

AMY WEATHERLY & JESS JOHNSTON

# *I'll Be There*

(BUT I'LL BE WEARING SWEATPANTS)

## WORKBOOK



FINDING UNFILTERED, REAL-LIFE FRIENDSHIPS  
IN THIS CRAZY, CHAOTIC WORLD

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## WORKBOOK

FINDING UNFILTERED, REAL-LIFE FRIENDSHIPS  
IN THIS CRAZY, CHAOTIC WORLD

THIRTEEN LESSONS  
FOR INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

AMY WEATHERLY & JESS JOHNSTON



HarperChristian  
Resources

*I'll Be There (But I'll Be Wearing Sweatpants Workbook*

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# Introduction

*Hey, Can We Talk for a Sec?*

At the core of our book, *I'll Be There (But I'll Be Wearing Sweatpants): Finding Unfiltered, Real-Life Friendships in This Crazy, Chaotic World*, was a heartfelt invitation, one that we put right in the book's introduction. Did you catch it there? The invite went like this: "Let's not do life alone; let's do it together."

*Together.*

There's so much hope in that word. So much promise and potential. Even if you're a die-hard introvert. Even if you're a self-starter, a solitude lover, an independence junkie. We're betting that you—yes, *even you*—see the value in having someone at your side from time to time, someone who sees you and gets you and loves you just like you are, someone who will lend an ear, or an egg, or a ride, or some hard-won wisdom when the bottom falls out of life. In fact, our bet is that every woman reading these words not only sees the value in relational connectivity but actually *craves that connectivity for herself*. If she could just sort out how to overcome the (totally valid) obstacles that keep her living life alone, she would overcome them in a heartbeat.

She would show up.

She would invest in others' lives.

She would let herself be known.

She would *friend*. She would friend *hard*.

If you fall into that category of wanting the "together" dream but having no clue how to bring it to fruition, then you're in the right place. We've both been there. We still visit there every once in a while. But we no longer live there 24/7. We've landed a new address, and to shoot straight with you, the view is much better from here. It can be much better for you, too.

So, while we're by no means experts in this friending thing, we're not as hopeless as we once were. And maybe since we still remember the sinking wretchedness of feeling all alone in this world, we're just the right people to lead you to higher ground.



In the thirteen lessons that follow, you'll be offered a boatload of opportunities to assess your friendship landscape as it stands today, as well as imagine (and plan for) your friendship dreamscape as it may unfold across all the tomorrows to come. It's a really useful journey and one we think you're going to love, but here at the outset we think it's wise to tell you that we're going to get up in your business. Like, way, *way* up in there. We're going to do for you what we wish someone had done for us, back when we were fumbling our way through friendship's doldrums, losing hope like sand through a sieve.

Our promise to you is that if you will stick with these lessons in their entirety, you will find it vastly easier to establish friendships, you will do a much better job maintaining the friendships you've got, and you will feel happier and more hopeful about this "friendship thing" being for you. Fair enough?

We think so, too.



A quick note about the layout of this guide, and then we'll turn you loose to begin. You can work through these lessons alone or in a group; either way, consider these two pro tips for setting yourself up for success:

1. If it's possible for you to secure a copy of the book that this study is based on—*I'll Be There, But I'll Be Wearing Sweatpants*, (Thomas Nelson 2022)—do so. Read the chapter each lesson is based on before completing that portion of this workbook.
2. If you choose to work through this content in a group setting—with friends, neighbors, family members, work colleagues, etc.—we strongly

recommend completing each lesson on your own prior to the group meeting when that lesson will be discussed. Many of the questions/prompts are highly personal in nature, and many require significant thought. Best to have your thoughts already thunk (creative spelling) and logged before feeling pressed to share them in a full group.

While we're on the topic of group discussion, you'll notice that each lesson contains four main parts:

1. "Get Going" :: The lesson overview and one setup question to whet your appetite for the content to come.
2. "Catch Your Breath" :: An opportunity to take one to two minutes in silence before working through the discussion questions.
3. "Dive Deep" :: Discussion questions to consider and respond to.
4. "What Now?" :: An action item or two to help you practice what you learned before convening for the next lesson.

If you structure your group time according to a ninety-minute lesson, then you might divide your time this way:

Get Going: 10 minutes

Catch Your Breath: 5 minutes


Dive Deep: 50 minutes

What Now?: 25 minutes

We wish you well on your friendship journey! Every minute you devote to the process of gathering sisters to your side and also becoming a better friend will pay huge dividends for you. We cheer you on as you begin. To friendship! To friendship, for sure.







# When You Really Need a Friend (Yeah, Us Too)

We want to be known. We want to  
be seen. We want to be loved as we  
are, where we are, with what we have.

*Based on Chapter 1*

Jess and Amy

## GET GOING

*“I’ll be there.”*

Isn’t it always a total relief to hear those three words? Whether they are said in response to an invitation you sent to a gathering, an everyday request for participation, or a middle-of-the-night cry for help, there’s nothing quite as comforting as hearing someone say to you that you don’t need to fret, that you won’t be alone, that *they’ll for sure be there*.



Nobody wants to do life alone. Or we should say, nobody wants to do *all* of life alone. At some point, we all long for another person to witness our lives—to share a laugh, to help shoulder a burden, to celebrate a massive achievement, to revisit a momentous experience, to dive into a giant bowl of steaming-hot queso from that beloved restaurant with us.

True for you? When do you most crave true friendship? When you're ridiculously happy? Super-sad? Up to your eyeballs in stress? Some other time? Do tell . . .

## CATCH YOUR BREATH

Before moving on, take a moment to silently consider your answer to the last question. Why do you suppose you crave true friendship at that time? What needs do you suspect true friendship might fill in your life that are going unfulfilled today?

## DIVE DEEP

One of the occupational hazards of writing a book about friendship is you start thinking about friendship all the time. As in, for two years straight, all you think about is this singular topic. We have *thoughts* about friendship, I'm telling you. And one of them is what the term even means. So, right from the top, let's get some definitional work out of the way.

How would you define *friendship*? In other words:

- What does it mean to “have a friend”?
- What does it *not* mean?
- How do you know when an acquaintance has become a friend?

When we talk about friendship, as we said in the book, “*We’re talking about the kind of friendship that gets raw and gritty. The kind of friendship that is built for real life and running errands. The kind of friendship that is safe for big feelings, deep secrets, and laughing so hard you snort. The kind of friendship that stays through sickness, health, anxiety, and announcements like, “Hey, something is hanging out of your nose.”*

Anything in our definition stand out to you? If so, what?

Describe a season of life when you enjoyed this kind of real, raw, no-holds-barred connection with a friend or friend group.

- Where were you, and who were you with?
- What dynamics were in play?

- What types of experiences did you share?

What benefits showed up in your life during or after that season, because of knowing and being known by a true friend?

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Confidence               | <input type="radio"/> Joy                     | <input type="radio"/> Learned to trust               |
| <input type="radio"/> Peace                    | <input type="radio"/> Less stress/<br>anxiety | <input type="radio"/> Learned to<br>laugh            |
| <input type="radio"/> Strength                 | <input type="radio"/> Less loneliness         | <input type="radio"/> Learned to<br>communicate      |
| <input type="radio"/> Companionship            | <input type="radio"/> Creativity              | <input type="radio"/> Learned to<br>resolve conflict |
| <input type="radio"/> Personal growth          | <input type="radio"/> Effectiveness           | <input type="radio"/> Learned about<br>God           |
| <input type="radio"/> Emotional<br>growth      | <input type="radio"/> Efficiency              | <input type="radio"/> Learned to love                |
| <input type="radio"/> Spiritual growth         | <input type="radio"/> Feeling seen            | <input type="radio"/> Something else:                |
| <input type="radio"/> Secondary<br>friendships | <input type="radio"/> Feeling known           |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Hope                     | <input type="radio"/> Feeling cared<br>for    |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Comfort                  | <input type="radio"/> Feeling loved           |  |

How does that season of life compare with the relational season you're in now? How have things changed for you, on the friendship front? How have they stayed the same?

We've done the obligatory half-laugh. We've eaten food we hated, and we've tried for so long just to belong somewhere—anywhere—and now, we just want to be with people who feel comfortable. We want friendships that feel secure and made to last.

If you could twinkle your nose and alter your current friendship situation, what circumstances would you want to see unfold? What magic do you wish you could unleash on your present relational reality?



If you're anything like us, seeing that desired state written out in your own handwriting can cause your heart to sink a little: *Will I ever have real friends? Will my current reality ever really change? Is there any hope for me?*

We posed those exact questions and worked like crazy to get them answered, which is how we can tell you with complete confidence that if you stay this course, you *will* have real friends, and that your reality can *absolutely* change, and that there is so, so much hope for us all. As a matter of fact, we wrote an entire book to prove these things to you, so if you haven't read it yet, well, what are you waiting for? It's good! (It's at least *pretty* good. We trust you'll think so.)

We'll talk more in the lessons to come about exactly how to get your reality to look more and more like your friendship dreamscape, but for now, let's get our expectations properly set for what lies ahead. As we noted in chapter 1, previous generations made time for each other. Friendship didn't "just happen." Women got together on a regular basis. They cooked together. They cleaned together. They shopped together. They worshipped God together. They stopped by for a "visit." They shamelessly stuck their noses into each other's business and refused to apologize for it. They tattled on each other's kids. They looked out for their own. They pushed pause on other stuff, just to have time to be with their friends.

They said yes.

They showed up.

They spoke up.

They shared what they had.

They asked the question, and the question after that.

They forgave.

Most importantly, they kept at it, over time.

We bring all this up because despite all the advances in technology that have been made across the years, relationships that are worth their linked arms and private jokes still require a whole lot of action verbs. They still require a significant investment of time and energy and heart. They still demand to be tended to, to be fought for, to be prized.

Just curious: How do you feel about the audacity of friendship to require so much of us? In your previous friendships, have you found these demands to be true?

## WHAT NOW?

There is an upside to this whole dynamic, which we'd like to draw your attention to now: While it is true that finding and maintaining true friendships will require much of us, they return to us vastly more.

Keep investing in friendship. Keep watering. Keep loving. Keep being reliable and consistent. It will be worth it. It will be worth it every time.

Take another look at the benefits you noted on the previous page, during or after that season of friendship you said you enjoyed. What would you say were the top three investments you made during that season? What were the top



three returns? Spend a few minutes calling up those memories in your mind's eye, and then jot down your recollections on the grid below.

### A BELOVED FRIENDSHIP

THE HARD STUFF: INVESTMENTS I MADE	THE GOOD STUFF: BENEFITS I ENJOYED
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

In the end, were those investments worth it? Any encouragement your *previous* self would offer to your *current* self, regarding the value of throwing ourselves fully into the work of finding and keeping good friends?

As we get underway, what fears or insecurities do you think might get in the way of your friendship-building efforts?

In case you haven't committed our entire book to memory just yet, let us remind you that the whole reason we wrote that book, which we divulged in chapter 1, was because we both were tired of being nearly debilitated by fear and insecurity on the relational front.

We were *just sure* that life had overlooked and forgotten us, that we were destined to be lonely for the rest of our days.

We *just knew* that we were the problem, that *we* were the colossal fails.

We both were stuck—there's no other way to put it. We were stuck with no way to move ahead.

The one glimmer of hope for us was that we truly had nothing to lose. When you're staring up at the belly of the bottom of things, there's no way to go but up. And so we decided that we might as well give the whole friendship quest a try. We would devote our best thoughts and prayers and actions to the singular goal of *not doing life alone*. And we would see where that devotion would take us.

You can imagine our shock when it worked.

*It worked.*


Imperfectly, but still.

So, those fears and insecurities that you don't quite know what to do with? We'll get to those. We'll address those. We'll work around those. We'll put those things in your relational rearview mirror. Swear.

Stick with us, deal? We're going places.

Best of all? We're going there *together*.





# When You're Alone and It All Kinda Sucks

Friendship is hard, and it's messy.

*Based on Chapter 2*

Amy

## GET GOING

Adulting is hard. Can I get an amen? Remember the day you realized that if your car was going to have a full tank, *you* were going to have to stop and get gas? And if your bills were going to get handled, *you* were going to have to pay them? And if your clothes were going to get clean, you were going to have to do laundry? Such an unwelcomed wakeup call, isn't it, this thing called becoming an adult?

And then there's friendship. While there was a time long, long ago when you could just show up in some age-appropriate setting—



a preschool classroom, a neighborhood, a ballet class, a sports team, a high-school homeroom, a dorm's dining hall—and make friends, cultivating friendship in adulthood takes *work*. Like, *lots* of work.

Are you feeling this reality these days? How would you describe your current friendship dynamic? More work, or more recess? More pain, or more joy? More trick, or more treat?

I said in chapter 2 that one of the problems with adult friendships is that finding people is so exhausting. It takes so long to break them in! And yet when we let ourselves be held back from forging ahead in friendship, we settle for outright loneliness.

## CATCH YOUR BREATH

Take a moment to sit silently with your answer to the previous question. Are you happy with the truth of your current friendship landscape? If yes, what's making it work so well? If not, why not? What do you wish were true that just isn't the case today?

## DIVE DEEP

When do you notice the pangs of loneliness? What situations bring a lonely sensation to the surface for you? Tick any of the following options, and/or add a few of your own.

- ☐ You walk into a room and don't recognize a single face.

- ☐ A good friendship ends. The friend moves away. Circumstances shift. Things change.
- ☐ You can't find a good friendship in the first place.
- ☐ Your life feels like it's falling apart.
- ☐ You win, and there's nobody to celebrate with.
- ☐ You look up and realize that you're dripping with acquaintances but can't name a single close friend.
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How do you generally cope with your loneliness? Which comforts do you turn to, and how effectively do they help?

In the last few decades, the number of Americans who believe they don't have any close friends has nearly tripled. Even sadder, according to data from the General Social Survey, when people are asked how many confidants they have, the most common answer is none.

Something inside of us knows that loneliness is not a sustainable strategy for getting through life. And yet that breaking-in period of adult friendships can just be the *worst*. We don't know how to make an introduction. We don't know what to say. We don't know what to do. We don't know how to proceed. We don't want to come across as stalkerish. And so we stay put—all alone.

What gives? Why are adult friendships so weird? Why is it so hard to make and keep good friends?

You and I both have weird-friend stories. (Please tell me you have them, too?) I promise I'm not asking you to note a few of them here to torture you. But still: I'm asking you to note them. Think back on a few of the weird-friend situations you've been in. The time when you unintentionally offended someone within the first three minutes of knowing her. The time when things got sideways early on and only got worse from there. The time when you thought you were headed in a good direction, only to discover things weren't what they appeared to be.

What friendship weirdness still messes with you today? What situations have you faced firsthand, in your efforts to make new friends?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

The method to my madness in asking you to replay some of these less-desirable reels is that regardless of how sucky the start, *no effort toward genuine friendship is ever made in vain*. There is always a realization to make, a lesson to learn, a distinction to catalog, an aha to glean. True? True.

Think back on the situations you noted in the previous question. What did you learn from each of them? Complete the sentence starters below.

Because I faced \_\_\_\_\_,

I learned \_\_\_\_\_.

Because I faced \_\_\_\_\_,

I learned \_\_\_\_\_.

Because I faced \_\_\_\_\_,

I learned \_\_\_\_\_.

Because I faced \_\_\_\_\_,

I learned \_\_\_\_\_.

Because I faced \_\_\_\_\_,

I learned \_\_\_\_\_.

The thing is, when you and I take all that we've learned from all that we've experienced into the next friendship, that friendship stands a better chance at success. So, yeah, we can let the old ghosts haunt us interminably and keep us from ever trying again. But equally true is that instead of being haunted, we can be heartened. We can remember that *connected* is how we're made to live.

When we live connected to other people, we grow stronger.

When we live connected to other people, we grow braver.

When we live connected to other people, we build better things.

When we live connected to other people, we are more helpful.



When we live connected to other people, we are happier.

When we live connected to other people, we more frequently *light up the dark*.

Let me ask you: If you and I were sitting across from each other, a bowl of thick, creamy queso and a giant basket of tortilla chips between us, and I asked you to rattle off your top-ten list of favorite memories from your life so far, what would you say?

Go ahead. Give it a whirl. (If coming up with your *all-time top ten* is too intimidating, then how about ten *favorite* memories? Ten *pretty good* memories? Ten times life didn't suck?) Ready, set, write:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Now, go back to that list and circle the ones that feature you by yourself, all alone.

I'll wait.

How many did you circle? I'm guessing somewhere around . . . none?

*Life is meant to be lived connected.* To people. To sisters. To *friends*.



You know that I'm a Jesus-girl through and through, and one of the things that keeps me coming back to the (weird, awkward, awful, sometimes-embarrassing) process of making and keeping friends is that I have noticed a trend in my life: Whenever I grow in my relationship with God, I long to grow in my relationships with the people he creates and loves. As I realize with fresh awareness how good he has been to me, I can't help but want to be good to the girls in my life. As I see how deeply he loves me, it's like I start craving someone to love.

How do you connect with this idea that you, too, are divinely seen and loved?

We don't crave connection because we are doing life wrong. We crave connection because, to the depths of our DNA, that's how we were built. We were built to be together and to love together and to laugh together and to experience life together.

Do you think it's possible to love people without loving God? What about the inverse? Can you love God without loving the people he has made?

## WHAT NOW?

Regardless of what you've been through on the friendship front, and of how things are looking for you today, my promise to you is that you were not only *made* for friendship, but also that sturdy friendships can be yours. You don't have to believe me just yet. In this early stage of our journey together, you can borrow my belief. All I'm asking you to do is to *act* like you believe. I'm asking you to trust Jess and me not to lead you astray. I'm asking you to step out in faith. (Baby-stepping is totally fine.)

Baby steps are just the right speed for success.


All right. Here goes. Your (baby) step for this week is to pick at least one of the (terrifying! disconcerting! uncomfortable! unpredictable!) actions below to complete before you start lesson three. I'm here for you. I've got you. More importantly, *you've got this.*

- ☐ Show up, even though you really, really want to stay home.
- ☐ Extend the invitation you so wish you could receive.

- ☐ Answer the call.
- ☐ Reply (truthfully) to the text right away.
- ☐ Remember—and celebrate—the birthday.
- ☐ Swallow your pride. Let what goes without saying go without saying.

Are you sweating, just *reading* that list? Been there, done that, too. My best advice is to gather your scared, sweaty self together and get going on nailing that list.





# When You Can't Amazon Prime Your Friendships

Life is too beautiful and too  
terrible not to do it with people  
who truly know and love us.

*Based on Chapter 3*

Jess

## GET GOING

Time. Finding someone who actually has enough of it is like spotting a unicorn in the wild. *Nobody* has enough time. Ask around, and the first thing most people will tell you in response to your saying, “Hey, how are you doing!” is some version of, “Fine! Busy. But fine. Did I mention busy?”

Have you ever wondered what we’re all so busy doing?



Let's start with you. Not to be crass, but what *are* you so busy doing?

## CATCH YOUR BREATH

Can you spare sixty seconds? I want to invite you to think about your answer here, the answer to what you're so busy doing. How does your response line up with your values? In other words, regarding how you're spending your time these days, how close are you to being the person you say you want to be?

## DIVE DEEP

If you're like me, you can't even find time to sweep the crumbs off the kitchen floor that have been there since Taco Tuesday . . . three weeks ago. Finding time to cultivate friendships? Ha. Or more the case: *Hahahahaha!* Who has time for that?

And yet in the same way that we sometimes mysteriously, miraculously find time to know every plot point of every episode of *Bridgerton* at all times, as we start to see the importance of sisters in our day-to-day lives, we'll start carving out time for them, too.

What obligations or activities do you suspect might have to take a back seat for a while—a month, a year, the next five

decades?—if you were to start prioritizing reaching out to, encouraging, and engaging with friends?

- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

Who in your life right now do you wish you could start with?  
Who do you wish you could stop being acquaintances—or even *strangers*—with and start a friendship with them?

Hang onto those names as you work through this lesson and the lessons to come. I'm willing to bet that those people are on your heart and mind for a reason. Let's see if we can sort out why that is.

✧ ✧ ✧

While it's true that it takes a long time to make old friends, I can't think of many things in this life that are better than old friendships that still sing. Think about your own life . . . your current friendship landscape, if you will.

Describe a time when you've really “been there” for a friend. Something big went down, you got the text or the call, you said yes, and you actually showed up for her. What were the



circumstances? What do you remember about the turn of events?

Now the fun part. If I asked you to rewind that relationship to the very beginning, what shared experiences between you and that friend qualified you to be there for her that day? Jot down as many as you can recall.

There is always a story between a friendship's first memory and "being there" for a friend. There are always a *thousand* stories, truth be told. Friendship is like that, unfolding and evolving and deepening over time—you know, that thing that we don't seem to have.

Realizing you don't have old friends is like realizing you don't have full-grown trees in your yard. You don't want a sapling. A sapling doesn't do anything. In fact, you have to water and care for a sapling. A sapling takes time, and you don't have time. What you really want is to be able to sit and drink lemonade in the shade of its giant branches, right this very minute. You demand the comfort only a large trunk and leaves can provide, and you don't want to wait for something to grow.

**Question for you:** If time weren't an issue, what types of friendship experiences do you wish you could share with someone?

What adventures would you embark on, what stores would you hit, what classes would you take, what fun things would you learn, what habits would you form with someone, if you only had time for a friend?

## WHAT NOW?

It's tempting to buy into the belief that the old friends we have today just magically appeared out of thin air, but the reality is that every friendship begins with one person reaching out to another, asking a question, making an invitation, risking looking ridiculous, and working like crazy at being a friend.

Could you be that "one person" today?

What could you say or do today that would convey to a potential friend some pretty powerful messages:

- "I see you."
- "I value you."
- "I am interested in knowing you better."
- "I am prepared to invest in your life . . . for real."

For the record, who *doesn't* like to hear these things? You and I both like to know that someone out there sees us and values us and finds us interesting, don't we?

Yeah. Rhetorical question, if ever there were one.

So, with that reality in mind, let's hit that question once more: What could you say or do today to convey life-giving messages such as those? Tick the ideas below that resonate most with you and/or invent a few of your own.

- ☐ Text a kind word to a friend.
- ☐ Set up a monthly girls' night out with a few people you'd love to know better.

- Ask a friend how she's doing regarding a situation you know she's dealing with. Then, ask the next question after that. How can you help? What burden can you help bear? How might you pray for her? When is a good time for you to check in again?
- Initiate a Facetime call with a friend who lives far away.
- Strike up a conversation with someone you don't know but who catches your attention for some reason.
- Get two of something fun or functional today—a latte, a great-smelling candle, a box of brownie mix, a jumbo package of toilet paper?—and share with a neighbor or friend.

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What do you think the effect could be of incorporating simple—and yeah, sometimes random—acts of kindness into your set of daily to-do's? How might your friendship circle expand? How might your current friendships grow?