



Befriend: Create Belonging in an Age of Judgment, Isolation, and Fear

Scott Sauls , Ann Voskamp (Foreword)

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Is "real" friendship too risky? We live in a world where real friendship is hard to find. Suspicious of others and insecure about ourselves, we retreat into the safety of our small, self-made worlds. Now more than ever, it's easy to avoid people with whom we disagree or whose life experiences don't mirror our own. Safe among like-minded peers and digital "friends," we really don't have to engage with those who can challenge and enhance our limited perspectives. Tragically, even the church can become a place that minimizes diversity and reinforces isolation. Jesus models a much richer vision of friendship. Scott Sauls, pastor and teacher, invites you to see the breadth of Christ's love in this book, "BeFriend." Join Scott on this journey through twenty-one meditations to inspire actively pursuing God's love through expanding your circle of friends. Scott has met too many people whose first impulse is to fence off their lives with relational barriers that only end up starving their own souls. Yes, it's true: Real friendship is costly. Love does make us vulnerable. But without risk, our lives will remain impoverished. Join Scott in "BeFriend" as he summons you toward diverse friendship that can enrich your life and, in the process, reveal a better version of yourself.

Befriend: Create Belonging in an Age of Judgment, Isolation, and Fear Details

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From Reader Review Befriend: Create Belonging in an Age of Judgment, Isolation, and Fear for online ebook

Porter Sprigg says

An excellent book about compassion and the love of God which stretches to everyone, even those who we don't naturally gravitate towards. I deeply appreciate the kindness, thoughtfulness, and honesty with which Sauls writes. He communicates why we need to make friends and how to thoughtfully love those friends.

Meggie says

This book is rooted in the truth of the gospel. It offered me fresh eyes to see how the gospel impacts my heart, and in turn, my interactions with others. Knowing my deep brokenness and need for salvation changes how I connect with other people. The first and last chapters helped me understand this in a new way, especially to have a knowledge that everyone around me is in some kind of struggle. That impacts how they engage with me; and my personal struggles impact how I engage with them. This has truly and profoundly changed my way of relating.

That's mostly where my positive thoughts about this book end. Each chapter takes a different "people group" and offers insight for how to relate to them, change our perspective, love them. While offering true insight, as I slogged through the book, I was frustrated by an "us-them" mentality that made me feel like I was just reading about other people. Yes, there's much to be learned from those of other races, abilities, viewpoints, etc., but perhaps it is not so unifying to spend so much time discussing those differences.

Rebecca Cal says

Insightful

Befriend... there are some great thoughts here. Many resonate with things I already believed, others were new thoughts. The last chapter was worth the whole book.

Milla says

This is one of the most important books I've read yet this year. We studied this book as a church group, which allowed us to move slowly and really chew on and discuss each chapter, and the principles have already changed the way I see the city and the people around me. One of Sauls' main points is that we need friendships with people unlike us, as being in real relationship helps us to learn, to grow, to be challenged, and to become more like Christ. He really challenges the church and the ways it falls short while also showing what a beautiful thing the church can be when it follows Christ's example of living in relationship. Wow... I could go on and on. This book pointed me towards Christ, gave me more love for people, and filled me with hope for the church. I highly recommend it.

Nathan Albright says

[Note: This book was provided free of charge by BuzzPlant in exchange for an honest review.]

There are some joys about getting books like this one in unedited edition for advance readers. One can see, for example, the elements of the book that wait until the end, such as the detailed footnotes for the citations and sources included in this book. Sometimes, though, one is missing content that one would really want, and sadly, in reading this book, the chapter I wanted to read the most was not included--befriending the opposite sex [1]. Fortunately, the other chapters of this book, which is a bit under 200 pages, are good enough that even with this crucial chapter missing, it was still an immensely worthwhile book. Most people who know me, even people that may not like me that much, would probably concede even if grudgingly that I am a particularly friendly person. This book was written for friendly people, people who want to be friends and think kindly of basically everyone, and to do so from a godly and Christian perspective. It is the sort of book I enjoyed reading, something that encouraged my own personal tendencies and habits with regards to befriending others, and was a pointed reminder of the difficulty of being a gracious person as well as a godly one.

The contents of this book--the twenty chapters that are included in the version I read at least--make it clear that believers are to befriend or at least try to befriend nearly everyone: the person in the mirror, the "other," prodigals and Pharisees, the wrecked and the restless, the shamed and ashamed, the ones you cannot control, true friends and significant others, sexual minorities, dysfunctional family members, children, those grieving and dying, the poor and empty-handed, the other race, the rich and powerful, bullies and perpetrators, women and humans not born yet, strangers and refugees, those who vote against us, people with disabilities, God. There are at least some of these lists where people would place me, others that are filled with people I encounter in the course of my ordinary life, and the author manages to include a great deal of personal stories about himself and his family, often told with a sense of self-effacing candor that fits with the other writing by the author I am familiar with [2], and with the same basic point, that we should be loving and kind to everyone, not merely those like us or those who happen to like us. No, we must be friendly even to those who hate us and fear us and mistrust us, as difficult as that is.

It is hard to overstate how practical this book is in light of our contemporary polarization and hatred and intolerance. The author wades into political debates about race, about abortion, about homosexuality, and does so without sacrificing biblical truths about either our obligation to be loving and gracious or about the conduct that is being dealt with. The author reminds us, and the reminder is a necessary one, that our opinions about issues and our worldview concerning behavior or sin does not give us the greenlight to hate people on those grounds. The author even, uncomfortably, addresses our need to befriend those who have committed terrible crimes and sins, to forgive them of their wrongs, even as we recognize that there are consequences that last even after forgiveness is given, and to pray for reconciliation even after wrongs like rape and murder. This is not an easy book, and what it asks of its readers is immensely difficult. There are many books that encourage a cheap sort of ragamuffin grace, but this book points out over and over again just how costly the grace is that we are to show to ourselves and to other people. Those of us who seek to be gracious in our own lives are often reminded painfully of this fact, and those who have yet to try should be encouraged but also suitably warned by the contents of this most excellent book.

[1] See, for example:

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.wordpress...>

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[2] See, for example:

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.wordpress...>

Mark says

It is surely an indictment of Western culture, but also very revealing, that this is a necessary book. But I do believe it is. For in an age of parochial self-interest, culture-war mentalities, and brutal ad hominem politics, the notion of friendship with anyone who is different from me in any way (politically, culturally, economically, physically, racially, educationally etc etc) seems hard to imagine. It certainly won't happen without a concerted effort or a degree of humility and readiness to listen.

So Scott Sauls' book is a timely antidote. He has a refreshing willingness to transgress prevailing social divides. His is an important challenge. In Trump's America this is more urgent than ever. But the same must be said of an increasingly nationalistic Europe. If the followers of the boundary-destroying Nazarene can't do what he did then what hope do any of us have?

So I really enjoyed this book: a sequence of brief but challenging calls to befriend 'others' whom many of us would rather ignore. To this end, Sauls is provocatively non-partisan. No one can get away with a smug complacency after this.

If I had one quibble (and it really is a small point) an editor could have helpfully excised some of the slight tendency to name-dropping and Tim Keller name-checking! Sauls worked with the latter in NYC and was naturally deeply influenced. But we don't need to have his great virtues extolled at every mention! But hey - what do I know? I never worked with Tim Keller!

Rachel B says

DNF'd at 13%.

Right from the get-go, I found myself in disagreement with Sauls on the value of various friendships. He compares "real" friendship to digital friendship, transactional friendship, and one-dimensional friendship. I get where he was coming from re: digital and transactional friendships, but then he described what he calls one-dimensional friendships: friendships that revolve around a single shared interest.

So in his mind, if you have a friend that you only ever meet with to go for bicycle rides, or put together puzzles, or have a playdate with your kids, those aren't "real" friendships, and they will leave you "distanced, isolated, and afraid." (p. 7)

He fails to recognize the value of those types of relationships and the fact that we can't be *everyone's* everything. Not even Jesus, while He was on earth, had the same type of relationship with each of his friends! While it's a gift to have a friendship with someone who you can call when things go right and when they go wrong, who's loyal and makes time and works through differences, etc., it's also a gift to have someone who's involved in your life only to the extent of your shared interests. Friendships don't have to be divided along this line of "best/closest friends = real and good" and "situational/casual friends = fake and bad." Sometimes all you need is to know that when you show up to a weekly event, there will be someone there who will offer a smile and be genuinely glad to see you, even if you don't know each other well - *and even if you never will*.

The other thing that bothered me was his apparent love of repetition as a writing tool. On every page, there are multiple instances of this kind of writing: "You too do abc. You too do xyx. You too do 123; Don't forget abc. Don't forget xyz. Don't forget 123." It makes for a dramatic reading, like Sauls was trying very hard to write something profound, and it was simply overdone.

David Harris says

This is about different categories of people we ought to befriend: not really about befriending itself. The introduction was solid - Sauls talked about the need for friendship in our disintegrated world. Quotes Lewis's Four Loves (how could you not?) but goes downhill from there. The most disappointing element in the book however, was not that it seemed it missed its mark entirely (which I believe it did) but rather the author's views on shame. Shame is a bad thing, Sauls said. This was fascinating to me, having recently read Keller and Lewis on how shame is both an explanation of the reality of evil, and the proper response to sin. Again, for Keller and Lewis, shame is ultimately dealt with through redemption. For Sauls (although at times he has great gospel clarity in the book he deserves credit for) shame is something overcome through changing our self image.

Summary: Title is deceiving. Cool cover design. Quotes a good book that actually deals friendship. Buy that one. I would be ashamed (*gasp) to give this more than two stars.

Shawna says

Pretty basic. If you already have friends that cross cultural, racial, sexual identity lines, you don't need this book. If you live an isolated, Christian friends only life, you need this book.

Lauren says

I'm really glad I read this book. It's insightful, humble, honest, and drenched in scripture. I'm really encouraged and inspired after reading it. It's an easy read - highly recommend!!

Nora St Laurent says

Take your time in reading this book. There is so much inside. The author states, "Real friendship is hard... There are other, less real versions of friendship. The less real version are "less" because they are less costly, less committed, less descriptive, less scary, less gritty, less gutsy, and less out-of-our-control than real friendship. But here's the rub... Less "real" versions of friendship are also less rich. In the short run, they feel better and smoother than real friendships. But in the long run, they leave us lonely and alone. And it is not good to be alone."

This explains how we can have thousands of friends on FB; be more connected than we've ever been in our lives and feel all alone. This is a new phenomenon we didn't grow up with and our children are navigating without use (because we can't be with them 24/7.)

With our children growing up with virtual friends and getting to know people through texting and having a player join their video games; I think that this book is very important for everyone to read. There was a time when we knew our kids friends and could help them navigate things but now any more. The scary thing is you don't really know the other person on-line because their profile may not be real. Bad guys can sit in their homes and pick their prey. Being educated on what to look for in relationships will help you spot what is real and what makes you go "hum" It's also a helpful refresher course on what is important. The author discusses the following types of relationships (and so much more.) in an engaging way.

1. Digital Friendships – Facebook, video game friends etc. The kinds of friends your kids can talk to without leaving the house.
2. Transactional friendships – this isn't really friendship. "Unlike real friendship, transactional friendship treats other people as a means to an end. When we relate this way, we come to view people more as resources than as human beings. Instead of loving and serving them as we would in a real friendship, we use them to advance our careers, build our platforms, gain access to their social circle, increase our self-esteem) impress others, etc."

I'm glad he talks about this. I think this is important. Sad to say that this is happening in the work force too. Everyone is replaceable and viewed as a resource.

3. One-dimensional friendships – "happens when they revolve around a single shared interest and not much else."

I'm glad he talks about this too. Sometimes we have friends that like to do the same things but it doesn't go any deeper than that. It's ok to have these friends but don't expect it to go anywhere other than the events shared.

A Case For Befriending. C.S. Lewis says, "All true friendship begins when one person looks at another and says, "You, too?"" When a friendship grows beyond one dimension to many dimensions – a poverty of

friendship is replaced by a richness of friendship...Everybody matures and grows. And when everybody matures and grows everyone wins.”

I’m so glad this author took apart the topic of friendships and relationships in general. In a time where everyone is racing to have more “friends” than the other; it’s a refreshing look at what is “real” and what is pretend. Face to face relationships are important. They take work and risk. So much is lost in a text or a comment on facebook. Our words can be distorted and emphasis on something the writer never intended. This book is a keeper. It’s one I’ll be reading over and over again; each time getting another revelation I didn’t see the last time I read it.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received a complimentary copy of this book from Tyndale Publishers. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255 “Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising”

Nora St. Laurent

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The Book Club Network blog www.psalms16.blogspot.com

Book Fun Magazine www.bookfunmagazine.com

Dee Bell says

Do you feel that making friends has gotten harder since you became an adult? I do. Most of my remaining friendships were established early in my life. Honestly, I seem to have taken the aphorism, "no new friends" to heart. Even among those who I have recently befriended, I do not maintain the friendships. So when I saw the book *Befriend: create belonging in an age of judgment, isolation, and fear* by Scott Sauls available to review, I had to order it.

When I was a child, making friends was as easy as asking someone if they wanted to play together. After that, we were usually life long friends. I still maintain friendships with former kids from the old neighborhood who I met at the park down the hill from my home.

Sauls opens the book by defining the different types of what he calls "less real" friendships: digital, transactional, and one-dimensional. I have been on both sides of all three of these types of friendships and currently seem to be stuck in a pattern of both giving and receiving aspects of each of them. Somewhere along the line, I lost the vulnerability of opening myself up to mutual reciprocity.

Befriend is a collection twenty essays. Sauls recommends that readers read the book in a community - a book club or inviting a friend to read it along with you so you can discuss it together. He also suggests reading it as a daily study where you read a chapter a day. Finally, you can always just read it as you would any other book. Once I finally got into the book, I was a little disappointed to discover that it wasn't a practical guidebook on how to develop those richer types of real friendships that we seek. Instead it seemed to be an overview of how Christian practice can serve as a catalyst for friendship. He shares stories of how alcoholics and drug users were embraced by the acts of kindness by church members. Each chapter outlines ways that you can befriend different types of people, yet didn't seem to make a direct connection to developing deeper friendships. The end of each chapter has a summary, scripture, and a thought to consider.

Take aways:

The book is scripturally-based and Christ-centered.

The book offers readers a chance to reflect on the reading by posing thoughts to consider.

The first chapter of the book seems disconnected from the rest of the book. Many of the stories of how friendships developed seemed to be based on one of the three types of "less real" friendships. I think that it would have been more powerful to include personal stories of long lasting friendships and add tips on how they maintained those friendships.

I really had high hopes for this book. I love the book cover and the premise of the book, but the content left me wanting more.

*Tyndale House provided a complimentary copy of this book in exchange for my honest opinion.

Katherine Jones says

My husband and I have several friends who choose, very intentionally, to make friendship the center of their Christian ministry. This is a beautiful thing and, quite honestly, I think very much what Jesus had in mind when He discipled His followers. He modeled it Himself, showing that the best kind of witness begins with genuine friendship.

These friends do naturally what others — especially those who have grown up in a digital, online culture which by its very nature inhibits authentic friendship — might need to be shown another way.

This is, of course, what Scott Sauls' insightful, incisive book is all about.

Part of BeFriend's appeal is that it's neither ponderous nor preachy. The 21 bite-sized chapters — essays, really — are pithy and to the point. Each easily consumed in one sitting. And incidentally, it's Scott Sauls' hope that readers will digest his book either in community or as a personal study. Toward this end, he includes helpful prompts and further Scripture reading with each chapter to facilitate deeper thought on each topic.

For me personally, his chapter on befriending Dysfunctional Family Members provided welcome perspective and balm. So too did his chapters on befriending Those Who Vote Against Us. But I have to say it was his thoughts on befriending Sexual Minorities that gave me the greatest encouragement. In it, he expands on a theme he hits on earlier: grace before ethics. So many of us have gotten off the track by reversing these two, but no one — no one — is drawn to Jesus (or anything else, for that matter) by condemnation. Scott puts it this way:

“It's not that ethics are unimportant. Ethics are very important. But we can't talk about ethics in a productive way without the necessary prerequisite of friendship.” (page 79)

BeFriend is worth reading for these chapters alone, for the author's gracious, outside-the-box provision of a way forward through today's divisive climate. How I've needed that.

Have you? Then I highly recommend you get your hands on this book. You — and your newfound friends — will be grateful you did.

Thanks to Tyndale House Publishers for providing me this copy free of charge. All opinions are mine.

Kaitlyn Watson says

When I got this book I was going through a rough time, struggling in all my friendships and wondering if friendship was even worth what it seemed to cost me. I saw the summery of this book, it asked the same question I had been for months "Is friendship worth it?"

I got the book ASAP, and when I started it I thought it was going to give me the answers I was looking for. Sadly it didn't.

Befriend is a book about finding the friendship you have in Christ, and how to be a friend to the various types of people, including the ones you may not like. Each section is filled with helpful advice with questions to challenge you and your friends if you decide to read this in a group. Which I personally recommend doing, it will help all of you grow closer.

I loved the book, but compared to what I read on the back of it's cover it was different from what I was hoping to find. It's still a wonderful book on how to be a friend, but if you are someone like me asking the question, "is friendship worth the cost?", then you'll need to find another book.

Befriend deals more with how to be a friend, which is a helpful thing to know for many people and why I still like this book and highly recommend it, just don't expect it to be what the back cover describes.

That's all for today folks. Until next time I hope you have a blessed day!

I received this book in exchange for an honest review, which I have given.

Joelle says

Convicting, thought-provoking, and balanced. Sauls has an interesting perspective on many current social issues. He offers much to think about without becoming "preachy", and he regularly directs you back to scripture. This is a great book club or discussion group selection--could even be a small bible study.... a worthwhile read!
