

This prayer service is best used after chapter 5 in the book *Your Life in Christ*.

**Prayer Service:
“Gratitude for True Friends”**

Needs:

- a decorated prayer table with the Bible
- small (2”x3” or so) pieces of cardstock, each with a small adhesive magnet attached to the back (Magnet strips are available in all craft stores.)
- markers or colored pencils

Prayer Introduction

Chapter 5 reminds us that in the process of developing and following our consciences, we need to be careful not to give in to negative peer pressure. The flip-side of this warning is that we are, in fact, strengthened for and encouraged toward moral actions through the support of our good Christian friends. These are the people who are true friends who look out for our best interests and would never encourage us to do what is wrong or potentially harmful. The author of the book of Sirach understands this and provides advice for ensuring that our friends are true friends. As we reflect on friendship today, let us thank God for our true friends and pray that God will continue to send into our lives strong spiritual companions.

Reading 1: Sirach 6: 5-17.

A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter.

Guided Reflection/Response to the Reading

As you lead the reflection, observe a prayerful pause where indicated by “ ... ”

Leader: Sirach lists the qualities of true and false friends. Quietly and with your eyes closed, think about your friends. ... Was there ever a time when your friend left you during a difficult time for you? ... Was there ever a time when a friend spoke behind your back? ... Was there a time when your friend was too bossy and demanding? ... Was there a time when your friend suddenly started avoiding you? ... These friends are not, as Sirach says, true friends. In your heart, find the peace and mercy to forgive these people. ... Who are the friends with whom you share all of your deepest thoughts and dreams?... How are you sure you can trust these friends? ... When has a true friend been a sturdy shelter for you? ... Which friends in your life are your treasure? ... When has a true friend been a life-saving remedy for you? ... Which friends in your life do you consider to be friends of God? ...

Faith Sharing (Optional)

Leader: Slowly open your eyes. In your reflection, did any of you recall a time in which your friend guided you in the right direction or advised you to do what was right? How did it turn out? If anyone would like to share a story, you are welcome to do so. Do not mention any names, just call this person “my friend.”

Allow time for sharing, facilitating the discussion from diverging too much from the theme and watching the time.

Ritual

Leader: In a moment I am going to read through a portion of the reading from Sirach again. Listen for one short phrase that best calls to mind one of your true friends. On the blank magnet I've given you, write the short phrase and decorate it. As you work on it, pray for the friend this passage has called to mind and plan a time when you can give the magnet to him/her.

Slowly re-read Sirach 6:14-17.

When all are finished:

Closing Prayer

Leader: Hold your magnets as we pray:

God, source of all love and friendship,
bless both these gifts of our friendship and
the friends who inspired them.

Thank you for those friends in our lives
who encourage us to be the people
you have called us to be.

They are your gifts to us, O God.

Give us the wisdom to choose our friends
carefully and to support them with our prayers.

We ask this through Christ, your Son and our friend. Amen.