

BECOMING  
HEART  
SISTERS



A Bible Study on  
Authentic Friendships

NATALIE CHAMBERS SNAPP

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Abingdon Women / Nashville

**Becoming Heart Sisters**  
**A Bible Study on Authentic Friendships**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Natalie Chambers Snapp** is an author, blogger, and speaker who describes herself first and foremost as a follower of Jesus, then wife to Jason, and mom to one spunky daughter and two spirited sons with a whole lot of energy. Not choosing to follow Jesus until the age of twenty-seven, she is passionate about sharing the grace, mercy, and truth of God's love regardless of your track record. Her authentic approach to life and faith is both refreshing and endearing. She is the author of *Heart Sisters: Be the Friend You Want to Have* and has written for various blogs and online devotionals, including Proverbs 31, as well as The Mothers of Boys Society, Whatever Girls Ministry, and Group Publishing. She lives in the Midwest with her crew and writes about faith in the everyday mundane.

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# INTRODUCTION

In today's world of technological advancements, we are more connected than ever before, but we struggle to *feel* connected. From the false intimacy of social media to our fast-paced lifestyles and increased mobility that results in the transplanting of families, there are many challenges to developing meaningful friendships today. If that isn't enough to keep us from seeking and investing in genuine relationships, there often is another challenge: conflict.

Conflict is a common obstacle for many of us when it comes to navigating friendships with other women. As I have conducted research for a book and now this study on friendship, so many women have sent me heartfelt messages filled with sadness, frustration, and despair over friend breakups and other relational conflict. When we have been hurt in relationships, we can be tempted to give up on friendship and “go it alone.” I've been there myself.

There was a time when I told God that I was done with female friends, reassuring myself that my family would be enough because it was just too difficult (and painful) to have girlfriends. The challenges and conflicts I had experienced in past relationships—in addition to the everyday obstacles of a busy life and full schedule—made me reluctant to take risks and try again. But deep down, I knew I needed girlfriends. I knew God created us for relationship—with Himself and with other people—and I knew this includes relationships with other women. I knew that friendships with other women are as important to our mental, physical, and spiritual health as rest, exercise, and prayer. So I cautiously stuck my toes in the waters of friendship again, and with God's help and the guidance of the Scriptures, I rediscovered how to cultivate authentic friendships.

I can honestly say that these authentic relationships with other women are one of the richest blessings I've ever received from God. I adore my husband, and my children are proof of God's goodness and mercy; but there is no substitute for the gift of genuine girlfriends. I call them “Heart Sisters”—those friends who carry me when I can't walk, speak truth when I'm believing lies, and make me laugh when all I want to do is cry. Though we are not related by blood, we are like family—sisters united by a deep connection of the heart.

Heart Sisters truly are a “good and perfect gift...from the Father” (James 1:17 NIV), and He wants to bless each and every one of us with this gift. Whether you are longing to have authentic friendships of your own, struggling to balance friendship with everyday life, navigating a hurt or conflict with a friend, or simply wanting to enrich or deepen existing relationships with other women, this study will lead you in a deep exploration of timeless truths in the Old and New Testaments that will help you to develop the kind of enriching and satisfying friendships that build up the body of Christ and bring honor to God.

As we dig into God’s Word together week by week, we will explore these topics:

1. Why Do We Need Girlfriends and Where Do We Find Them?  
Understanding Our Need for Friendship with Other Women  
(Lessons from *Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 2 Samuel, Proverbs, Matthew, Luke, John*)
2. Getting Right with God: Addressing Spiritual Issues that Affect Friendship  
(Lessons from *Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Obadiah, John, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, 2 Timothy, James, 1 Peter, 1 John*)
3. Clash of the Titans: Honoring God Through Relational Conflict  
(Lessons from *Genesis, Leviticus, 2 Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Matthew, Mark, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, 2 Timothy, James, 1 Peter, 1 John*)
4. The Forgiveness Business: Letting Go and Being Free  
(Lessons from *Genesis, Lamentations, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, Psalms, Isaiah, Matthew, Luke, John, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 1 John, Revelation*)
5. Blurred Lines: Establishing Healthy Boundaries  
(Lessons from *2 Samuel, Psalms, Proverbs, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Timothy, James*)
6. Heart Sisters Do’s and Don’ts: Putting It All into Practice  
(Lessons from *Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 Samuel, 2 Kings, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Matthew, Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Hebrews, James*)

By learning to cultivate God-honoring relationships, we will become more like Christ and demonstrate to a broken world His selfless, authentic love. And there’s no question that our world today needs to see and know the love of Christ!

## **Options for Study**

I love to study the Bible. I love topical studies grounded in solid, in-depth study of the Scriptures (which is my approach here), and studies of specific books of the

Bible. I love workbooks and good, old-fashioned handouts. I love DVD teachings and lessons led by an in-the-flesh Bible teacher. Just as there are a variety of spiritual gifts, there are a variety of approaches to Bible study—all originating from the same Spirit, and all having value and purpose. I also know that regardless of the Bible study we are doing with our group at a particular time, many of us will find ourselves in different seasons of life; and these seasons determine how much time we can contribute to the study. Like anything else, what you put into a study determines what you get out of it, but sometimes we can only do so much, right? Knowing this, I've designed this study so that you can make the level of commitment that best fits your current season or circumstances.

Essentially, you have three options for your participation in this study:

**1. Basic Study:** This includes five daily lessons for each week. Each lesson combines study of Scripture with personal reflection and application (boldface type indicates write-in-the-book questions and activities) and ends with a “Turning to God” prayer suggestion. In the margins you’ll find some “Fun Facts,” Scriptures, and highlights from the lessons. Before you begin each week’s lessons, be sure to check out “Just Between Us” for my thoughts about the main theme we will be exploring together. Each lesson should take about twenty minutes to complete. When you gather with your group to review each week’s material, you will watch a video and discuss all that you are learning.

**2. Deeper Study:** This level is for those who want more than just the basic study. Each week includes a memory verse, as well as several Scripture Challenges in the margins, which prompt you to dig a little deeper into the Scriptures.

**3. Lighter Commitment:** If the basic study feels too much for you, there is no condemnation! We’ve all lived through seasons in which the time we have available for study is not as much as we’d like. God will still teach you and bless you with what He wants you to know regardless of your commitment level. Offer grace to yourself!

Will you please take a moment and pray over which option is the best fit for you? When you’ve determined your level of participation, please fill in the circle next to each option God is nudging you to complete. Next, share your choices with someone in your group so that you will have some accountability and encouragement to keep going.

- Prioritize group sessions. Watch the video and engage in discussion.
- Complete as much of the homework as you can between sessions.
- Complete all five days of homework between sessions.

- Memorize a weekly memory verse.
- Complete the “Scripture Challenges” as directed.

## **Encouragement Before We Begin**

Perhaps you are familiar with the popular “Starfish Story.” Here is my adaptation.

A man was walking along the beach one morning after a storm. He noticed a young woman standing near the shore, picking up starfish and throwing them back into the ocean. “Why are you throwing the starfish into the ocean?” the man asked. “The tide is going out, and if I do not throw them in, they will die,” the young woman answered.

“But there are miles of beach and thousands of starfish. You cannot possibly make a difference!” the man replied.

The young woman listened politely, bent down to pick up another starfish, and said, “It will make a difference to this one.”

The key to building up the body of Christ through authentic friendships—and influencing the watching world—is you. Like the young woman saving the starfish, we can focus on one authentic relationship at a time. And as we learn to love our friends—and others in general—we will be demonstrating the love of Christ and encouraging others to love as He loved. Before we know it, we can start a movement of loving, authentic relationships that will have a ripple effect, bringing much-needed change in a distracted and broken world. That change begins with you and me. So let’s get started!

*Natalie*



## Week 1

# WHY DO WE NEED GIRLFRIENDS AND WHERE DO WE FIND THEM?

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UNDERSTANDING OUR NEED FOR  
FRIENDSHIP WITH OTHER WOMEN

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### Memory Verse

*Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

*(Matthew 22:37-40 NIV)*

## Just Between Us

What do you think of when you hear the phrase “Love one another”? Does it conjure up warm, fuzzy feelings, or does it slightly terrify you? It’s likely a combination of both.

I have an eleven-year-old daughter and two elementary-school-aged sons. The love I feel for them is warm and fuzzy, yet it’s also terrifying. Who knew you could love someone so fiercely? In full disclosure, I also have those days in which I completely understand why some species of animals eat their young. The moments of bickering over trivial details and who gets more of what is enough to make me want to wave the white flag of parenting and run away to a deserted island in the tropics.

While I know my children are good kids, I also have learned so much about the natural bent of human beings by watching them interact. Since the fall of humankind, we’ve struggled with what some call a “sin nature.” Do you agree that we sometimes prioritize our own needs over those of others? Have you ever caught yourself trying to convince someone else to do something because it benefits you? Have you seen T-shirts for children declaring phrases such as “It’s All About Me”? We can be a very self-centered lot.

But that isn’t how Jesus wants us to live, and His way—the way of love—is much more difficult than it sounds. Who knew loving others could be so hard? Thankfully, God made us all wonderfully unique. He created us to have different desires, interests, opinions, and dreams. While these differences are part of what makes this world such an interesting place, they’re also the reason for relational conflict; and sometimes we don’t handle those conflicts with love.

Jesus is quite clear in Matthew 22: Love God above all else and love your neighbor as yourself. It really is that simple. Notice He didn’t add “unless” at the end of the second commandment. He didn’t say, “Love your neighbor—unless she (or he) doesn’t agree with you.” He didn’t say, “Love your neighbor—unless she (or he) doesn’t believe what you believe.” Jesus said, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Period.

We have to be in relationship with other people in order to love them. According to 1 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV), love “does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.” Does this convict you like it does me, sister? Authentic and meaningful friendships are one way we can love each other—regardless of our differences. This week we will consider why authentic friendships with other women are so important—not only to fulfill Jesus’ command but also to meet some very basic needs. Friend, we were created to have Heart Sisters!

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## DAY 1: MADE TO RELATE

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I once read somewhere that men typically feel most successful when they enjoy their occupations and are providing well for their families. On the other hand, women tend to feel most successful when their relationships are healthy and there is peace among the people in their lives. Although this is a generalization and does not apply to all, it seems to be fairly accurate according to my own observation. It really should come as no surprise to any of us who have read the creation story in Genesis. Adam was tasked with taking care of the garden while Eve was created to be in relationship with Adam. Let's take a look at the story.

**Read Genesis 2:5-15 and answer the following questions.**

**At the beginning of the account, why had God not yet created vegetation? (vv. 5-6)**

**What do we learn in verse 7 that God created?**

**What did God create after He placed Adam in the garden? (vv. 8-9)**

**What did God place Adam in the garden of Eden to do? (v. 15)**

Adam was created to work and care for the land. It's no wonder men tend to derive more of a sense of success from their work. This is how they were created!

**Now read Genesis 2:18-25 and answer the following questions.  
According to verses 18 and 19, what did God observe, and how did  
He attempt to remedy this?**

**What does the second half of verse 20 tell us?**

**How did God create Eve? (vv. 21-22)**

Eve was created from Adam because no suitable helper could be found. In other words, she was created to be in relationship with Adam because the wild animals just weren't cutting it. I believe this is why we women often feel distress when we're faced with a relational conflict or when those we love are at odds with one another. Because we were created to be in relationship with others, we can feel as if we're going to break when our relationships start to crumble.

Of course, God's purpose in creating men involves much more than work, and His purpose in creating women involves much more than being in relationship with others. In all that we do and above all else, both men and women were created to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7).

**Read Genesis 10:32 in the margin. What happened after the Flood?**

After the Flood, the only people who survived were Noah and his family. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. From these three sons came many offspring, and eventually it became a little too crowded for everyone to live in the same land. Therefore, the various families settled in different parts of the world so there would be enough land for them to live peacefully, as well as enough natural resources to meet the needs of the people. One specific tribe moved eastward and settled on a plain in Shinar.

*These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood.*

*(Genesis 10:32 NIV)*

**Read Genesis 11:3-9. What do you learn about these people in verses 3-4? Why did God want to confuse the people who were building the tower?**

If nothing were impossible for you, you would have no need for God, right? God saw that the pride among those building the tower was great. If they succeeded in their mission, they would blind themselves to the help and comfort God brings us and would be unable to glorify Him. And glorifying God—making Him known—is what God wants most for us to do.

There are many ways that we can glorify God. Yet when it comes to the ways we find fulfillment, work tends to be at the top of the list for men and relationships tend to be at the top of the list for women. This doesn't mean that women do not find fulfillment in work and men do not value relationships. It simply means that, generally speaking, we have these tendencies because that is how we were created.

We women have been supporting and encouraging one another for quite some time; this concept is nothing new. Unfortunately, we also have been competing and comparing ourselves to one another for quite some time—but we'll talk about that later in our study. Today we're going to examine a relationship between two friends in the Bible who model love and support: Elizabeth and Mary.

**Read Luke 1:26-38, paying particular attention to the details that stand out to you. Try to read these verses with new eyes, and ask God to reveal truths you haven't noticed in the past. What did you notice?**

Many scholars believe Mary was between twelve and fourteen years old. Now, I understand that teens back then were a little different from modern-day teens (no iPads, no social media, no phones)! Though she was a young girl who lacked in-depth knowledge of the world, she was betrothed to marry Joseph. In Jewish culture of the day, a betrothal represented a commitment almost as permanent as marriage; breaking this off would require a divorce. And did I mention she could legally be stoned to death for adultery?

Sure, she didn't commit adultery, but I think we all can agree that getting pregnant through the Holy Spirit might sound a bit outlandish to those in the community.

Mary was in need of a little comfort and truth.

**Read Luke 1:39-56. Where did Mary go after she was told of the plans God had for her?**

**What did Elizabeth say when she saw Mary, and what happened to the baby in her womb?**

**What did Mary do after she heard Elizabeth's encouraging words? How do you think she may have felt?**

Elizabeth's simple encouragement led Mary to compose the beautiful verses known as the Magnificat. In this song Mary glorifies God, truly accepting with peace the mission God has entrusted to her—all because of Elizabeth's encouraging words.

**How has a friend encouraged you in the past?**

**Who is someone you can encourage today?**

## **Fun Fact**

It is believed that Elizabeth was actually a distant cousin of Mary's and was significantly older. Friendship doesn't have to be limited by location and age!

## Never underestimate the power of the encouraging words you speak to the women in your life!

Never underestimate the power of the encouraging words you speak to the women in your life!

Just as Mary went straight to Elizabeth when she needed encouragement, Heart Sisters go to each other when they're feeling down and need a little pep talk. Possessing a mutual trust, they confide in each other, lift each other up by speaking truth, and help each other with the logistics of life. Elizabeth was not threatened by the fact that Mary was pregnant with the promised Messiah. Instead, she opened her home, her arms, and her heart to offer Mary comfort, encouragement, and love. Elizabeth was the ultimate Heart Sister to the mother of Jesus.

Just like Mary and Elizabeth, we all need Heart Sisters in our lives.

### Turning to God

To be loved and encouraged by our friends is a great blessing; however, to find a friend who not only loves and encourages us but also helps us to walk closer with God is a rare jewel indeed. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when he discovers that someone else believes in him and is willing to trust him." Ask God to show you how to be this kind of friend to your friends. Make some notes in the margin if you would like to share what you've heard from God with your group.

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## DAY 2: NOT JUST A "WANT"

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"I don't need girlfriends," she said, trying to mask the hurt I could see overtaking her pretty face. "I have my husband, and that's enough. I've been burned by women, so I just stay away," she further explained. While I understood what she was saying and could certainly identify with her feelings, I also know this leads to a very lonely existence.

I love my husband, but let's just say he doesn't always understand my thoughts and emotions because...well, he's not a woman—thankfully, of course.

A few days ago, some of my friends and I were standing around my kitchen. My husband, Jason, came home from work early and joined the conversation.

“Do you really think the grocery prices there are cheaper?” asked Jill. Jen chimed in with, “I don’t know, but I like their organic selection.”

“Do we really need to be eating organic or is it a hoax?” asked Rachel.

“I read online about the amount of pesticides on regular fruits and vegetables, so yes, I think so,” offered Katrina. Then we started talking about how you can’t always trust what you read online.

Jason was lost. He thought we were still talking about grocery prices at the store.

Now hear me out on this, sisters. I’m not saying my husband isn’t a smart man, because he’s brilliant (if I do say so myself). The thing is, just like a dog doesn’t know what it’s like to be a cat, a man doesn’t know what it’s like to be a woman—and vice versa.

This isn’t just my opinion, either. In their renowned nurses’ study, Harvard University found that women with strong networks of friends have biological as well as emotional advantages that women without these strong networks do not possess. According to the study’s findings, women with strong networks of friends have lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure, and lower resting heart rates. Here’s what shocked me the most: women without strong networks of friends pose the same risk to their health as smoking and being overweight.<sup>1</sup>

We don’t just *want* friends; we *need* friends. We were created to love. Loving relationships are at the heart of the gospel. That’s what we’re going to unpack today.

**Read Matthew 22:34-40.**

**What did Jesus say is the greatest commandment?**

**What did He say is the second-greatest commandment?**

**How do you think being in relationship with other women is an opportunity to love our neighbors as ourselves?**

Loving God and loving others are the two basic premises of Christianity. When we choose to follow Jesus, we are choosing to love God above all else and love one another. And one of the most effective ways to love one another as we love ourselves is to engage in healthy, authentic relationships.

Yet knowing *how* to love others can be confusing and downright frustrating at times, can't it? I once saw a quote that went something like this: "I could be a Christian if it wasn't for the people." Have you ever felt that way? Loving others sounds like it should be a simple task, but let's be real: sometimes it's not. Relationships can be a difficult road to navigate, but just because we might trip along the way does not mean we should stop walking! God teaches us some of His best lessons through the bumps we stumble over.

In fact, how we handle those bumps along the way makes others stand up and take notice of our character. First Peter 2:9 says, "You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light." Maintaining an attitude of strength and love while navigating a bumpy terrain—and even when the path is smooth—is an opportunity to show the world what we believe and why.

**Read Matthew 5:13 and complete this sentence: Jesus said, "You are the \_\_\_\_\_ of the earth."**

I admit that when I first read this Scripture, I was a little confused. I can purchase a large cylinder of salt for two dollars. How valuable is that? Turns out, very. In ancient times, salt was considered extremely rare and quite valuable. Because it often was used as currency, it was the reason for a few great conflicts. The great philosopher Homer called it a "divine substance."<sup>2</sup> Salt was set apart. Precious.

There are more uses for salt than just seasoning our food or melting the ice on our roads. In fact, the salt industry claims fourteen thousand different uses for these small pieces of the only consumable rock in existence. Salt can be used to remove stains from clothing, brighten up the colors of vegetables, seal cracks, extinguish grease fires, and kill poison ivy to name a few.<sup>3</sup> Salt is not only precious and valuable. It's useful. And we're called to be "salt," which means *we* are precious, valuable, and useful.

Salt also naturally brings out the good flavor in what we eat and preserves food from spoiling; likewise, we are to bring out the good flavor in others and keep them from spoiling. In this way, we are useful to God.

**Read Matthew 5:13 again, and fill in the blanks to complete the verse. (Your translation may be slightly different.)**

*“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, how can it be made salty  
again? It is \_\_\_\_\_,  
except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot” (NIV).*

Is it just me, or does this make you a little concerned about losing your flavor? And yes, there are days in which I feel like I’ve lost my flavor. There are certainly moments when I feel as if God might want to throw me out. Fortunately, God’s grace covers those less than favorable moments, and the truth is, He will *never* throw us out!

**Now let’s read Matthew 5:14-16. What else does Jesus say we are? And what are we supposed to do?**

Not only are we called to be salt—which means to be set apart, precious, valuable, and useful—but we’re also called to be light.

Like salt, there is a certain power in light, which we often take for granted. Light allows us to function after the sun goes down. It makes scary moments feel not as frightening. It produces a comforting glow. Figuratively, light illuminates the secrets we want to keep in the darkness, so that they lose their power over us. Light is even more powerful, illuminating darkness, reducing fear, and encouraging truth. But what happens when our light is hidden?

Sometimes people can see a joy in others, and it threatens them. For example, one of my friends is having a tough time being “set apart” among her long-time group of friends because she’s a new follower of Jesus and her friends are not. She dims her light by downplaying her faith, not living a life that is obviously set apart, because she doesn’t want to be different or seen as self-righteous—and I completely understand because I’ve been in that situation before. However, if we continue doing what we’ve always done, how will anyone know we are different and set apart? That doesn’t mean we should be self-righteous and act as if we’re “holier than thou,” but

## Dimming our light for the sake of belonging ultimately results in an extinguished flame.

it does mean we have a responsibility to show the world we know Jesus by being bold and unashamed in our faith. Dimming our light for the sake of belonging ultimately results in an extinguished flame.

**What are some ways you may be dimming your light? Check all that apply:**

- Spending time with people who don't make you feel good about who God created you to be.
- Believing lies about who the world says you are ("You're too much" or "You're not enough").
- Not speaking up when others are speaking negatively about someone else.
- Refusing to surrender pride because you want everyone to believe you have it all figured out.
- Using words to tear down rather than build up (gossiping, speaking ill of others, criticizing, etc.).
- Comparing yourself to others and being envious of what you don't have.
- Fearing rejection, failure, or judgment.
- Forgetting you've been forgiven and redeemed.

Salt and light. It's a bit of a tall order, sisters. We're called to be set apart, precious, valuable, useful, powerful, illuminating, fear-reducing, and truth-seeking—in *all* of our relationships. Now, if that isn't a definition of love, I don't know what is! But the best news of all is that we are not on our own; we have Christ within us, and He is the Light of the world! Shining our light and being salt—or set apart—is exactly what we're called to do.

Daniel 12:3 says, "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (NIV). Let's be wise and shine brightly, sisters! Let's love our friends well by showing them the authentic light of Jesus.

### Turning to God

Spend some time with God surrendering the stuff that dims your light. Ask Him to search your heart and reveal things you've never even realized were dimming your light, and then surrender those as well. On the lightbulb on the next page, write at least two ways you will shine for God this week. Examples could be striving to not speak negative thoughts or to see the brokenness of those who hurt you instead of immediately getting angry and defensive.



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## DAY 3: SEEK AND YOU WILL FIND

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Once upon a time, I thought I had to be best friends with everyone I came into contact with on any given day. From casual acquaintances to my closest friends, I mistakenly believed I was supposed to invest in all of those relationships. What I didn't quite understand at the time is that we all have just twenty-four hours each day. Figure in time to sleep, time to eat, time to do laundry (can I get an amen?), time to care for children, and time to work (whether you work outside of the home or not, you still work) and you're down to precious few hours. I ran myself ragged in an attempt to be there for everyone, and eventually it was the ones I love the most who suffered the most: my sweet family.

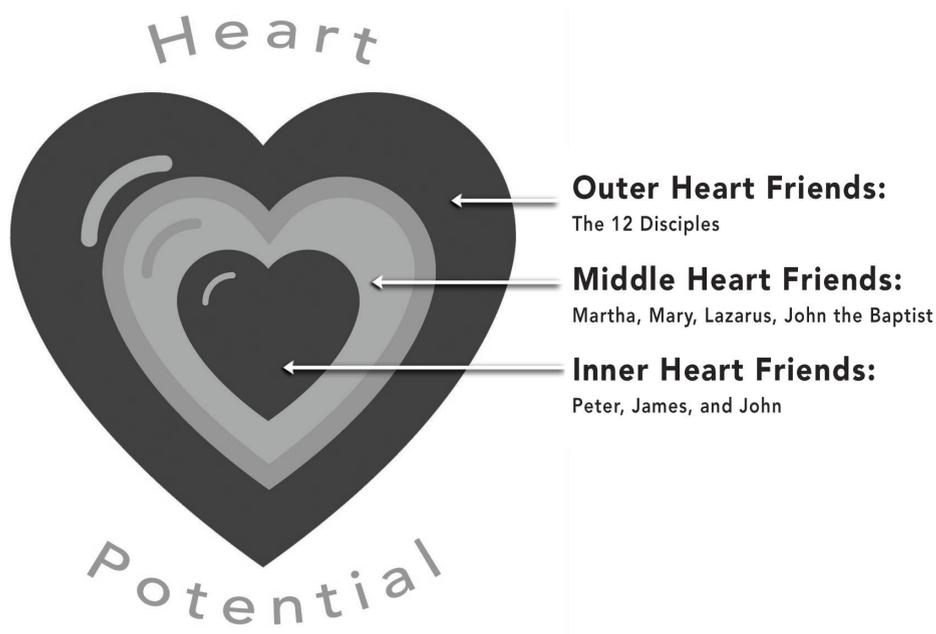
When you find yourself doing ministry and forgetting your first ministry, you've gotten it twisted, sister, and I was indeed one twisted sister.

## Fun Fact

Mary was the woman who poured the expensive oil on Jesus' feet just days before He was crucified (John 12:1-8). Pure nard was a powerful and aromatic oil, and experts believe it still would have been fragrant at the time of Jesus' death.

What I didn't know then but, thankfully, do now is that we can't be best friends with everyone. There simply aren't enough hours in the day. Within our Heart Sister relationships, there are three categories or levels: (1) Inner Heart Friends (our very closest friends), (2) Middle Heart Friends (close friends), and (3) Outer Heart Friends (good friends). The outer perimeter is labeled as "Heart Potential" because it's important to always keep our hearts open to new friendships.

Let's look at these three categories through the lens of the relationships of Someone we all know and love: Jesus.



Read Matthew 16:27-28 (NIV) and complete the verses below.  
(Your translation may be different.)

<sup>27</sup> "For the Son of Man \_\_\_\_\_ in  
his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person  
according to what they have done."

<sup>28</sup> "Truly I tell you, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ will not taste death before they see  
the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Jesus was speaking to the disciples about when He will eventually return to the earth. He then mentioned there were some among this group of disciples who would not have to wait until they died to see the glory of Jesus and the angels. As we learn in the next chapter of Matthew, Jesus would choose a few of his disciples to witness a special moment in which His glory would be revealed.

**Have you ever been chosen for something, such as a promotion at work or an award? Have you ever been a young person's chosen favorite? Have you ever been selected to participate in a special panel or discussion? If so, how did you feel to be chosen?**

**If not, what do you think it would feel like to be chosen? (And guess what? You *are* chosen—by God!)**

**Read Matthew 17:1-13. Why do you think the Transfiguration was a special and intimate time for Jesus?**

**Which of His disciples did Jesus choose to join him on the mountain? Write their names below:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Jesus chose Peter, James, and John to accompany Him to the mountain so that they could witness the moment of truth: Jesus' appearance literally changed into that of His heavenly glory. In fact, the Greek word *metemorphōthē* is used in Matthew 17:2 and means "an alteration in form"

## **Fun Fact**

Peter was the friend Jesus tasked with starting the early church (Matthew 16:18). John was the disciple Jesus loved and entrusted to care for his mother, Mary, after His death (19:26). James was John's brother, who was the first apostle to die for his faith (Acts 12:2).

## Fun Fact

James and John were nicknamed the “Sons of Thunder” by Jesus (Mark 3:17) because of their boisterous and sometimes fiery tempers. John later became known as the “Apostle of Love” because he preached so often about loving each other.<sup>5</sup> He started his relationship with Jesus as a “Son of Thunder,” and after many years of following Him, he became known for love. John was transformed through his relationship with Jesus, and we all are given this same opportunity!

or “to change outwardly and physically.”<sup>4</sup> Jesus trusted Peter, James, and John enough to reveal His true self, which proved He was who He said He was. He then asked them to keep it quiet.

Why did Jesus want to keep something so wonderful a secret? Jesus was strategic about what He revealed about Himself and to whom. Early in His ministry, He wanted others to hear His message more than He wanted them to be impressed with His healing abilities and divine nature. Yet Jesus wanted His closest friends to see Him for who He really was. Peter, James, and John were His closest friends—those He trusted completely. They were what I call Inner Heart Friends.

Jesus also had Middle Heart Friends. Middle Heart Friends are still close friends—they’re just not as intimate as Inner Heart Friends. Lazarus, Mary, and Martha are examples of Jesus’ Middle Heart Friends.

**Read Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-44; 12:1-8. Based on these accounts, how do we know Jesus was close to Lazarus, Mary, and Martha?**

**Do you most identify with Lazarus, Mary, or Martha? Why?**

**What is something you can learn from this person’s relationship with Jesus?**

Finally, the remaining nine disciples (minus John, James, and Peter) were Jesus’ Outer Heart Friends. Sure, He loved, trusted, and valued them as friends; however, in comparison to those individuals I have labeled His Middle and Inner Heart Friends (a comparison I am making based upon what I read in Scripture about those relationships), the other disciples’ relationship with Jesus does not appear to have been as close or intimate. However, no doubt as He spent time with them during his three-year ministry, teaching them and traveling with them, they developed a very strong bond.

Understanding these three categories of friendships gives us such freedom and grace. Once I was talking to a woman who said, “I don’t have time for any more friends, so I don’t really try to get to know anyone else.” Truthfully, I get it. As I mentioned earlier, we can’t be best friends with everyone because we have only so many hours in the day. Yet at the same time, we need to keep our hearts open to new relationships. If we fail to do so, we might deprive ourselves of some very meaningful friendships! We reach our full “Heart Potential” when we keep our hearts open to new relationships while allowing ourselves the freedom to have Outer, Middle, and Inner Heart Friends.

As someone who moved to a new community eight years ago, I’m so thankful my friends kept an open heart toward the new people they met, because I was one of those new people! Now I try to keep my heart open toward others, welcoming any new friendships that God might have planned for me. Whether we’re actively seeking new friendships or feeling content with the relationships we already have, the truth is that God always wants us to keep an open heart.

### **Turning to God**

As a recovering people pleaser, I’ve had to accept the reality that I can’t be everything to everyone, nor can I be best friends with everyone. The truth is, all that people-pleasing, wanting-to-be-best-friends-with-everyone stuff—it’s rooted in pride. Yes, ma’am. Pride. Ick.

When we try to please everyone, we’re trying to be everyone’s everything. However, there’s one small problem: only Jesus can be our everything. So when I try to be everything to everyone, I’m putting myself on level ground with Jesus.

Today, turn to God and tell Him you want Him to be your everything. Confess if you, like me, have tried to be everything to everyone, and release those you love into His care. Rest in your freedom, and let God do what God knows how to do.

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## DAY 4: IT TAKES ALL KINDS, PART 1

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When my daughter turned four, she was completely into cheerleading. She wore a red and white cheerleading uniform every single day without fail. (I should probably also note there was no way to clean said uniform because of all the sequins and glitter.) If anyone asked her what she

### **Scripture Challenge**

The Bible doesn’t say much about the relationship between Jesus and Lazarus, yet we are told that Lazarus was reclined at the table with Jesus (John 12:2). They were chummy! Explore other instances in the Bible in which body language communicates so much about Jesus’ relationships (for example, see John 13:23 and Luke 5:12-13).

**Whether we’re actively seeking new friendships or feeling content with the relationships we already have, the truth is that God always wants us to keep an open heart.**

wanted to be when she grew up, she quickly responded with “a professional cheerleader.” Naturally, I didn’t even have to ask her what kind of birthday cake she wanted.

At the urging of a few friends who claimed it was easy to make simple, cute birthday cakes, I decided I could probably handle it. I Googled “cheerleading cakes” and found a megaphone cake that could be made with a 9 × 13 pan and a donut as a handle.

Except my version didn’t turn out so cute, and it certainly wasn’t easy.

It would have been easy for my friend Laurie, because she’s a gifted cake and cookie decorator and knows what she’s doing. Me, on the other hand? Not so much. I now have no shame in purchasing my children’s birthday cakes because it’s better for us all. Cake decorating is not my thing!

We are all different with unique gifts, but there is at least one way we’re the same: *we all need each other.*

*As iron sharpens iron,  
so one person  
sharpens another.  
(Proverbs 27:17 NIV)*

**Read Proverbs 27:17 in the margin. What do we learn from this verse?**

We were all created with unique personalities that shape our perspectives and opinions. Just as the sharpening of one iron blade against another makes it more effective, close friends help sharpen our character and make us more effective. But what kinds of friends should we seek if we want to ensure we’ll be encouraged to grow in our faith?

Today and tomorrow we are going to learn about seven women of the Bible who represent the different types of friends we want to have with us on our faith journey: Rahab, Deborah, Bathsheba, Ruth, Naomi, Mary, and Elizabeth. I call them the “Super Seven Sisters.” We’ll examine different aspects of their personalities and what we can learn from each, and you can decide which one you identify with most. What kind of friend are you to others? What kinds of friends do you have? The “Super Seven Sisters” will help you identify just that.

While having a group of “Super Seven Sisters” is a goal we can work toward, there are no hard-and-fast rules here. Maybe your Martha friend is also your Mary friend. The quality of our friendships is more important than the quantity of friends we have. On the other hand, while you may not have seven close friends, it’s less than ideal to have just one girlfriend because she cannot be your everything. That could put too much pressure on her shoulders, and your friendship could suffer.

It's also possible to have a whole host of friends but none who walk closely with you—in sync with your heart. I've been in this situation before, and it's a lonely place to be. Though you may be surrounded by people often, having too many “surface” friendships can cause you to feel unheard, increase your desire to be known, and make you feel that something is missing in your relationships—you just might not know what that something is. Perhaps author Kim Culbertson said it best in her book *The Liberation of Max McTrue*: “People think being alone makes you lonely but I don't think that's true. Being surrounded by the wrong people is the loneliest thing in the world.”<sup>6</sup>

Surrounding yourself with the right people can literally change your life. So let's take a look at our “Super Seven Sisters,” beginning with the first three.

## 1. Rahab

**Read Joshua 2 and write four words you would use to describe Rahab. Then put a star by the quality you admire the most.**

1.

2.

3.

4.

**Why do you admire this quality?**

**Now read Joshua 6:22-25. What happened as a result of Rahab's courage?**

During the time of Rahab's story, Jericho was known as a corrupt city in the land of Canaan filled with idol worshippers. God had promised to one day give the land back to the Israelites when the “sin of the Amorites” reached

its “full measure” (Genesis 15:16 NIV). The Amorites were descended from the sons of Canaan. Apparently, Jericho had reached its full measure of sin! Whether or not Rahab possessed the wisdom to see that the two spies were on a mission from God that ultimately would achieve a greater good by delivering the Israelites back to the land they were once promised, she knew that the Lord had given them the land and that He was the God of heaven and earth (Joshua 2:8-11). So she chose to hide the spies, which resulted in her entire family being spared.

A “Rahab friend” is bold and courageous. She will speak for you when you can’t, and she will lovingly speak God’s truth if you aren’t living your life for God. She is willing to speak and act on truth while keeping your best interest a top priority—which is exactly what Rahab did, isn’t it? I like to think that Rahab was able to see the big picture, the greater good of defending the Israelites. Whether she had faith in their mission or simply reverent fear of their God, she possessed a stoic courage I so admire.

We need courage in today’s world, don’t you think? This is precisely why our Rahab friends are so important; we need women who are courageous enough to speak and act on the truth in love!

## **2. Deborah**

### **Read Judges 4:1-3. After the death of Ehud, what happened to the Israelites?**

During the period of the judges, the people were not yet united under one king. It was a time of extreme oppression for the Israelites, and Deborah proved to be a fearless and bold leader. Each tribe lived independently, and people who lived near these tribes sometimes took advantage of their vulnerability. Several tribes together would be too strong to attempt an attack; however, individual tribes were more susceptible to attack. During Deborah’s time, the Canaanite king Jabin of Hazor mercilessly oppressed the Jews, along with a brutal general named Sisera. Deborah remained true to God during this time, and the people flocked to her to hear words of wisdom and encouragement. Ultimately she came up with a plan to defeat the Canaanites.

Throughout their history, the Israelites had cycles of faithful obedience where they really seemed to understand God and how He works, followed by cycles of extreme despair and foolishness—sort of like me. Maybe you

can relate, too. Regardless, this was a period of intense hardship for the Israelites.

**Now read Judges 4:4-9. Is there something about Deborah or this glimpse of her story that resonates with you? If so, why?**

I'm guessing you discovered that a "Deborah friend" is bold, courageous, wise, and possesses strong leadership skills. When a crisis strikes, she will remain levelheaded and calm. She's also the first friend you'll seek when you're in need of wise counsel.

C. S. Lewis once said, "The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are."<sup>7</sup> When we can't know everything (and who can?), a Deborah friend can help.

### 3. Bathsheba

**Read 2 Samuel 11. We don't know much about Bathsheba's character at this point, but we do know she has experienced some challenging times. On the line below, create a timeline of the events described in 2 Samuel 11. The first and last have been added for you.**



I've always had a soft heart toward Bathsheba. During this period of time, if she had refused to go to King David—well, let's just say Uriah likely would have returned home to find a dead wife. Women didn't have many rights at that time, and most certainly, if the king summoned you, you weren't given much choice in the matter. Bathsheba wasn't being passive; she was being prudent.

**Read 2 Samuel 12:15-24. What was the consequence of David's sin? How do you think this impacted Bathsheba?**

## Fun Fact

Deborah was a prophetess—someone who spoke for God. There are ten identified female prophets in the Bible, showing that God values and loves His daughters and will speak through them regardless of gender!

## Scripture Challenge

Take a look at 1 Kings 1:1-31 to find out what bold action Bathsheba took years later on behalf of her son, Solomon.

**I'm certain God intends to mold us and make us more like his Son through our relationships.**

**How did the Lord show them grace?**

**How would you describe Bathsheba's character after reading these passages?**

Bathsheba walked through some trials, wouldn't you say? She's often portrayed as an adulteress, but again, she didn't have much of a choice in the matter. When the king summoned, you went—no questions asked! She lived through her husband's death and the death of a child—two unfathomable losses. Yet through both of those tragedies, she remained loyal, steadfast, and committed to the son she later conceived, Solomon.

In 1 Kings 1:15 we see further evidence of Bathsheba's courage and persistence through her insistence that a dying King David carry out his promise of crowning Solomon as the new king. Another of David's sons, Adonijah, had manipulated his way to the throne even though it had been promised to Solomon, and Bathsheba was having none of that! Hell hath no fury like a mama whose child has been scorned!

Bathsheba friends have walked through trials and lived to tell about them. In fact, it's their trials that have made them courageous, compassionate, and calm.

I love how God has created each of us to be so wonderfully unique. If we were all the same, no one would ever learn and grow, and the world would be such a boring place! I'm also so thankful for the array of personalities my Heart Sisters possess, because their differences offer unparalleled perspectives and insights I otherwise would not have uncovered. I believe the people in our lives are no accident. I'm certain God intends to mold us and make us more like his Son through our relationships. The diversity of our Heart Sisters is one way He does just that.

### **Turning to God**

Rahab, Deborah, and Bathsheba possessed traits that are pleasing to God—traits we can strive to develop in ourselves.

**Which of the traits we discussed today would you like to develop further in yourself? Write it below:**

Talk to God about what is stopping you from developing this trait and the help you need from God. For example, if you would like to develop more courage but fear is stopping you, talk to God about what you are afraid of and ask Him to give you the strength you need.

**Record your thoughts in the space below. Then read the definition of a breath prayer in the margin, and create a short breath prayer that you can recite whenever you need help with your desired trait.**

## **Fun Fact**

A breath prayer is a spiritual tool that can help you to center your thoughts on God and God's ever-present help. Choose a short phrase or Scripture prayer, saying the first part as you inhale and the second part as you exhale. For example, "Lord Jesus, be my strength."

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## DAY 5: IT TAKES ALL KINDS, PART 2

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When I was in high school, there was a group of girls who wanted to cut off my hair. I'm not kidding.

At the start of my freshman year, there were three girls who became the targets for the older girls' bullying. I was the lucky winner of one of those not-so-coveted spots. In between classes, I would rush to my locker, heart racing and palms sweaty, to retrieve my books for the next class and get on my merry way as fast as possible. I wish I were kidding when I tell you there were four girls who followed me during passing periods with long shears, walking intimidatingly behind my back as they opened and closed those sharp blades.

I was terrified.

After this had been happening for a few weeks, my friends Holly and Jennifer committed to show up at my locker in between classes to ensure I was safe and to calm my frazzled, steeped-in-fear nerves. And you know what? Their love, support, and loyalty were just the balm I needed to see this was a comma in my story, not a period. Commas tell readers to pause for a moment; the commas in our lives are pauses in which times might be hard, but the story isn't finished yet.

I can't help thinking of Holly and Jennifer when I think of Ruth—number four of our “Super Seven Sisters.” Let's continue our exploration of these women who represent the different types of friends we want to have with us on our faith journey. Because Ruth and Naomi's lives were intertwined, we will read their story through once and then revisit verses as we consider their traits separately.

#### **4. Ruth**

**Read all of Ruth 1. Then reread verses 16 through 19. What one word would you use to describe Ruth?**

**How does (or would) it make you feel to know you have someone who is unfalteringly loyal to you?**

I can't even begin to grasp the magnitude of Ruth's utter and complete unselfishness. After all, she was still young and could easily find a husband. She wasn't necessarily responsible for her mother-in-law. And it would be much more difficult to find a new husband with her mother-in-law in tow. There were many reasons why Ruth should have just cut her losses and moved on. Yet that is not what she did. Ruth chose the more difficult option because she was loyal and committed to honoring her mother-in-law.

A few years ago, our family had a conflict with another family that lived in our neighborhood. The situation was handled poorly on both sides, and the conflict still remains unresolved—much to my dismay. Another friend of mine shot down any rumors or unflattering comments that were made about our family because she knew the truth of what happened. This friend is a “Ruth friend”—loyal, unwavering, and committed to truth.

#### **5. Naomi**

**Reread Ruth 1:8-9. What one word would you use to describe Naomi?**

When I read the Book of Ruth, I am struck by Naomi's utter and complete selflessness. During biblical times, if you were a widow, your sons took care of you. However, both of Naomi's sons died, so she literally had no one. It's tempting to see this situation through our own eyes as women living in the twenty-first century and assume she could care for herself. Why couldn't she just get a job? Why couldn't she go to the bank and get a loan or draw from savings, if she had any?

That's not how it was during the times of Ruth and Naomi. Women didn't have the same rights, and their voices generally were not heard. They were considered second-class citizens, which means it would have been very difficult for her to earn a living. She also was too old to remarry. Naomi likely would have ended up as a beggar on the streets.

For Naomi to urge her daughters-in-law to go back to their family homes and find new husbands was the ultimate act of selflessness, wasn't it? Because Naomi loved Ruth and Orpah, she wanted what was best for them—even though it meant an uncertain and bleak future for herself.

**Reread Ruth 1:12. What did Naomi call her daughters-in-law? Why do you think she called them this?**

**Naomi had an intense love for these women who married her sons. Why do you think Naomi loved Orpah and Ruth so much?**

**Why do you think showing kindness is so powerful?**

**To whom can you show kindness today?**

A "Naomi friend" is loving and unselfish. She makes a great mentor because she likely has had more life experience than you've had, and she can offer insight, wisdom, and truth.

**Has a friend ever done something for you because it was what was best for you—even though she didn't benefit? If your mind is drawing a blank, I would encourage you to spend some time talking to God about this. Ask Him to reveal a time when you've been loved so selflessly by someone who was willing to lay down her needs for your own. Write—or draw—your thoughts below.**

May I issue you a challenge for today? Whoever came to your mind, take a moment to handwrite a note to that person (no e-mail, text, or phone call!), thanking her for her selflessness and love.

When my grandmother passed away years ago, I found a manila envelope of sweet notes she received from those she loved. I remember her telling me she would pull them out on the hard days. You know the ones: those days when you forget who you are and whose you are. The days when you believe the lies the world tells you. The days when you think you just can't do it anymore. I don't think we can ever fully understand the power of our handwritten words to those we love. They have the power to change the trajectory of our days and transform our hearts.

Take a moment today to encourage the one who loved you so well. Who knows? Maybe your note will end up in her envelope of encouragement!

## **6. Mary**

Ruth and Naomi weren't the only loyal and steadfast women in the Bible. Mary, the mother of Jesus, possessed so many redeeming qualities that it's difficult to list them all!

**Read Luke 1:26-38; 2:16-19; and John 19:25-26. Based on these accounts, how would you describe Mary?**

These Scriptures make Mary more human to me. As the mother of Jesus, Mary is rightfully exalted, revered, and respected. But we tend to put her on a pedestal and forget she was a young girl who eventually became a woman with a heart for her son, just like any other mother.

In Luke 2, we see that the word about the birth of the Messiah is quickly spreading, and Mary knows it. Before more visitors arrive and the pressure of mothering the Messiah sets in, including having to share her son with so many, we see that Mary “treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart” (v. 19 NIV). She treasured this quiet moment with her infant son so she could recall it later when the challenges came.

As a mother myself, I have mental snapshots of my children’s faces at younger ages frozen in my memory. When they’re adults, I know I will still see those faces. Like Mary, I treasure these things in my heart, too. I can relate to this Mary.

A “Mary friend” is a trustworthy prayer warrior. She’s steadfast and loving and has a strong desire to live a life pleasing to God. Even if you don’t communicate with her regularly, you know she’s always there for you, and you can pick up right where you left off.

## **7. Elizabeth**

We talked about the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth on Day 1, but now let’s look at Elizabeth and then reexamine her friendship with Mary through the lens of qualities we look for in a friend.

**Read Luke 1:1-25. What do we know about Elizabeth from verses 5 and 7?**

**How did her husband, Zechariah, react to the angel’s news of her pregnancy, and what happened to him as a result? (vv. 18, 20)**

**How was Elizabeth’s reaction to this news different from her husband’s reaction? (v. 25) What can we conclude about Elizabeth based on this?**

**Reread Luke 1:39-45, which we read on Day 1. How else would you describe Elizabeth?**

Elizabeth was a faithful woman who possessed the gift of encouragement. However, before we label her as a quiet and timid little mouse, let's read another part of her story.

**Read Luke 1:57-65. What do these verses further reveal about Elizabeth?**

Elizabeth was actually quite bold, wasn't she? Remember that during this time in history, women didn't speak up very often. Now, of course, Elizabeth probably had to do a little more speaking up since her husband, Zechariah, was unable to talk, but she still defied the cultural expectation to honor God's instructions. Not only are "Elizabeth friends" gifted encouragers but they also are committed to honoring and pleasing God.

Ruth, Naomi, Mary, and Elizabeth possessed traits that please God and help others to grow in their faith—traits we can strive to develop in ourselves.

**Which of the traits we discussed today would you like to develop further in yourself? Write it below:**

**Now, let's have some fun. For each of the "Super Seven Women," write the names of people you know who fit that description.**

**1. Rahab—bold, courageous**

**A Rahab friend will lovingly speak truth if you aren't living your life for God.**

**2. Deborah—strong leader, wise**

A Deborah friend remains calm when a crisis strikes. She also offers a wise, biblical perspective when advice is needed.

**3. Bathsheba—tough with just the right balance of grace and truth**

A Bathsheba friend has been through tough times and lived to tell about them. She'll walk through adversity with you and reassure you that good will come out of life's struggles.

**4. Ruth—loyal and true**

A Ruth friend is faithful and always on your side—no matter what!

**5. Naomi—selfless, loving, older**

A Naomi friend is older than you and can serve as your spiritual mentor.

**6. Mary—trustworthy, prayer warrior**

Even when you are not able to connect as often as you would like, a Mary friend is someone with whom you can always pick up right where you left off.

**7. Elizabeth—encourager, bold and obedient**

An Elizabeth friend is an earthly encourager who helps keep you going! She builds you up with pep talks and always points you back to truth.

Now put a star beside the woman who sounds the most like *you*!

Not only do our friends have different personality types, as represented by the “Super Seven Sisters” we’ve examined, they also fall into different categories or groups. I’ve observed that most of us seem to have at least five different categories of friends. This doesn’t mean we have all five of these categories of friends, so don’t feel like you’re lacking if you don’t! It just means that in this culture of social media and technology, relationships have evolved, making our connectivity far greater than it once was—for better or for worse!

**(1) Online friends** are people you might not know in real life but to whom you feel deeply connected. In our digital world, meeting friends through social media groups, blogs, and online book studies is not uncommon. **(2) Real-life friends** are the ones who will be there when you’ve been in bed with the flu for days and someone needs to feed your family. They’re the ones you meet for lunch and leave feeling refreshed and refueled. (Having online friends without real-life friends can feel very lonely.) **(3) Narrow path friends** are followers of Jesus who help to keep us on the narrow path that leads to God and discourages us from choosing the wide path the world offers. **(4) Mentor/mentee friends** are those who are mentoring us and those whom we are mentoring. **(5) Ministry/work friends** are the friends we know from working together in some capacity.

**List some of your friends in these categories:**

**1. Online friends**

**2. Real-life friends**

**3. Narrow path friends**

**4. Mentor/mentee friends**

## 5. Ministry/work friends

### **Do you think it is important to have friends in each of these categories? Why or why not?**

With all this talk about types and categories of friends, I'd like to end our week of study with an important word about cliques and tight-knit groups of friends. You see, there's a critical distinction between the two. Allow me to explain.

Cliques can indeed be very hurtful. I know this from experience, and I suspect you do, too. Is there anyone who has never felt excluded by a clique at some point? I doubt it. Yet sometimes we can be turned off by what we think is a clique of women but actually is a tight-knit group of friends. The difference is in how they welcome you.

A clique will make you feel less than. Sure, they might say hello during introductions, but that's about it, my friend. They won't ask you many questions about yourself, and they won't make any attempt to include you. On the other hand, a tight-knit group of friends might appear to be a clique to an outsider because they're close and they know one another well; however, they welcome new people by asking them questions about themselves, they work hard to make you feel welcome and included, and they will include you in plans they're making while together. It's important to recognize the difference between cliques and tight-knit groups of friends because incorrectly labeling a group of women as a clique might deprive you of some very dear Heart Sisters!

As we close today, I would like to remind us why we need Heart Sisters: to love one another. One way to love our neighbors as ourselves is to be in relationship with other people—but we can't be in relationship with other people if we isolate ourselves because of our own fear. God has made it clear that we were created to be in relationship. He has blessed us with women in our lives who possess different personalities, strengths, and weaknesses, and He has provided various avenues to connect with these women. Having authentic friendships is a symbiotic relationship—in other words, both parties benefit. God has known this from the beginning. So when we cultivate Heart Sisters in our lives, we are fulfilling God's plan for us. Yet another reason to be thankful for God and His all-knowing provision!

## Scripture Challenge

The Hebrew word *goel*, used to designate the kinsman-redeemer in the Bible, means one who delivers, rescues, or redeems property or people. In the story of Ruth, the kinsman-redeemer is Boaz.

To find further examples of kinsman-redeemers, read Leviticus 25:25-28; Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Ruth 3:1-4; and Matthew 22:23-28. Next, read Isaiah 43:1-7, which shows that God is our kinsman-redeemer who redeems us through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.

## Turning to God

Wow, we've covered quite a bit this week, haven't we? My prayer is that you have a deeper understanding of why we need female friends, appreciate the importance of having different kinds of friends, and feel hopeful—and expectant—about having close girlfriends.

**What is your main takeaway from this week of study? Spend some time asking God what He has for you, and then write or draw your thoughts below.**

# VIDEO VIEWER GUIDE: WEEK 1

## WHY DO WE NEED GIRLFRIENDS AND WHERE DO WE FIND THEM?

We were \_\_\_\_\_ for relationship.

*ezer kenegdo* – a helper of the same nature as God, providing strength and protection

God intends for us to have \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Mary Visits Elizabeth**

<sup>39</sup> *At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea,*  
<sup>40</sup> *where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth*  
*heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with*  
*the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women,*  
*and blessed is the child you will bear! <sup>43</sup> But why am I so favored, that the mother of*  
*my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my*  
*ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> Blessed is she who has believed that the*  
*Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"*

*(Luke 1:39-45 NIV)*

We \_\_\_\_\_ other women.

# VIDEO VIEWER GUIDE: WEEK 1

## The Two Greatest Commandments

*<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*

*(Matthew 22:37-39 NIV)*

\_\_\_\_\_ with other \_\_\_\_\_ is an opportunity to

live out Jesus' commandment to love others.

