ) might help to identify some characteristics of true friends in Christ. Look up the Scripture reference and then fill in the quality. (See answers in Leader's Guide online.)

S _____ **Ecclesiastes 4:9–10**

I _____ **Hebrews 12:1–2**

S _____ **1 Peter 4:8–10**

T _____ **Colossians 3:16**

E _____ **1 Thessalonians 5:11**

R _____ **Philippians 2:3–4**

S _____ **1 Thessalonians 2:8**

If time permits Answer the following questions:

How can friends in Christ inspire one another? _____

What words and phrases have other people used to encourage you? Which were most effective? _____

An old Persian proverb states: "He who wants a rose must respect the thorn." How can friends in Christ show respect for one another? _____

What can be some of the rewards of a sister (or brother)-in-Christ relationship? _____

Faith Talk: Share your faith story or your LWML story with a partner or with the small group. Take just a few minutes. Be concise and share your contagious joy!

Faith Walk

1. Thank and praise God for His Son Jesus — your Best Friend Forever (BFF)!
2. Rejoice that you have been given true friends in Christ (sisters and brothers) who care for you.
3. By the power of the Spirit, share the joy of being a child of God with a friend this week.
4. Intentionally share the love of Jesus with those you meet daily by word and action.
5. Become part of a group Bible study.

Closing Litany (from Psalm 25)

Leader: To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

Group: O my God, in You I trust.

Leader: Make me to know Your ways, O LORD;

Group: Teach me Your paths.

Leader: Lead me in Your truth and teach me,

Group: For You are the God of my salvation.

Leader: For Your name's sake, O LORD,

Group: Pardon my guilt for it is great.

Leader: The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear Him,

Group: And He makes known to them His covenant.

Leader: Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me!

Group: Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in You.

Leader: To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

Group: O my God, in You I trust. Amen!

Closing

Sing or speak together "Brothers and Sisters in Christ" (*Sing!* #78) or "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (*LSB* #770; *LW* #516; *TLH* #457).

*"My Best Friend Is Jesus" by Mildred Adair Stagg. Copyrights: 1939. Renewed 1967 Broadman Press (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.). Published in 4 hymnals, including *Sabbath Songs for Tiny Tots* and *Little Voices Praise Him*. CCLI SongSearch: #229512.

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