**We all need friendships and community. Since Covid, we have struggled more than ever to stay connected. We have allowed our fear and the fears of others to keep us from attending church and ministry events. If we do attend, we are inconsistent, often giving poor excuses. While we all desire those deep friendships and supportive community, it requires effort and sacrifice.**

**Recently, while on tour speaking, I stayed with my friend Linda Blachly. Linda is an inspiration to anyone she meets. As we were sipping our morning coffee, she shared a devotional piece she wrote about friendship with me. I have written on friendship many times, including in several Bible studies, including Intentional Relationships, where I highlight the three kinds of friends we should all have. Friends that pour into us/mentor and disciple, friends we pour into/mentor and disciple, and balanced friendships. Linda has broken it down even further, giving us seven types of friends and their value in her lives, hopefully yours.**

**—Kris Swiatocho**

**Friends Devotion by Linda Blachly**

*Note: 2021 survey: Average person in America has 3-5 close friends.*

I have always been blessed to be surrounded by some amazing friends. As the seasons of life change, some have come and gone for various reasons, but one thing is certain: we all need at least one good friend.

At the beginning of this year, I began a journey to appreciate and nurture the friendships in my life. I know and have fellowship with many people through my various ministries and singles groups. Still, this year, I have made it a priority to slow down the “busyness” of life and concentrate on the fewer but deeper friendships in my life.

*Proverbs 12:26 says, “The righteous choose their friends carefully.”* And this is very important, especially as the rise of social media has watered down what it means to be a friend.

Throughout my journey, I have identified seven types of friends we would all benefit from. Having even one of these types makes that friendship a great treasure.

1. **The Listening Friend**. This is the special friend you feel comfortable with sharing your struggles. There are times when we just need to weep. In these moments, we need a friend who listens and cries with us. The listening friend has the gift of staying by our side, listening without trying to “fix it.” *In James 1:19, God instructs us to listen well: “Be quick to listen and slow to speak.”*
2. **The Creative Friend.** This friend can show you a different perspective on your problems. She can assure you that, while you feel worn out and too broken to be of any use to God and others—like that broken crayon that spills out of that colorful box—that broken crayon can still color. She can point out that God is using your brokenness to create something more beautiful than you could ever imagine. *Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, “He has made everything beautiful in its time.”*
3. **The Praying Friend.** [You turn to this friend first when you have a crisis. The first one you text or call. And conversely, the friend who asks: “How can I pray for you today?” This friend prays BIG prayers](http://www.caravansonnet.com/2015/01/10-things-to-pray-for-your-single-friend.html) and believes in the impossible no matter the situation. She is the one who believes that *God can and will do immeasurably more than we can ever ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)*.
4. **The Encouraging Friend.** This is the friend who you always like to be around because they are filled with encouragement. They truly have the joy of the Lord. They see the glass as half full instead of half empty. *Proverbs 15:23: “Let everything you say be good and helpful so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.”*
5. **The Friend Who Mentors You.** This is the friend who challenges you to grow in your faith. This friend asks questions to get you to think on a higher plane. This friend teaches you by example*. Proverbs 27:17 says, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”*
6. **The Friend You Mentor.** You may not even realize it, but there are people out there who look up to YOU and call on YOU when they need advice, a listening ear, and prayer. Why do they turn to you? Because you have shown qualities in your life that they would like to emulate. *Proverbs 13:20 says, “He who walks with the wise will become wise.”*
7. **The fun friend.** And finally—everyone needs that fun friend. That adventurous friend. That friend who—when you are having a pity party, shows up with a pin to pop your black balloons. They say, \*\*\* “Come on, get up, we are going out for cake!”

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says: Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”*

Finally, *Proverbs 18: 24 says, “One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”* And that friend is **Jesus**. Jesus will stand with you when nobody else will.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What kind of friend are you?
2. Can you identify the different types of friends you have and who they are?
3. Can you identify any other types of friends?
4. Does my life change someone else’s for the better?

A person smiling at the camera

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About Linda Blachly: Linda is a born-again believer, the mother of three adult children, and the grandmother of six grandchildren. After 24 years of marriage, she became single again after a divorce 22 years ago. Since then, God has used Linda to encourage others through the DivorceCare and singles ministries.