

# Guided Bible Study

**Salendine Nook Baptist Church  
Friendship (Growing Side By Side)**

**Ecclesiastes 4 v. 1 - 12**

**A modified Version of Scripture Union's  
LifeBuilder Bible Study Series originally written by  
Carolyn Nystrom**



# About These Bible Studies

*For the purposes of our Bible Studies we will be using Scripture Union's LifeBuilder Bible Study Series. Our Theme for these studies is: **Friendship (Growing Side by Side)**. The studies were originally written by Carolyn Nystrom, but we will be modifying them in order that they become more usable for home study as church transitions between the church building and home during the ongoing Pandemic.*

*These studies give us the opportunity to study the Bible in a greater depth and to reflect on what it is saying to us – much like we would do in our normal Wednesday Morning Bible Study. To give a sense of group study, it is suggested that you do the study on a Wednesday morning, for an hour, starting at 10.30am. Get yourself a tea or coffee, a Bible, pen and paper (for any notes you want to make) and begin studying.*

*Hope that you enjoy it!*

**Pastor Ian**

# Context

God created us to thrive in one another's presence. Friends help us to mature emotionally and spiritually. Friends love us no matter what. Friends teach us about forgiveness. As we look at these studies together, they introduce us to powerful stories about friendship in the Bible, and how we can apply the principles contained within these stories into our own lives. They also help us to discover the riches of godly friendship – the greatest friendship of them all.

# Study 1 -

## Needing Friends

People vary in their friendship patterns. Some have long – term friendships, relationships that they have cherished from childhood. Others enjoy the challenge of frequent moves and shaping new friendships in each new home. Some people want a host of casual friends, a roomful of noise and laughter. Others choose only a few friends, preferring long talks and comfortable silence. But people without friends can usually be described with one word: **lonely**.

**PERSONAL REFLECTION.** *How satisfied are you with your current patterns of friendship? What areas do you think most need attention?*

An ancient wisdom writer, who was questioning whether anything could bring meaning to life, discovered that friends were among the few worthwhile pursuits. **Read Ecclesiastes 4 v.1-12**

## QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

- What phrases here help you see the writers view of the world?
- What specific complaints does the writer have about society? (**Ecclesiastes 4 v. 1**) and about work? (**Ecclesiastes 4 v. 4 – 6**).
- Note the number of times that the writer says that life is meaningless. Why do you think he says this?
- What statements in **Ecclesiastes 4 v. 1 – 6** do you agree with and why?
- If you were a friend to the writer of this text, what would you say to him?
- Finally, in Ecclesiastes 4 v. 9 – 12, the author poses one solution to his despair: a friend. What practical value does he see in friendship?
- What are some ways that these small practical helps from a friend might dent the despair that the writer expressed in **Ecclesiastes 4 v. 1 – 3**?
- Christian couples often choose the words of **Ecclesiastes 4 v. 12** as a wedding theme: ***‘A cord of three strands is not quickly broken’***. If two friends (or marriage partners) invite God as the third strand in their cord of friendship, what impact would that have on their relationship?
- Many people today live with the same despair that is expressed in **Ecclesiastes 4 v. 2 – 3**. Who among your acquaintances needs your friendship? What steps could you make in that direction?

# Friendship (Growing Side By Side) - What's it all about?

God created us as beings who thrive in the presence of each other. The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us in simple terms: 'If one falls down, his friend can help him up'. (Independence is great, but some of the tumbles we take in life are more than we can survive alone). Later the passage adds: 'How can one keep warm alone?' (A bed warmed by a spouse who is a friend or a warm cup of tea with a brotherly/sisterly friend provides physical warmth and emotional comfort). Proverbs adds: 'As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another'. (Friendship brings abrasion, even real pain. But as we bump against each other in our conflicts, we rub off those edges that keep us from being all God has designed). And that design doesn't end with this life. The God who knew us when we were still in our mother's womb is creating eternity for us where we will live together with him – as his friends.

The Bible talks about friendship, but it doesn't dwell on the subject. Instead, over and over the Bible shows us examples of friendship in practice.

The Bible Studies that we will be looking at over the next 10 weeks, will provide for us an introduction into Biblical Friendship. This opening study introduces us to Biblical reasons for friendship. Next will follow four pairs of studies. In each pair, the first study introduces a characteristic of godly friendship; the second lets you look at Biblical friends who put that quality to work. Finally, we will be looking at Christ's promised return to earth and our friendship with him that lasts an eternity.

# To help you in your study

**The purpose of the study is: To appreciate God's gift of friendship with other people and with himself.**

Try and recognise that the man was alone, that wealth did not bring contentment – maybe because he had no one to share it with and seemed unable to express and experience joy. (**Ecclesiastes 4 v. 8**).

**Ecclesiastes 4 v. 1 – 6** express a variety of complaints, observations and even a suggestion or two. Most of us can identify with one or more of the statements that are mentioned. Try and see how others would understand these things.

Try and respond to the author of Ecclesiastes as if he were actually your friend. Many of us have friends with these complaints. Some of the complaints are even our own. Some people will agree with this 'friend', while others will offer compassion and hope. How can this help you to minister indirectly to others that you call 'friends'?



Now

or

Later

**SPEND SOME TIME IN PRAYER.**

Friends are a gift from God. As you pray, why not mention several of your friends by name, and tell God what you appreciate about each one of them.

**READ SOME MORE OF THE BIBLE.**

The book of Proverbs offers short wise sayings on many subjects – including friendship. Try reading **Proverbs 27 v. 6, 10 & 17**. Now ask yourself what strikes you as being wise in these words.

**MAKE CONTACT WITH A FRIEND.**

Why not spend some time this coming week and make contact with a friend. You could phone them, e-mail them, text them or even write a letter to them.

If you are a little more technically minded you could even Zoom, Skype or FaceTime them!

# Contact

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