Chapter 1: A Case for Befriending

1. Right now, how would you describe most of your friendships? Would you say that most of your friendships are one-dimensional or real?
2. What scares you, and what excites you, about plunging in to the rest of this book?

Chapter 2: Befriend the One in the Mirror

1. What keeps you from loving every kind of person whom Jesus loves? Specifically, how does shame contribute to the limits you place upon your love?
2. How can belief in the Bible’s teaching on the image of God and the far-reaching love of God broaden your limits and open up your boundaries?

Chapter 3: Befriend the “Other”

1. Right now, where is your greatest opportunity to expand your “us”?
2. Is there someone who needs to hear a hopeful verdict, to be surprised by warmth and welcome, to be forgiven, to be loved? Who is it, and what would be a loving first step?

Chapter 4: Befriend Prodigals and Pharisees

1. With whom do you identify the most—the law-Pharisee or the grace-Pharisee?
2. What would motivate you to show love to people you are tempted to judge the most? What will be your first step?

Chapter 5: Befriend the Wrecked and the Restless

1. Have you been through a season of feeling “wrecked and restless”? Are there signs of God’s presence and care in that season that you can thank him for now? Or, if there is still confusion and bewilderment, which particular truths and which particular friends would be helpful to surround yourself with?

Chapter 6: Befriend the Shamed and Ashamed

1. How has shame been a part of your story? How has it shaped the way you think about God, others, and yourself?
2. What are some practical ways that you can “turn up the volume” on the voice of Jesus that assures you that you are loved and that you belong?

Chapter 7: Befriend the Ones You Can’t Control

1. Do you struggle with wanting to control other people? Where does the desire for control come from? Is it pride, fear, or both?
2. What are some practical things you can do to both (a) take responsibility for loving those around you and (b) relinquish control over those same people?
Chapter 8: Befriend True Friends and Significant Others

1. When it comes to choosing a close friend or significant other, what criteria do you use? Which matters most—physical appearance and pedigree or a humble heart and a well-worn Bible?
2. Why is it important that the closest people to us also be given permission to challenge us where our character and Christlikeness is lacking?

Chapter 9: Befriend Sexual Minorities

1. Do you agree or disagree with how Christians have approached the public conversation about sexuality?
2. Why do you think that Jesus never scolded people outside the church for their broken sexual ethics and practices?
3. For those being told in Scripture to remain sexually chaste outside of the male-female marital union, how can the church help ease the burden of loneliness?

Chapter 10: Befriend Dysfunctional Family Members

1. Why do you think therapists focus so much on the nuclear family when trying to help their patients? What is it about the nuclear family that impacts us, either positively or negatively, so much?
2. Do you agree or disagree that placing priority on Jesus and the church can make us better members of our nuclear families? Describe your own experience in this regard.

Chapter 11: Befriend the Children

1. What bothers you most about small children?
2. When tempted to avoid children or those who mess with our “scripted narratives,” what opportunities do we miss to grow ourselves as children of God?
3. What specific things can you do to encounter children more than you do currently?

Chapter 12: Befriend Those Grieving and Dying

1. Have you ever experienced suffering, sorrow, and/or death?
2. How are you preparing your heart for that inevitable day when you or those you love will face death?
3. Where does Jesus currently fit into your perspective about sickness, sorrow, pain, and death?

Chapter 13: Befriend the Poor and Empty-Handed

1. How would you describe your current relationship with the poor? In what ways has today’s teaching challenged you? In what ways can it strengthen your understanding of Jesus’ love for you and others?
Chapter 14: Befriend the Other Race

1. In what ways has racial tension impacted your life and relationships?
2. What have been your most difficult experiences in the area of race? What have been your most life-giving experiences?
3. In what ways is it important for you to speak on the subject of race? In what ways is it important for you to listen?

Chapter 15: Befriend the Rich and Powerful

1. If we believed deep down that Jesus is our truest wealth, how would this impact our thoughts toward, and relational approach with, the haves in our lives? With the have-nots?

Chapter 16: Befriend the Bullies and Perpetrators

1. Is there a type of person from whom you wish God would withhold his grace and forgiveness? What distinguishes this type of person from those you do want to see saved? If Jesus were standing in front of you, how would he minister to you in this struggle?

Chapter 17: Befriend Vulnerable Women and Humans Not Yet Born

1. In the choice vs. life discussion, why do you think so many people prioritize a “pro-woman” stance over a “pro-infant” stance, or vice versa? What about the both/and approach being promoted here connects with you? What about it creates a struggle for you?

Chapter 18: Befriend Strangers and Refugees

1. How much would you say that God’s love for the world—the whole world—plays in to your own perspective?
2. When you hear about how God reached to the ends of the earth to secure you for himself, does it overwhelm you or motivate you?
3. What are your thoughts on the idea of charity starting at home and moving outward, versus starting and also ending at home?

Chapter 19: Befriend Those Who Vote against You

1. Do you feel that you have more in common with people who share your faith but not your politics, or your politics but not your faith? What does your answer reveal about where your truest loyalties reside?
2. What does it mean that Jesus’ Kingdom is in this world and for this world but is not of this world?
Chapter 20: Befriend People with Disabilities and Special Needs

1. What disability do you fear or worry about the most for yourself or for someone who is close to you, and why?
2. In what ways have you been touched, personally strengthened, or spiritually motivated by how others have responded to a special need or disability?
3. Why do you think there is so much emphasis in the Bible on how God manifests his strength through our weaknesses?

Chapter 21: Befriend the God Who Embraces You

1. Would you identify as a “task” person or a “people” person? How does this impact how you relate to God and others?
2. What do you think about the idea that through Jesus, God loves you and also likes you? How would believing this impact how you live?