

# The Best of Friends

## small group resource

One of the core principles of *The Best of Friends* is that life is a relational event and journey. As such, the book has been written in a way that is beneficial for individuals, but to really maximise its impact it is best read in a small group setting. This small group resource is your guide and accompaniment as you seek to put the friendship principles into practice. It can be used in a house group setting, as a sermon series, or in any other suitable gathering. Feel free to use as much or as little of the elements as you see fit. The resource material works best if group members have read the relevant chapters of the book before coming to the meeting, as this can help frame the session.

The majority of the activities require no extra props or equipment, but some are enhanced with a simple item, so it is worth reviewing the session ahead of time to see if there is anything you need to prepare in advance for the group.

## How each section works

### Welcome

After the usually mandatory hot drink and biscuits, the welcome is a gentle introduction into the subject matter for the meeting, an icebreaker or game, intended to be fun and get the group talking.



### Watch

Each session has at least one video element. All the videos are available online and so can be watched on an internet-enabled TV, computer or laptop. You can even send the video link to the group ahead of time. The videos will either be available to watch on YouTube or at [philknox.co.uk](http://philknox.co.uk)



### Read

Each session corresponds to at least one chapter in the book. To get the most out of the material, it is recommended that all group members read the relevant chapter(s) in the week preceding the meeting, as the session content and discussion questions will be framed by the relevant chapter.

## Bible

There are key passages in each session for the group to read and discuss.

### Discussion

Having read and watched the relevant content, there are some questions for the group to discuss to help explore the themes and how they can apply to their everyday lives.

### Activity

At the end of several of the chapters, there is a section with some practical friendship tips.

### Response

At the end of each session there is an opportunity to respond. This can be in the form of a creative and reflective activity or contemplative Bible reading, to help group members consider applying the teaching to their personal lives.

# Session 1

## The power of friendship

### Aim

By the end of this session, group members should be able to:

- Appreciate how important friendship is from a theological, physical and sociological perspective.
- Reflect on their existing friendships, celebrate their benefits and be inspired to take them deeper.
- Take away some practical tips on how to make friends and develop their friend-making skills.



### Before the session

Read: *The Best of Friends* chapter 1

### Welcome

Name the missing friend:

- Leonardo, Donatello, Michelangelo, \_\_\_\_\_
- Ross, Rachel, Chandler, Joey, Monica, \_\_\_\_\_
- Frodo, Gandalf, Sam, Merry, Gimli, Aragorn, Pippin, Legolas, \_\_\_\_\_
- Julian, Dick, George, Timothy, \_\_\_\_\_
- Iron Man, Hulk, Thor, Black Widow, Hawkeye, \_\_\_\_\_
- Ginger, Scary, Posh, Sporty, \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: 1) Raphael (Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles) 2) Phoebe (Friends) 3) Boromir (The Fellowship of the Ring) 4) Anne (The Famous Five) 5) Captain America (Avengers Assemble 2012) 6) Baby (The Spice Girls)

## Discuss:

- Who was your first friend? What do you remember about them and your time together?
- What is your favourite friendship from history, a film, TV series or book? What do you love about it?

This small group series is about helping us become the best friends we can be. Friendship is perhaps the most important, least talked about relationship in the church and in the world. In this first session we will consider how good friendship is and the extraordinary benefits to our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.



## Watch

'We need friends' video  
[eauk.it/we-need-friends](http://eauk.it/we-need-friends)



## Bible

Genesis 2:1–18

## Discuss:

One of the beautiful features of the Genesis passage is that it sets out for us some broad principles of what we were created for:

- Purpose – humankind is created to look after the garden, to craft and cultivate (v15).
- Obedience – God gives the man commands to follow to be in relationship with Him (v16–17).
- Relationship – It is not good for the man to be alone, so a companion is created for him (v18).

**Which of these resonate with you in this moment? Which do you think we focus on more in the church and in society?**

In *The Best of Friends*, Phil writes about the following benefits of friendship:

- Physical: “Studies consistently show that those who eat unhealthily, smoke, drink heavily and lack exercise, but have strong friendships, live significantly longer than those who look after themselves physically but are socially isolated. It really is better to eat kebabs with friends than a salad on your own.”
- Emotional: “We should not be surprised that the factor that distinguishes the happiest 10% of people from everyone else is the strength of their social relationships.”

cont...

- Spiritual: “Just as our physical lifespans are contracted by social seclusion, going solo spiritually will threaten to squeeze the spiritual life out of us if we find ourselves isolated as disciples.”

**Talk about a time when you observed the blessings of friendship and connection in your life in relation to one of these benefits. What was it about that relationship that made a difference?**

“The power of friendship has always mattered, but arguably it has never mattered more than now.”

**Why do you think this is a conversation that is particularly relevant at the moment? What are the global and personal factors that are impacting our friendships?**

**How would you describe the state of your friendships? How do they compare to your relationships in the past? What are your hopes for how these sessions might improve your connections with your friends?**

## Activity

### The Best of Amends

The practical tips in this session focus on how we improve our ability to form initial connections with others.

- **The table** – on page 125 Phil describes how his wife Dani fed more than 100 people in a year by inviting the church community to Sunday dinner in groups of 6–8 at a time. It was a phenomenal way to get to know people, but also introduce people who were not yet friends. Connections that began at these gatherings have flourished into fully-fledged friendships.

Perhaps starting with less than 100(!), could you begin to host meal gatherings and invite people to get to know one another? What might the format and meal look like to make this happen?

- **Breaking the ice** – on page 67 Phil gives us his killer question for when he first meets someone, to get to know them.

“So, what keeps you busy when you are not in <insert current location> on a <insert current day of the week>?”

What are some of the questions you have found that are good ice breakers and help light the fires of early connection?

- What else have you found are great ways to get to know people? In the early stages of your best friendships, what were the things that happened that drew you both closer together?

# Response

The purpose of this session is to remind us and reinforce in our minds how good it is to be together. We cannot go through life alone. We were created to know God and be known by Him. God made community for us. We close this session by reflecting quietly on a passage from Ecclesiastes.



## Read

Ecclesiastes 4:8–12

Encourage the group to find this passage in their Bibles. Take a moment of reflection to read it slowly and quietly. You may like to play some worship music in the background as you do. Ask the group to thank God for the relationships they have and pray into the hopes they have for the sessions ahead.

## Pray

Father, thank You for friendship. We recognise that it is not good for men and women to be alone. We are grateful for the people in our lives that You give us. Where relationships need to be deepened, would You give us the wisdom and grace to press into this. Where new connections need to be formed, would You help us see the people You put in front of us and provide good friends for us. Help us in these sessions to learn how to be the best of friends. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# Session 2

## The pressure on friendship

### Aim

**By the end of this session, group members should be able to:**

- Recognise and identify the pressures their friendships are under.
- Consider ways to battle these pressures.



### Before the session

Read: *The Best of Friends* chapter 2

### Recap

Remind the group of the themes of the previous session:

- Friendship is powerful because God created it.
- The benefits of friendship are physical, emotional and spiritual.
- This is an especially timely conversation.

Ask the group if there's anything in particular that they have reflected on or that resonated with them since last week's session.

### Welcome

This is a simple game to get you talking about some of the best and worst moments in friendships. Pour a packet of Skittles in a bowl and pass them around. Encourage each group member to, without looking, pick a Skittle out of the bowl and answer the question below that corresponds to its colour:

**Red** – What are your best and worst qualities as a friend?

**Orange** – Describe your biggest friendship fail.

**Yellow** – What qualities do you admire most in a friend?

**Green** – Would you rather attend a party with 100 friends or go out for a drink with your closest three?

**Purple** – You have a day to spend with your closest friend(s), money is no object, what would you do?

Continue for as long as you like. If duplicates are pulled out, alternative questions can be chosen.

Friendship is a battleground. A 2019 YouGov survey found that 18% of men and 12% of women do not even have one close friend. This means that millions of people in our communities have no one to call when they receive great news, no one to sit down and talk to about important things and no one to cry out to when a devastating storm arrives on the shores of life.

A combination of our own selfishness, the cultural waters of individualism, palm-sized screens competing for our attention and changing work patterns inhibit the flourishing of God-given friendships.



## Watch

'My phone is my shepherd'  
[eauk.it/my-phone-is-my-shepherd](http://eauk.it/my-phone-is-my-shepherd)



## Bible

Ephesians 2:1–10

### Discuss:

Ephesians 2:1–3 describes our three main enemies as Christians – the “ways of the world” (v2a), “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (v2b), and “the cravings of the flesh.” These are paraphrased as ‘the world, the devil and the flesh.’ Phil expands on these in *The Best of Friends*.

- Which of these have you observed as a threat to your friendships?

Verses 4–10 tell of the beautiful, good news, that these enemies need not have the same hold over us because of the grace and kindness of God and the power of the cross and resurrection.

- What difference does a relationship with Jesus make to our friendships and how we combat the enemies mentioned here?

cont...



Chapter 2 of *The Best of Friends* lists several challenges for flourishing relationships, including:

- Pressures on our time from our rhythms of life and working patterns.
- Screens and social media.
- Our own selfishness.
- A sense of the devil working against us.
- Which of these do you perceive to be the greatest threat in our world and why? What other factors contribute to the poverty of friendship in many people's lives?
- What are the best and worst things about social media and the new technologies that connect us in our world today?
- What have been the best ways you have found to prevent some of the factors we have explored from negatively impacting your relationships?

## Activity

### The Best of Amends

**Managing your tech** – consider the suggestions on page 67 around technology and ensuring we master it rather than allowing it to master us. Discuss them as a group and specifically talk about what impact the following suggestions might have on friendship:

- Mealtimes as phone free zones.
- 'Off-grid' holidays – disconnecting from technology when resting.
- Putting phones away when meeting with friends.
- Phone curfews, sabbaths and sabbaticals.

What other practices and rhythms have you tried?

## Response

The response in this session is to invite God to reveal to us the pressures our friendships are under and encourage us to do what we can to minimise their impact. To do this we will need the beautiful words of Psalm 139 and a drawing pin for each group member.

Give each participant a drawing pin and explain that it will represent the pressure(s) that we feel that our friendships are under. Then read Psalm 139:23–24 slowly, a couple of times, and invite

the group to spend some time listening in silence to God and ask Him to show them where the world, the flesh and the devil are inhibiting their friendships. Explain that the drawing pin represents the pressures we feel and invite each member of the group, when comfortable, to drop it into a bowl as a symbol of letting go of the pressure and giving it to God to help fight against it. Allow a few minutes of reflection for this activity and then pray to close. You may like to offer the opportunity for people to share and pray for individuals.

## Pray

Father, we recognise that it is not easy to follow You and friendship is one of the key battlegrounds of our spiritual walk. Please help us in our fight against the pressures we face, and may we overcome these challenges. Thank You too that we don't do this alone. Amen.

# Session 3

## Circles of friends – the inner circle

### Aim

**By the end of this session, group members should be able to:**

- Explore the model of circles of friends and consider the implications for their friendships.
- Consider the power of close friends on the mountaintops and in the valleys.
- Map out the current picture of their friendships in terms of their proximity and reflect on where they invest their relational time and energies.



### Before the session

Read: *The Best of Friends* chapters 3 and 5

### Recap

Remind the group of the themes of the previous session:

- Friendship is powerful and has immense benefits – we were created for it.
- Friendships are under attack from multiple sources – Christians call these ‘the world, the flesh and the devil.’
- Changing working patterns, new technology, our own selfishness, the enemy and circumstantial events all conspire to negatively impact our relationships with friends.

Ask the group if there’s anything in particular that they have reflected on or that resonated with them since last week’s session.

# Welcome

## 'Quit while you're ahead.'

Explain that this is a game to try and stop at the right time. You can play along with a packet of sweets or without. The format of the game is that one group member chooses to be the contestant and listens to a sequence of numbers being read out by another member of the group. They have to decide when to say 'STOP', before the word 'CRASH' is interjected into the sequence and have to 'bank' the number of sweets as they go, corresponding to the numbers being called out. If they don't shout 'STOP' in time and get to the end of the sequence and the word 'CRASH' is read out, then they lose everything. It's a game of knowing when to stop. If contestants stop too early, let them know afterwards how much they could have won.

- 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, CRASH
- 3, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22, CRASH
- 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, CRASH
- 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 25, 26, CRASH
- 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, CRASH
- 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, CRASH
- 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 22, 25, 26, 28, 31, 32, CRASH

Explain that this game is a tenuous link to the theme of this session which is about managing our relational capacity well and not over committing our time and resources – knowing when to stop.

## Discuss:

- What are the things in life that give you the most energy?
- What are the things that drain you most?

Anthropologist Robin Dunbar has found that the maximum amount of meaningful relationships we can have is around 150. He has then mapped that number inwards to find that the number of good friends we can have is around twelve and the number of close friends is three. There is a remarkable correlation with the relational connections of Jesus. These form the concentric circles that are a central theme to *The Best of Friends*.

It is a good thing to have different grades, levels, and depths of friendship. The reality is that we have limited time, bandwidth, and emotional energy. The temptation in our excess-ridden world is to take on more and more relationships that go far beyond our saturation point.

Jesus had a tight inner circle of three who He took with Him on the mountaintop of the transfiguration and into the depths of Gethsemane.

## Discuss:

- If mountaintops represent the highs of life; and the valleys, lows and plains represent the ordinary, mundane, everyday; where are you stood right now?
- “We have to grasp the uncomfortable nettle that Jesus did not treat all of His friends in the same way.” How does it make you feel to consider that Jesus excluded some of His disciples at times in order to invest in Peter, James and John? How can we navigate this well, so that we strike a similar balance?
- Think about the people who you know best. What were the key moments along the journey that helped you get to know them really well and develop a great friendship? What advice would you give to people who have plenty of mates, but want to be intentional about cultivating brilliant, deep friendships?
- Who are the first people you tell in a moment of celebration or desolation? Have you ever got in trouble for announcing some news in the wrong order? Do you know anyone who found something out on social media that they should have heard in person?

 Watch

Lament  
[eauk.it/lament-spoken-word](http://eauk.it/lament-spoken-word)



## Discuss:

- When you remember the pandemic, or a similarly challenging event for you personally, what did friends do that helped you get through this time?
- What is it about physical presence that makes such a difference to our relationships?

# Activity

## Draw your circles

Encourage the group to participate in this activity from page 141 of *The Best of Friends*.

Take a piece of paper and draw out the familiar concentric circles. Begin to think about the people in your life. As a memory aid, you may like to scroll through your contacts in your phone.

Populate the circles with the names of those who fit in the various layers. As you do, give thanks for them. When you have done this, take a look at how many names are in each circle. How close are the numbers to those in Jesus' circles? Which layers feel a little full? Where are there some gaps?

Next, prayerfully consider the names in front of you. Then consider if they are all in the right circle. There may be some in front of you who you would really like to get to know better. Draw an arrow next to these towards the centre of the circle, into the layer that you would like them to be in. Think especially carefully about your inner circles, especially if these areas are not as populated as you would like.

Then, there may be names in the inner three circles who you feel you need to be less intentional with. If you have double figures of people who regard you as their best friend, it's probably time to create some relational bandwidth for the sake of all of your relationships. You may also have drawn a few arrows into these circles and need to create some room. With these friends, draw an arrow away from the centre of the circle to the appropriate layer. This will feel difficult, harsh even, but you are not cancelling the friendship, you are creating emotional capacity to invest more wisely and fruitfully in other friendships. Next, write a list of the friends with arrows next to their name and, using all of the practical tips that you have covered in the book so far, consider how you might be intentional about developing those relationships. Maybe some friendships need intensifying, whereas others might need you to sensitively and gradually begin to decrease the energy and time you invest in them.

## Response



### Read

Philemon 4–7

In this passage, Paul remembers how grateful he is for his friend Philemon. Encourage the group to take a moment to spend some time looking at their circles and giving thanks for the people God has put in their lives. Verse 7 says, "Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints." Group members could use these words or write their own to express their gratitude for their inner circle and beyond.

### Pray

Father, thank You that You model close friendship with us. You are the God of the universe and yet You choose to draw near to us. Give us wisdom and grace to know who to be more intentional with and the discipline to prevent overcommitting ourselves. We thank You that You are with us in the highs and lows of life, but we are also so grateful that You give us good friends to be there too. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Session 4

## Circles of friends – the huddle

### Aim

**By the end of this session, group members should be able to:**

- Understand the importance of the huddle – those friends that are good but not great.
- Reflect on the diversity of their circles of friends and be challenged to form bridging friendships with those who are different as well as bonding friendships with those they have lots in common with.
- Consider ways to develop this circle and especially how to connect with and cultivate relationships with people who are different.



### Before the session

Read: *The Best of Friends* chapter 6

### Recap

So far, we have explored the power of friendship, the pressures on it, and the inner circle of friendships. In the last session we discussed how the inner circle are particularly important as those we invest the most time and presence in, and those who we need in the best and worst seasons of life.

Ask the group if there's anything in particular that they have reflected on or that has resonated with them since last week's session.

# Welcome

## Would you rather...

- Wear summer clothes in winter; or winter clothes in summer?
- Eat chocolate and tuna flavoured cake; or mint and mustard ice cream?
- Be able to speak to animals, but not able to eat them; or able to speak every language, but eat no international food (Italian, Indian, Chinese etc)?
- For the rest of your life: go on holidays alone to anywhere in the world; or go on holidays and take unlimited people with you to the same UK seaside town?
- Never celebrate Christmas again, but have three-day weekends; or never celebrate a birthday again, but have a week off every month?

Each of these questions contain a blended mix of ideals and challenges. This session is about the next circle of friends in our lives and as we will see, an emphasis is on the mix in our friendship groups.



## Bible

Matthew 10:1–8

## Discuss:

- After reading the passage and the profiles of the Twelve on pages 93–95 of *The Best of Friends*, what strikes you most about the people Jesus chose to be His closest companions? What encourages you the most? What surprises you?
- Beyond the innermost circle, what are the benefits you have found of having friends in the 'huddle' and the network? How do you maintain these relationships? What level of significance do they play in your life?
- Talk about a friendship with someone who you have lots in common with. How did it develop? Then talk about a friendship with someone you have less in common with, what are the differences in how it grew? What are the blessings and challenges of both kinds?
- Where do you observe the deepest divisions between people groups in the world around you? How have these improved or deteriorated in recent years?
- How might friendships with people who are different from us make a difference in society and in our communities? How can church play a part in making this happen?





## Watch

Don't put people in boxes  
[eauk.it/dont-put-people-in-boxes](http://eauk.it/dont-put-people-in-boxes)



# Activity

## The best of amends

The focus of the practical advice in this session is ways to widen your friendship circles and build your connections. Read out the following suggestions and ask what participants think about them, whether they could try them or tailor them to make new friends.

- **Pub Club** – The comedian Max Dickins wrote a book about male friendship, because he realised the main reason he hadn't asked his girlfriend to marry him is that he didn't have a friend he was close enough to, to invite to be his best man. One of the recommendations in his book *Billy No Mates* is to host a 'pub club' or something similar, where you let your friends know you will be somewhere at a certain time and just encourage them to show up for a drink and a chat.
- **RSVP** – On page 126 of *The Best of Friends*, Phil talks about his tendency to default to finding excuses when invited to gatherings that might push him out of his comfort zone, especially when there will be people there he doesn't know. How do you feel about having a mindset that occasionally accepts these kinds of invites to widen your circles and grow your friend-making muscles?
- **Walk across the room** – When in a social gathering or at the end of church, the most natural thing to do is to gravitate towards the people you know well. There is nothing wrong with this, but sometimes, it is a good thing to intentionally start a conversation with someone you know less well. Discuss.
- **Open circles** – This is a simple, practical idea. When stood in a group, always leave space at the edge of the circle for those looking to join. Closed circles of people talking communicate that there is no room for another participant. Try to position your body in these circles to welcome newcomers.

# Response

Heaven is going to be full of people from 'every tribe, nation and tongue'. It's probably a good idea to begin to get used to that now. The beautiful tapestry of diversity that God has created points forward to our eternal future.

 **Read**

Revelation 7:9–12

As you do, encourage group members to reflect and be inspired by Heaven's future of reconciliation with both God and each other and the stunning picture of unity as tribalism is laid down before the throne of the King who holds us together.

## Pray

Father, thank You that You are the God of every tribe, nation, tongue, age and story. We celebrate the diversity of the people You have made. Help us in our friendships to bridge some of the divides in our society and be the antidote to a divided world. Forgive us when we have treated people unfairly because of external appearances and internal differences. May we be joyfully welcoming and Christlike in building bridges and making friends with those we have less in common with. May this be good news and a powerful demonstration of the gospel to those around us. Amen.

# Session 5

## Intergenerational friendship / friendship with God

### Aim

**By the end of this session, group members should be able to:**

- Celebrate the power of intergenerational friendship and be challenged to invest in connections with those older and younger.
- Be encouraged and challenged in their most important friendship.
- Consider how to prioritise and cultivate their relationship with God.



### Before the session

Read: *The Best of Friends* chapters 9 and 10

### Recap

So far in these sessions we have:

- Celebrated the power of friendship and explored practical ways to make friends.
- Considered the pressure on our relationships and asked how we can fight against the challenges.
- Explored the model of friendship in circles, the need for deep friendship, discerning friendship and diverse friendship.

# Welcome

Buy a box of Cadbury's chocolate Heroes in advance of the session. Explain that one aspect of this session considers those further down the track of life and the heroes of the faith in our lives. To break the ice, pass around the treats. Participants are going to take it in turns to take a chocolate from the box/tin without looking and do a corresponding action. When you pick the following chocolate, here's what you must do:

- **Dairy Milk** – Describe your favourite order in a coffee shop.
- **Caramel** – Either put the chocolate on your forehead and attempt to wiggle it down to your mouth without handling it or throw it in the air and catch it in your mouth.
- **Double Decker** – Tell the group two things that have been helpful as a result of these sessions.
- **Crunchie** – Either describe your most awkward moment or do 10 sit ups.
- **Twirl** – Either tell the group your most embarrassing habit or spin around 10 times and walk across the room.
- **Wispa** – Send a 'Chinese whisper' around the group. See how it comes back when it returns to you.
- **Creme Egg** – Hold the Creme Egg chocolate in your mouth without chewing or swallowing it until everyone else has taken a turn.
- **Fudge** – Tell the group two truths and a lie. They have to guess the 'fudge'.
- **Eclair** – Describe the most generous thing anyone has ever done for you



## Bible

Exodus 18:1–27

### Discuss:

- If you could meet any hero (not from the Bible), from history or fiction, who would you meet and why?
- How have you observed the divisions between young and old in your life? Why do you think they exist? What can we do as a society and as a church to increase connections across the generations?
- In the passage, the intervention of Jethro in Moses' life is a significant moment of gathering wisdom at a formative stage in his leadership. Talk about a time when someone older than you invested in you and the difference it made.

cont...

- What practical tips would you give to someone seeking to get to know someone of a different age and at a different stage of life?
- “What we think about when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” What do you think about when you think about God? How does seeing God through the lens of friendship affect that view?
- What are the habits you have found helpful in deepening your relationship with God? How have they changed during the time you have known Him?



## Watch

Shoulders  
eauk.it/shoulders



## Activity

### Thank a hero

Many of those who have invested in us over the years have no idea of the impact their investment has made. Explain that we are going to take a few minutes of silence or play some instrumental worship music to reflect on those who have had a significant impact in our lives. Invite group members to think about parents, youth workers, church leaders, teachers, mentors etc. Once this is done ask the group to consider who came to mind and how they might thank them if they are still in contact. Encourage them to commit to doing something there and then – it might be as simple as a text, writing a letter, buying a gift, giving them a call or telling them face to face. You might like to consider a tangible way of committing to this, for example, asking the group to write the name(s) of their person and the thankful action on a post-it note as a reminder.

## Response

Encourage the group to quieten their hearts. Read [John 15:9–17](#) slowly three times. Perhaps ask a few people to take turns reading it to the group. Consider using different translations. The first time, just allow the passage to wash over them. The second time, encourage people to listen out for a key word or phrase that shimmers or stands out to them. The third time, ask the group to individually ask God what one thing He is encouraging them to respond to, from the words of Jesus in this passage. Invite group members to share their answers, if they wish to.

Read this passage from page 161–162 of *The Best of Friends*.

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:13)

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the definitive moment in history. It is also the game changing moment for friendship. He exemplifies what it looks like for us and enables it to happen with God. As His arms are outstretched in self-sacrifice on a cruel wooden cross, Jesus is the epitome of true friendship. As His soul cries, "It is finished," Jesus absorbs the power of our sin and selfishness, meaning that reconciliation and relationship are possible with the King of the universe. And when crucifixion cannot contain Him, when death is defeated and dare not destroy Him, His resurrection invites us to a new life, free from our frailties and failings, and relationships are reborn.

## Prayer

Father, thank You that before You call us to be friends with each other, You extend the extraordinary offer of friendship from Your heart to ours. We are so grateful for the gift of relationship with You and also with each other. May we reflect well on what You have taught us through these sessions and strive to lay our lives down for one another. In the years ahead of us may our friendships reflect Jesus in intentionality, self-sacrifice and grace. Help us to be the best of friends. Amen.