



10 Dates

to foster

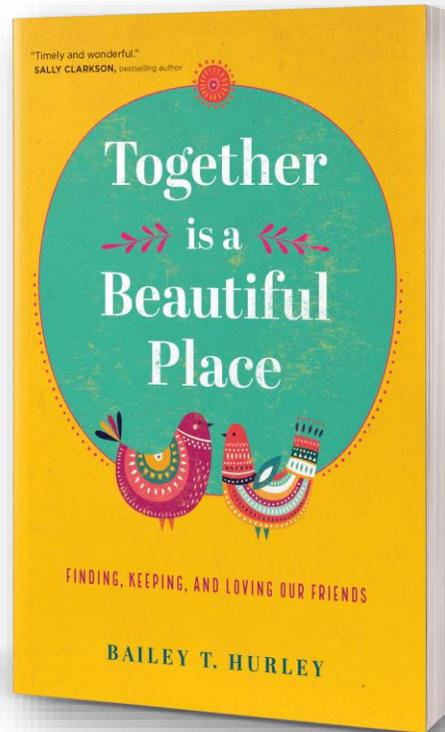
True Friendship



A TOGETHER IS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE
DISCUSSION GUIDE

BAILEY T. HURLEY

Together Is a Beautiful Place Discussion Guide



NavPress is the publishing ministry of The Navigators, an international Christian organization and leader in personal spiritual development. NavPress is committed to helping people grow spiritually and enjoy lives of meaning and hope through personal and group resources that are biblically rooted, culturally relevant, and highly practical.

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Dear Reader,

When my husband and I were dating, I found this book at my local seminary titled *Ten Dates Before I Say I Do*. With slight embarrassment, I brought it to the library-checkout guy, who proceeded to grill me about the specific subject of the book. “So . . . you’ve been seeing someone?” he asked with a sly grin. I told him I wanted to do my due diligence with such an important relationship. He nodded his head with approval.

Flash forward: The book became a favorite for me and my now-husband, Tim. Each chapter asked us questions about ourselves, giving us marriage topics to answer on our own and then providing a date prompt for us to follow. Sometimes it suggested going to the restaurant you visited on your first date to discuss the chapter. Or walk around our local zoo and find moments to sit and talk. It was like a guided book club. We loved it! Despite how nervous I was to ask Tim to go through the book with me, the experience was fruitful in helping us know each other better.

That premarital book was the inspiration for this companion guide for *Together Is a Beautiful Place*. If we spend so much time building into potential partners, why should we not be spending just as much time building into our friendships—relationships that are just as vital to our spiritual journey?

“Ten Dates to Foster True Friendship” is a guide for you to work through solo or with two or three friends. I’ll supply some gathering ideas for each discussion and questions that apply to the subject of each chapter in *Together Is a Beautiful Place*. And I promise this: **you will never regret getting people together and taking the time to truly know and thus truly love one another better.**

Bailey

Friend Date #1

WORTHY OF FRIENDSHIP



Friend Date: Get outside! Go for a walk, ride bikes, set up a picnic.

How many times have I talked myself out of a friendship because I thought I wasn't good enough or cool enough to be a part of the group? Too many times. Many of us women carry around friendship baggage that influences our ability to make friendships in the future. Sometimes it can be a rejection when we were very young, or the memory of being the subject of a joke at a slumber party that cause us to become timid as adults, afraid to share our real selves because our past taught us to doubt our likeability.

To move forward in being a friend, we must change the narrative we've been speaking over ourselves. If we don't, we will find ourselves stuck wondering why friendships never work out for us.

If you've felt like a failure at friendship, then check whether you've been believing a lie about yourself for so long that it feels true. Remind yourself you are worthy of friendship because God loves you and covers all your friendship mistakes and hurts, and He can heal the wounds of the friendship hurt done to you. God has invited you into his social circle through Jesus' life laid down for you, so you no longer need to believe you are unpopular, unaccepted, unliked, or unlovable. Jesus calls you friend, and anyone would be lucky to do the same.

Discuss Together

1. What negative thoughts recycle through your head about who you are as a friend?

2. Can you identify a friend experience gone wrong that has influenced your thoughts about making friends?

“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.”

2 Corinthians 10:4-6 ESV

3. How does this Scripture help you apply what you learned in this chapter?

4. In this chapter, Bailey writes: “Negative thoughts are waiting for their moment to strike. There will be many moments when this process feels like two steps forward and three steps back.” What will be your plan of attack when negative friendship thoughts come back?

Truth Takeaway: _____

Friend Date #2

FRIENDSHIP FILTERS



Friend Date: Pajama Party! Relive your teen days by taking magazine quizzes and sharing embarrassing stories. Invite your fellow readers over and take the *What Kind of Friend Are You?* Quiz. Make some classic junk food snacks and enjoy the fellowship.

“You are who you hang out with.”

My mom said this often when I was growing up. If I wanted to be a woman of character, then I needed to find the friends who were living lives I admired. Forget the ones who sought fleeting beauty and popularity. I needed to surround myself with kind, loyal, and fun-loving girls.

Now, as a wife, mother, and career woman, I think it’s easier to identify what type of friends I am looking to surround myself with. Are we in a similar life stage? Are they battling the same problems I am? Are they available and willing to put time into our friendship? In this chapter, we read a lot about different filters you can look for as you search for women of character. But remember, you have just as much influence in their lives as they do in yours. What kind of friend are you becoming? Take this quiz to get the conversation rolling.

Quiz: What Kind of Friend Are You?

These questions don't encompass every element of friendship, but they're a fun way to begin to identify what kind of friend you are!

1. When a friend has had a bad day you respond by . . .
 - a. Picking up her favorite Starbucks drink
 - b. Letting her vent and listening intently
 - c. Sharing your favorite quotes from a book for encouragement
 - d. Remind her there is a fresh new day tomorrow
2. When you are in a group of people you are typically looking to connect with . . .
 - a. The girl who is setting up all the snacks
 - b. The girl who is asking tough questions of those around her
 - c. The girl sitting in the corner by herself
 - d. The girl who is garnering the attention of the room
3. Which hashtag do you relate to the most?
 - a. #bekindandrewind
 - b. #maketodaycount
 - c. #brainsoverbeauty
 - d. #bestdayever
4. When picking out a birthday gift for a friend you might buy . . .
 - a. a coupon for a homemade dinner by you
 - b. a bungee jumping experience to cross off your bucket lists
 - c. books, books, books
 - d. tickets to a TedTalk
5. Friends often say you are . . .
 - a. servant-hearted
 - b. assertive
 - c. smart
 - d. bubbly
6. You are afraid your friends might . . .
 - a. abuse your kind-heartedness

- b. get mad at you for having strong opinions
- c. mark you as the quiet one
- d. think you can't be serious

7. When you've been hurt by a friend you might . . .

- a. be the first to seek peace
- b. get defensive and wait until she sees your side in the conflict
- c. journal all your thoughts and talking points before you share them
- d. give yourself a pep talk that everything will be alright tomorrow

If you answered mostly A, then you could be described as the . . .

The Servant

You are thoughtful and always looking for a way to make your friends' days easier. You are quick to offer help and will go out of your way to not inconvenience anybody. You are a good listener and take note of your friends' needs and plot in your schedule a way to meet them. When a friend is in crisis, you are the person they will call first because they know you are reliable. Though you love serving your friends, you worry that they think you are a pushover. Perhaps people have taken advantage of your kindness in the past, so you love when a friend shows her appreciation for all that you do. Don't forget: your needs matter too, and it's okay to voice them.

If you answered mostly B, then you could be described as the . . .

The Challenger

Every gal needs a friend that takes her out of her comfort zone—and that is when they text you. You are often nudging your friends to try new things because you genuinely want to see them grow. You are comfortable with a little conflict because a heated discussion fills you up; passionate discussions are your jam. Though you may be more stubborn about your strong ideas and opinions, your friends know that you care about them when you share your reasons for pushing them outside of their norm. Don't let your friends forget that you have a soft side, too. You don't like to share your true feelings often but when you do get vulnerable, it allows your friends to know the real you.

If you answered mostly C, then you could be described as the . . .

The Intellectual

You treat your friend's thoughts like they matter. You are deep, contemplative, and unafraid to jump right into the middle of a conversation by asking the right questions and intentionally listening to a friend's response. You typically read from different sources to create a more well-rounded belief on a topic, so your friends appreciate your addition to any conversation because

they know you have reflected thoughtfully on an issue that most remain passive about. Though you may like to stay home more than find yourself in the center of a party, your friends find your presence comforting because you bring a grounded presence to any social circle. Don't be afraid to be silly with your friends sometimes. Conversations are always a great way to grow your friendships, but shared experiences are important too.

If you answered mostly D, then you could be described as the . . .

The Cheerleader

When a friend is on the brink of a new idea, they reach out to you first because they know you will offer your full support. You won't easily squash a friend's ambition. Instead, you grab a posterboard and promise to stand at the finish line to celebrate all their hard work. You're enthusiastic about most things, and your friends find your joy and excitement contagious. People love having you around because you let your friends dream without limits—you allow your friends to believe the best things about themselves. When people are having a breakup or a bad day, they want you around as a voice for hope and encouragement. Don't forget to tell your friends that sometimes you have bad days, too. You have moments that you doubt yourself and wish you had a cheerleader to speak into your fears and insecurities. You don't have to hold it altogether, and your friends will appreciate coming to your side when you need their help.

No matter where you fall in these categories, you have unique gifts to share with your friends. Take a moment and recognize the women who have shaped you and supported you.

Take a moment to also reflect on the people who may have abused your kindness or discredited your unique personality. Perhaps the exercise reminded you of the type of friends you don't want to have. As you use the filters found in chapter two, you will quickly find yourself feeling free to let go of friends who were never meant to come alongside you.

Circle some friend qualities you'd like to grow in.

Acceptance

Bravery

Calmness

Charisma

Compassion

Confidence

Considerateness

Cooperativeness

Generosity

Happiness

Helpfulness

Honesty

Hopefulness

Humility

Imaginativeness

Inspiration

Joy

Kindness

Love

Loyalty

Organization
Outgoingness
Patience
Personability
Reflectiveness
Reliability
Respectfulness
Self-control

Sensitivity
Silliness
Thoughtfulness
Trustworthiness
Warmth
Wisdom

“There may never be a feeling of *I made it* when it comes to finding and making friends. People will move, friendships will end, or sometimes we simply grow apart and loneliness seeps back in. Your friendship *needs* will grow and change, which does not indicate you are having a friendship identity crisis; it just means *you* are growing and changing. There is freedom when we receive and release friends based on our life stage and the things we need in that stage.”

Together Is a Beautiful Place, pages 44-45

Discuss Together

1. How did this quote encourage you to understand the everchanging needs of your friendships?

2. What does the term *ghosting* mean to you? Have you been guilty of ghosting a friend? How would you handle the situation differently the next time?

Truth Takeaway: _____

Friend Date #3

DIY FRIENDSHIP



Friend Date: Do a DIY craft together (probably not dyeing ombre kitchen towels, lest you have my bad luck).

Whenever I think of DIY Friendship, I think of my neighbor Sara, who is a natural at initiating friendship and building a community around her. She moved to Denver right after she became a new mom and quickly began grabbing phone numbers and setting up playdates. I am just grateful to be one of the many women she encountered on a walk in the park and invited into her mom circle. She's inclusive, real, and great at bringing people together. She also benefits from all her hard work of creating a circle of friends. Instead of feeling lost and lonely in a new city, she was proactive about connecting with other women. Sara is a true friend-maker, even when she could have used being a new mom as an excuse to stay inside and "wish" for friends to mysteriously appear before her. Do you have a friend like this? May those women be an example of what it looks like to pursue others.

Discuss Together

1. What holds you back from taking the step forward to make friends?

2. Does understanding the commitment to friendship help or hurt your idea of what friendship will look like in your season?

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”
John 15:13 ESV

3. How does this verse change the way you think about loving your friends? How does Jesus’ pursuit of you inspire you to reach out to others?

Truth Takeaway: _____

Friend Date #4

NEVER TOO BUSY



Friend Date: The classic coffee shop date.

Do you feel like you are too busy to make time for friends? It's a tough spot to be in—you aren't sure where to find the time in the day, yet what could possibly be more important than your relationships?

Slowing down to make time for people really matters. But if we want to flourish in our friendships, we must be realistic. If you say you want to do five coffee dates a month with five new women, but you also work full time, are expecting your first baby, and you and your husband are on a pickleball team . . . maybe that's not a feasible goal. Instead, consider what would make friendship meaningful. Ask yourself, *Who is my priority right now and how can I plug them into my schedule?* #prioritizeyourpeople and make the small moments together count.

4. How does this Scripture help you apply what you learned in this chapter?

5. How do you struggle to trust God with your agenda? Where can your priorities shift to bring balance between friendships and other life obligations?

Truth Takeaway: _____

Friend Date #5

WHEN FRIENDSHIP DOESN'T MEASURE UP



Friend Date: Return to the place you first met as friends.

As someone who consistently wrestles with unmet expectations, I must keep myself in check when I begin to feel disappointment over the state of my friendships. When our expectations run wild, we end up in dangerous territory—considering giving up on a good friendship just because it doesn't look the way we thought it would. Our frustrations are not always without justification. For example, when someone in the friendship texts too much while the other person rarely texts back—it's not personal, it's just preference. We've all been there. We have varied capacities to communicate regularly and give time to each of our friends, so when a friend doesn't meet our expectations, there is bound to be some tension.

So, as we work through our expectations, let's remember to bring them to God and ask Him to highlight any unbiblical expectations for our friendships. Then in the light of truth, confess to your friends the areas you may have put unrealistic pressure on the friendship and agree to discover what friendship means to them (what expectations do they carry?). Now you can best meet each other in the middle and create a lasting friendship that works within those boundaries.

Discuss Together

- 1. Do you feel . . .
 - a. disappointed when everyday friends don't meet your expectations.
 - b. sometimes disappointed when everyday friends don't meet your expectations.
 - c. that your everyday friendships meet your expectations.

Explain your answer.

- 2. How has the media altered your expectations of how friendships are formed and maintained?

- 3. In what areas do you need to submit to God's view of ordinary but beautiful friendship?

4. Who is someone you may need to talk with about your friendship expectations?

Truth Takeaway: _____

Friend Date #6

FRIENDS FOR A SEASON



Friend Date: A letter M party. Everything at the party should start with the letter M. From music, to food, to games or gifts. Assign each person an item to bring and maybe even meet at an M location: museum, movies, Mexican restaurant, etc. Or choose an entirely different letter to center the theme of your friend date.

Change can either highlight a need to find new rhythms in your current friendships or shift your priorities to new friendships. I think there is something so beautiful about the way God brings people into your life at the right time to walk with you through things no one else could. But God also removes people from your life that you thought were going “all the way”—the ones you thought would be friends to the end. God sees the bigger picture and removes the friends that would hold you back from growing into the woman of God you are to become. Though we trust God, it can be hard, even regretful, to wonder if you did enough to save a lost friendship. But we have the freedom to recognize these *nostalgic* friends, the ones that were in your life for just a season, for the role they played and release them to what God has next.

And for the friends that you realize mean more to you than you thought—reaffirm them! Find a time to tell them how much you value them. Even though rhythms have changed in your life, remind them they are a person you care about, and you want to continue to tend to your friendship. These are *adaptive* friends, the ones who are willing to try new rhythms in your friendship because it is important to them to come alongside you through all of life.

Discuss Together

1. Bailey wrote, “When change happens, it costs us something.” How does this highlight our fear of change in our friendships?

2. Who are some nostalgic friends you’ve been holding onto unnecessarily?

Nostalgic

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3. Who are some adaptive friends you want to invest in long-term?

Adaptive

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

4. What new rhythms would you like to start in your friendships?

5. What comforts will this require you to sacrifice?

6. How will you make time for these rhythms? Plot one friend date right now in your calendar.

Truth Takeaway: _____

Friend Date #7

BETTER TO GIVE THAN TO RECIEVE



Friend Date: FaceTime check-in. When things get busy, and you wonder, *How will we ever finish our ten friend dates in a reasonable window of time?* Schedule time for a FaceTime date!

Giving to our friendships, knowing that there's a risk of the other person not reciprocating, is probably one of the hardest aspects of sharing life with others. We all enter friendships idealistically—we'll find an overabundant amount of time to spend together, begin to share memes over text, and in just a few months it will feel like we never knew life without the other person. But what if the friendship doesn't flow like that? What if a lot of the time, we feel like we are giving a lot and our friends aren't appreciating all we put into the friendship? When we reflect on our most important relationship—the one we have with God—I think we can see a model for an unbalanced relationship where God is always giving and providing more in the relationship than we will ever be capable of. This is because He is God. But, as followers of Jesus, we are to reflect the Kingdom of God, which means His economy for relationships will be a bit hard to comprehend and even harder to put into practice.

So, what is God's economy for relationships?

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Acts 20:35 ESV

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Philippians 2:3 ESV

It seems that giving is more valuable than receiving. (This is different from a friend who is

not reciprocating at all. This verse applies to friends who are equally providing value to the friendship but may have some imbalance in pursuing the friendship equally). I know the world tells us our friendships should all be about what others can do for us, but if any one of us has ever chased after a friendship like that, we know it's not sustainable or really that enjoyable. Instead, we find joy and share the love of Christ when we can give to our friendships without expecting anything in return. We can freely give to our friends because Jesus provides all we could ever want in a relationship.

Discuss Together

1. What's the first word that comes to mind when you hear the phrase "It is better to give than receive"? How does your response affect your view of giving in friendships?

2. Read Philippians 2:3-11. List three characteristics of Jesus described in this passage.

3. What does this teach you about God's friendship economy?

4. How can you discern a one-sided friendship versus a friendship that needs some expectation clarifications?

5. What are some of the practical steps Bailey discussed in this chapter that can help you move forward in a one-sided friendship?

Truth Takeaway: _____

Friend Date #8

STICKS AND STONES



Friend Date: Road trip...to Target, to a scenic spot, to a new place. Plan a playlist and bring along your questions.

I'd like to think mean girls disappear when you become an adult, but the playground just changes from the see-saw politics to social media. We can still find ourselves nitpicking, judging, and gossiping. We might post pictures of us at a birthday party, even knowing that it'll make someone else feel bad for not getting invited. As women who should find all our insecurities squashed in Jesus, we still can't help wanting to make ourselves look and feel better than the other women in our social circles.

Mean girls hurt *us*, but we need to make sure we don't forget our role in hurting others. We all need to reconcile our wrongs. We all need to put an end to gossiping and embarrassing one another out of spite. We all need to put aside our own pride to genuinely celebrate other women, even when they don't celebrate us. It isn't easy, but in Romans 12 we are taught to return unkind actions with kind ones:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another.

Romans 12:14-16

Instead of reveling in their sadness, mourn with them. Instead of withholding celebration because you're jealous, rejoice. We bless even when it feels impossible because we find our confidence in Jesus, not in what others have or have not done to us.

Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.

Romans 12:16

We should not align ourselves with those who are proud, only seeking attention for themselves, but with those who are humble and gentle.

Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”

Romans 12:16-18, 21 ESV

Unity is the ultimate goal in the family of God. May we aim to live honorably in the sight of our communities by always seeking to live peaceably with everyone.

Discuss Together

1. Read the following verses: Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:35; 1 Corinthians 16:14. What does the Bible say about treating those who mistreat you?

2. When friends mistreat you, how have you responded in the past? How would you like to respond differently in the future? How can you stand up for yourself while also being “above reproach”?

3. What are ways those mean-girl moments can turn into meaningful connections?

Truth Takeaway: _____

Friend Date #9

SHOW YOUR SWEAT STAINS



Friend Date: Take a drive, grab your favorite takeout food, blast your music, and discuss in the car.

Vulnerability—sharing my real thoughts and feelings with people I sense are safe—is the greatest fuel to my friendship fire. I can show up to a preschool mom’s brunch and easily gravitate towards the women who are being honest about their mom woes. It frees me up to share the things I’ve been struggling with as well, creating an instant point of connection. When my close friends share their honest requests for prayer over their marriage, I feel so privileged that they would share that with me. They trust me! What a good feeling—and that feeling gets reciprocated when we know we can trust them with our real self, too.

We all know vulnerability is important but are often too afraid to go first. It’s risky! But it is the right risk to take if we want to take a friendship and turn it into a transformational relationship. Friendship isn’t just for pillow talk and having someone to go to Justin Bieber concerts with . . . friendship is about finding women who make you more like Christ. We want more openness and honesty because we want friendships that sharpen one another. You need to be known to be looked after and cared for. Let’s get a little bold today and show our friends our sweat stains (and find some true friends who can tell us to get stronger deodorant).

Discuss Together

1. On a scale from 1-10 (1 being the most closed off; 10 being most open, almost TMI), how comfortable are you with practicing vulnerability?

2. What holds you back from being vulnerable?

3. How does your acceptance in Jesus help you open up with others even if you may be rejected?

4. When was the last time you felt safe in a friendship to share the hard stuff? What was it about this relationship that made you feel so comfortable to speak your truth?

5. How is vulnerability a gift to your friendships?

Truth Takeaway: _____

Friend Date #10

WRITE YOUR OWN FRIENDSHIP STORY



Friend Date: Sharing night. Create a safe space for each of you to share your own friendship story. Light candles, put on peaceful music, or find a spot that feels comfortable for you.

When I was in the early stages brainstorming *Together Is a Beautiful Place*, I thought, *How cool would it be to have a blank chapter for the reader to write their own friendship story and takeaway?* You have your own story, and you have walked away with some incredible lessons on friendship that deserve to be shared. Here is that space for your friendship story to be told. On these empty pages, reflect, share, and write your own friendship lesson. Feel free to share with your circle of friends or just keep for your own enjoyment.

You Did It!

You are a good friend because God is a good God. Crazy, right? But there isn't much about us that is good without Him. As you continue to pursue your people and care for others even on your worse day (and theirs), remember that Jesus has seen it all. Jesus knows what it is like to pursue people and have them turn their back on Him. He knows what it is like to have a trusted friend betray Him. But Jesus also knows the beauty of celebrating a meal with people He loves. He knows the importance of communities coming together and worshiping God. Jesus made it a priority to share life with others when He could easily have set himself apart from everyone else. He didn't really *need* the disciples, but He desired relationships. And then He loved so deeply that He chose to die on the cross, restoring our relationship with God so we could experience the richness of relationships just like the one He shares with us.

If you have struggled with friendship for a long time, consider choosing Jesus first and learning from His example. He is the most welcoming and unburdened friend you will ever have. For those of you who know the friendship of Jesus, keep loving your corner of the world and being a friend even when the world tells you it's too costly.

And may we all become women who invite people to come alongside us and discover that together is truly a beautiful place to be.

Truth Takeaway: _____

Friends,

Let's invite people to come alongside
us and discover that together is a
beautiful place to be.

Bailey

#togetherisabeautifulplace

