



CHAPTER 1:

The Girlfriends Guidebook

Leader: Read Introduction (pages 1-3) out loud as a group.

1. Who was your childhood best friend? What is your favorite friendship memory? Whom do you consider a close friend today?
2. Near the bottom of page 7, Marian says sometimes she feels like she needs a guidebook for girlfriend relationships. Can you relate? Have you every felt you needed guidance in a particular instance/situation with a friend?

Leader: God's word, the Bible, is our "guidebook" and can give us guidance in a particular instance/situation with friend. In Psalm 119:105, God's word is compared to a flashlight. In order to walk in the dark safely, we need light so we don't trip over things and fall into holes. In this life we go through trials with friends, but the Bible can be our "flashlight" to show us how to walk through the situation without stumbling.

Leader: Read the following passages out loud with your group. What instruction does God give us in these verses and how can they be applied to our friendships? What do the following scriptures teach you?

- Psalm 119:105
- Psalm 27:1-3
- Psalm 1:1-3
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Psalm 23:1-3

3. Have you ever failed or been the cause of a friendship breakup? Share if you feel comfortable.

Leader: Please note that some women in your group may be shy or they may not know everyone, so be sure you “open up” and identify your own friendship breakup. Don’t dominate the conversation or feel you must do all the talking, but do keep in mind that you set the tone for your time together.

4. On page 10, Marian says that few people actually know what the word friend means. What do you think of when you hear the word friend? What does a “good friend” look like to you?

Leader: Does anyone know what God’s word says about a friend?

Read the following scriptures in Proverbs on friendship and discuss.

“A perverse (woman) sows strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.” Proverbs 16: 28 (AMP)

“A friend is always loyal, and a (sister) is born to help in time of need.” Proverbs 17: 17 (NLT)

“(She) who covers and forgives an offense seeks love, but (she) who repeats or harps on a matter separates even close friends.” Proverbs 17: 9 (NIV)

- What type of friend seems right to the world?
- How do these verses describe a “good friend”?

5. On page 15, Marian mentions that friendship pains and misunderstandings are often swept under the rug. Think about your friendships. Have you swept under the rug any areas of hurt or misunderstanding? Are these areas you didn’t want to discuss or bring up but have really put a damper on your friendship?

6. Read the bottom of page 19. Who/What do you turn to first for guidance? The phone? Internet? Your mentor? Mother? Or do you first look to God and His word?

Leader: Read aloud Hebrews 4:13. Remind your group that nothing can be hidden from God. God is omniscient, all-knowing, He knows about everyone, everywhere, and everything about us. Not only can he see all we do, He knows all we think. God knows us intimately and can sympathize with us. Read aloud Hebrews 4:15.

- In what ways has the enemy lied to you concerning God’s ability to see, here, and sympathize with your situation?
- Do you believe “the eyes of the Lord” are on you?
- Do you believe He is faithfully watching over you to provide, to protect, and to preserve?
- Do you believe He is all-knowing and perceives your situations from afar?

7. Read through the questions Marian asks on page 21 and think through your friendships. Do you see any patterns in how you handle your relationships that may need to be looked into?

Leader: Below are the questions for you to reference.

- Why do we pull away when we feel hurt?
- Why do we avoid someone we used to spend time with on a regular basis?
- What is the real reason we feel jealous or envious?
- Or better yet, why do we really find it so difficult to trust?

CHAPTER 2:

The Destination

1. Page 30 gives us the definition of a friend. What characteristics do you look for in a friend?

Leader: "A friend is a trustworthy peer with whom we choose to lovingly live in a relationship with unique access and service." (pg.30) Read through the fruits of the spirit, or rather the character qualities of a beautiful friendship, found in Galatians 5:22-23. These are qualities that we should possess within our friendships and as women who abide with Christ.

- What character qualities, fruits of the spirit, are lacking within yourself and not being demonstrated in your friendships?

2. Page 30 tells us that a friend is a "trustworthy peer." Let's examine ourselves. Am I a trustworthy friend? Are all things kept confidential? Or can I not wait to tell the next "friend" the story I just heard?

Leader: Re-read the verse from Proverbs that says, "A perverse (woman) sows strife, and a whisperer separates close friends." Proverbs 16: 28, AMP

- How can we train ourselves to keep things that we discuss with our friends confidential and avoid gossip?

3. A friend is also a servant. Read through the description of a servant friend on page 32. Do any of your friends stand out to you as servants? Take time to thank them for being there for you!

Leader: In an age where mail correspondence has been outdated with Facebook and email, encourage the women in your group to write a handwritten note or letter to a friend who has displayed the act of servanthood to them.

4. Beginning on page 37, Marian mentions that friendships are a part of our sanctification. What do you think this means? How can friendships be part of our being sanctified to be more and more like Christ?

Leader: If needed, go back and read aloud the definition of the word sanctification on page 38.

- The term sanctification technically means, "to make holy". God desires that we reflect His holiness to the world.

Leader: As a group, pray and ask God to make you a woman who reflects His holiness and characteristics from Galatians 5:22-23 to the world and your friendships.

CHAPTER 3:

The Perfect Travel Companion

1. This chapter describes a train wreck Marian experienced in Europe. Share stories of when a friend was there for you during a major “train wreck” in your life.

2. Page 47 talks about relational idolatry. Reread this section and ask yourself, Do any of my friendships border idolatry?

Leader: Idolatry can destroy our spiritual health as surely as a disease or virus can destroy our physical health.

Read Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-30. Jesus clearly taught the proper value of worldly possessions in His conversation with the rich young ruler in Matthew 19 and Mark 10. The rich young ruler had asked what more was required for him to have eternal life since he had kept all the commandments from his youth. He asked Jesus what he still lacked. Jesus told him to sell all that he had and give to the poor, and come and follow Him. But the man went away grieving, for he loved his possessions.

- Would you pass this test?
 - What idol(s)/possession(s) are you placing before the Lord? An idol is anything or anyone that we put in place of God. Examples of idols could be your best friend, your significant other, your dog, your wardrobe, your academics, anything that the enemy would love for us to put our focus on other than God.
3. Do you find yourself dwelling on whether your friends accept or approve of you? What is the underlying issue here?
4. Review questions on page 54 about relational idolatry. Is this a struggle?

Leader: Read and discuss each question.

- Are my expectations of my friend concerning time, communication, and availability realistic?
 - Is my friend expecting too much of me?
 - Do I frequently, unintentionally hurt her?
 - Do I feel totally free and myself with this person?
 - Do I walk on eggshells in order to please?
 - Do I feel possessive or threatened?
 - Do I obsess in fear about losing the friend?
 - Is my identity tied to the friendship? Status, ranking popularity?
 - Do I have a history of failed close friendships? Why?
 - Have I conformed myself or my values to meet a friend's demands or in order to fit into a group?
 - Am I drawing an inappropriate amount of security from this relationship?
5. On pages 56-57, Marian talks about how she repented of relational idolatry after train wrecking several of her friendships. Repentance always means change. Are you making steps to change your unhealthy patterns? If so, how?
6. Looking at the section entitled “Reconnect with God's Truth” on page 58. We must know what God says about us. Read Psalm 139:13-16. What does this passage say about you? What does it say about God's acceptance and love for you?

Leader: Read aloud Psalm 139:1-16.

“You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.”
– Psalm 139:13-16 (NLT)

CHAPTER 4:

Deal with Your Baggage: Part I

1. Marian uses the illustration of baggage to describe friendship drama. How did this illustration help you examine your own friendships?

2. Page 71 begins the talk about pride and how it can be a huge destroyer of any relationship. Take a look at your-self. (NOT your friends!). How have you responded out of pride in a friendship? Do you always have to be the girl at the top of the cheer stunt?

3. Another relationship destroyer is envy. Examine yourself. Jealousy can manifest itself in just wanting something others have; or it can go much deeper and not only want what others have but also not want others to have it either! Do you sometimes wish that good would not come to your friend? Is that how a true friend should feel? Why do you think you feel that way?

Just as our baggage hinders our friendships, our sinful nature hinders our growth in our relationship with God. The apostle Paul writes in Hebrews, that as believers we should “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” – He is speaking of our sinful nature that enslaves us to the enemy.

Leader: Read aloud Galatians 5:19-21, which describes the sinful nature.

“When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.”

–Galatians 5:19-21 (NLT)

Now, read aloud Galatians 5: 22-23, which describes the fruit of the Spirit.

“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!”

–Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)

- Ask you group to be in praying for themselves individually and for each other. Ask that they would repent of any sin hindering their growth with God and their friendships.
- Remind your group that the fruits of the spirit, produce only when we join our lives to Christ. We must follow Him, love Him, acknowledge Him, and imitate Him.
- 4. Competition is another relationship obstacle. Do you compete against your friends in areas? Boys? Grades? Success? The areas you compete in are often what you are letting define you. What is defining you?

Leader: Challenge your group to personally examine their hearts before God for anything that they are allowing to define them other than Jesus, who has the only power to name and define.

5. On page 90, Marian quotes C.S. Lewis: “Comparison is the thief of joy.” What do you think about his statement? Can you see this in your friendships?

Leader: C.S. Lewis’ quote is a great perspective that can be a challenge as we go about our daily lives in a culture that says, “more is better.” So often we are robbed of joy simply by looking to the left or right at what someone else has, focusing on what we do not have or what we want. How can we find joy in what we have been blessed with and use the things we have to bring joy to others?

Read Mark 4:18-19 and James 1:9-11 on how coveting and setting our heart’s desires on things of this world can be toxic to our lives.

- Do riches (worldly possessions) mean anything to God?
- What does God take interest in?

CHAPTER 5:

Deal with Your Baggage: Part II

1. Read through the different baggage behaviors on pages 101-104. Do you see yourself in any of these types of girls?

Leader: Ask the group to read the baggage behaviors aloud and discuss.

2. Does a lot of drama surround your friendships? Do you think that you could be encouraging this type of drama by your past woundings?

Leader: Read Hebrew 12:15.

“Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.” -Hebrews 12:15 (NLT)

Discuss how one person’s bitterness of unhealed wounds (ex. Rejection, abandonment, or divorce) can lead to poisonous relationships that defile many. (baggage behavior)

3. Marian points out that we must deal with our baggage! Do any areas you have not dealt with come to mind? Areas where you have said, “I’m fine,” and put on the smiling face, but deep inside you know something is wrong?

4. Marian says that she finally got real with God. Looking at the areas that need healing, are you ready to get real and take action? First, confess and ask God for help! Second, do you need to forgive and release anyone who has hurt you?

Leader: Encourage your group to write down any person they need to forgive. During your closing prayer lead the group in forgiving the ones on their list.

Follow this suggested prayer if needed:

Dear Father,
I repent of the unforgiveness in my heart toward

_____.

I choose to forgive _____
for _____.

God, I release them to You. I forgive because I, too, am a sinner and have received forgiveness.

I pray You would bless this person.

Lord, please heal my heart of any bitterness caused by the unforgiveness.

I pray this is the name of Jesus. Amen.

(Prayer cited from Marian’s book Wilderness Skills for Women, page 188)

CHAPTER 6:

The Top 10 Characteristics of a Christlike Friend

1. John 15:13 says, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (NIV). How do you as a friend lay down your life for others? Ask yourself, Am I selfless or selfish in my friendships?
2. One characteristic of a friend is loyalty. What times stand out when a friend showed her loyalty? How does that signify Christ to you?
3. Another characteristic is trustworthiness. Have you recently blown it by letting private information be known? Examine your motives. Does it point to some deeper hurt or “baggage” that has not been properly dealt with?
4. “Encouraging” is another characteristics of a friend. Do you have a friend who always encourages you? If so, thank her for that gift! Discuss ways you could be more encouraging to your friends.
5. A friend is real. Do you open up to your friends? Do they know your struggles and fears? What keeps you from opening up, from sharing your real hurts and pains?
6. A huge part of maintaining friendship is being intentional. We must take time to stay connected. How does this relate to our time with God?

Leader: Have each person, in your group list out three specific ways in which they can be intentional to their friends this week.

7. Extending grace and forgiveness is a necessary part of any friendship. Do you hold your friends to perfection? Do you get upset if they don't always act as they would? We are sinful, flawed people; if God can forgive you or your issues, can't you extend grace to your friends?

8. Read the questions Marian presents on page 149. Turn to 1 Corinthians 13:5 in your Bible. It says love does not keep any record of wrongs and is not easily offended. What does this mean?

Leader: Remind your group that Jesus' love should compel us, not constrain us. And who else better to model our lives after than the one who gave love sacrificially and offers it abundantly. The love of Jesus should be the most practical thing we reflect to those we love and those who do not know Him. We can simply love our friends by our actions, words and in our sensitivity towards them.

Challenge your group if they see or hear a sorority sister', friends', or co-worker's need and they can meet it - go for it!

Pray with your group they would become women who seek the love of God and display His love to others -living with their heads up and your eyes open.

CHAPTER 7:

Kingdom Friendships

1. Marian talks about how, once she came to know Jesus, she didn't have anything in common with her old friends. Do you have "friends" from your old life that you just don't click with anymore? What was the common denominator in your friendship?

Leader: Read Hebrews 10:24-25. What does God say should be the common denominator in all Christian friendships.

"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." -Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)

- Accountability is crucially important in the battle against the enemy. An accountability partner can be there to encourage you, to rebuke you, to teach you, to rejoice with you, and to weep with you. Every Christian should have an accountability partner with whom she can pray, talk, confide, and confess.
- According to Paul, what's the importance of accountability for believers? How can our group become accountability partners for each other?

2. How are you handling these friendships now?

Leader: Remind your group members that God wants to bless them with healthy, Godly friendships. If girls in your group are lacking these types of friendships that Paul describes in Hebrews; encourage them to pray that God would bring them friends with the same purpose and passion. Also encourage the girls, who have good accountability to pray for those friends by name and that God would deepen their relationships within Him through each other.

3. Look back through all of the areas of friendship discussed in this book. What area or areas stick out as those you need to work on most?

4. How can you be a better friend to accomplish God's purpose?

Leader: Think carefully, when is the last time you had a friend call you just to ask how you were doing? When is the last time you called a friend and asked her if she needed to talk?

- Remind your group that prayer, encouragement, and support from other believers are sometimes the missing ingredients in fighting the battle against the Enemy.
- Pray with and for your group that they would be women who "encourage and build one another up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11), refining and strengthening each other as it says in Proverbs 27:17 - for God's Kingdom Purpose.



Redeemed *Girls* MINISTRIES