**All My Friends have issues**

**8-Session Video Bible study**

**Leaders’ Guide**

**Thank you!**

First of all, thank you for stepping up to lead a group. You are taking a risk anytime you join a group of women, and shouldering weight when you agree to lead one. I encourage you to model vulnerability in the study by sharing your own “issues” as they relate to friendship. But be careful not to dominate discussion! You don’t have to fill every silence. Let women get a little uncomfortable before you jump in.

This leader guide is short, simple, and hopefully sweet. I hope it will help you use the video sessions and workbook effectively.

**Before your first meeting**

* Get in touch with your group members and make sure they each have the PDF of the Workbook. (If you purchased a group license, you can simply email it to them after downloading.)
* It isn’t necessary to print the entire workbook, but recommend that your participants print the first two pages of each session before you meet. These are the lesson notes on which they can fill in the blanks and jot down additional ideas.
* Let your women know that if they miss a session, they can download it on their own from the website for a fee.
* Download the video sessions and make sure they are running smoothly for you!
* Start praying. For some women this will be a light-hearted study that reminds them to be grateful for their friends, and hones their relational skills. For some, it could be painful or even devasting as they come face-to-face with their own loneliness, their own toxic behaviors, or a long-followed pattern of unhealthy friendships. Pray for open hearts and courage to address our issues, as well as for healthy and safe group dynamics.

**Safety first**

The first week that you meet in your groups, I recommend going over these “safety rules” with your discussion groups. These rules fall in line with the Biblical instructions on how to relate to our friends, which I’ll be teaching in weeks to come. Set these clear expectations at the beginning so women don’t hang their head in shame on Week Seven when we talk about conquering the “rebuke culture” in Christianity. (If they do feel ashamed, don’t worry. We’ve covered shame in Week One!)

1. Everything shared in this group is confidential. Please don’t share anyone else’s stories with other friends or family members. You may share insights you’ve learned but don’t use people’s names.

2. Be quick to listen and slow to speak. Don’t interrupt one another, and limit your talking time so that others have a chance to speak as well.

3. Don’t give each other advice or correct each other’s theology. We want to make this a safe place to share our feelings and experiences without trying to fix one another. In upcoming sessions we’ll be learning about how to invite and offer accountability to one another. But let’s first start by just listening to and supporting one another.

[*To you, leader, if someone in your group consistently makes comments that are way “out there,” you might choose to ask gently where we see that in Scripture. If she says it’s just her opinion, say something like, ‘Thanks for sharing your thoughts with us.” You don’t have to fix people either.]*

**Using the Bible study and *All my Friends Have Issues*, the book together**

I wrote this video series and workbook as a stand-alone learning experience that would help women create and maintain remarkable friendships. The study was an opportunity to go deeper into some of the Biblical concepts than the original *All My Friends Have Issues* book.

However, though the themes are the same in both the book and the study, **the book contains additional stories, examples, research and some practical tips that are *not* in the Bible study. It’s also funnier.** Unique discussion questions for the book chapters are found in the reader’s guide at the end as well.

If you would like the “full” *All My Friends* experience, encourage your women to read the book on their own and bring their thoughts to the table. You can purchase the book in bulk from Thomas Nelson, my publisher, on a link on my website: [www.heartintraining.com](http://www.heartintraining.com), and individually from any major online retailer in paperback, e-book and audiobook formats.

The table below shows how the book chapters coincide with the Bible study sessions. Read the chapters in the order shown here; they will still make sense even though not in the book’s original order, and will more directly correlate to the Bible study lesson.

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| **Bible Study Sessions** | **Book Chapters** |
| Session One: If Jesus Loves Me, You Can Too | Introduction: My First Real FriendChapter 1: Calls from the Bathroom  |
| Session Two: Make “New” Friends | Chapter 2: Nuts and Gifts |
| Session Three: You Can Be Right or You Can Be Friends | Chapter 4: I’m So Sensitive |
| Session Four: Reading the Red Flags | Chapter 3: Perfection is for Yo-Yos |
| Session Five: Build Me Up, Buttercup | Chapter 5: In Lieu of Flowers, Please Send EmojisChapter 6: Sabbatical Sisters and Self CareChapter 7: Two Superheroes and No SidekickChapter 8: Funerals, Birthdays and Baby Showers [*I know, this is a LOT. I love writing about encouragement. Chapter 5 and Chapter 7 are the most closely tied to the Bible study. Chapters 6 and 8 will give you the most “extra” information.]* |
| Session Six: Walk Into the Light | Chapter 9: Tell Me the TruthChapter 11: Get Off the Treadmill and Eat a Cupcake Already |
| Session Seven: Let a Righteous Friend Rebuke Me | Chapter 10: The Year Everyone Got a Boob Job [There’s Bible content in this. I promise.] |
| Session Eight: The Friends that Pray Together Stay Together | Chapter 12: The Prayer Factor |

**The schedule**

This study is designed so that you meet eight times to watch the video and have discussion time. Each week, the homework will allow you reflect on the teaching you just watched. Every week includes a Scripture to study, as well as journaling prompts to promote self-awareness and authenticity.

Here is a suggested outline for meetings.

**Session One**

* Have all the women introduce themselves and tell everyone a little bit about the best friend of their youth (this could be in childhood or even in college.)
* Watch the video series.
* Answer the discussion questions
* Pray.
* Assign next week’s homework. Make sure to point out the prayer practice and encourage them to do it on their own at least one day a week. Refer them to the Friendly Prayer Practice Scriptures (pages 60-63) to help guide their prayers.

**Sessions Two through Seven**

* Ask women to share one take-away from the week’s homework. Then, ask the first discussion question as an ice-breaker (optional). (15 minutes)
* Watch the video (15-20 minutes)
* Answer the discussion questions.
* Pray.
* Assign the next week’s homework.

**Session Eight**

* Ask women to share one take-away from the week’s homework. Then, ask the first discussion question as an ice-breaker (optional). (15 minutes)
* Watch the video (25-40 minutes)
* Answer the discussion questions.
* Talk about how you will apply what you’ve learned in the study. Encourage each woman to share one action step.
* Make sure they know there is a final week of homework, even though you will not be meeting to discuss it.
* Send a follow up email at the end thanking women for their participation and telling them what you most received from the study.

**Follow-up**

Like we said at the beginning, for some women this could be a challenging and even painful Bible study, as they come face-to-face with their own toxic behaviors, or a long-followed pattern of drawing unhealthy friends into their lives. I recommend you have some resources on hand. Speak to your church leadership about support groups they have for women with relational issues, anxiety and depression, and grief support. Have a list of Christian counselors on hand. And also, look up some local groups that help women who struggle with codependency, which I address in both the book and the Bible study. You can find Twelve Step support groups for Codependents Anonymous on [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org). Christ-centered resources that offer relationship support groups include [www.celebraterecovery.com](http://www.celebraterecovery.com) and [www.newlife.com](http://www.newlife.com) .

**Contact me**

Send me notes, questions, comments and photos from your groups!

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