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*I am sure that your goodness and love
will follow me all the days of my life.*

Psalm

God Cares How I Feel

Psalm

God Cares How I Feel

Acknowledgments

Friendship Ministries is an interdenominational, international ministry with people who have intellectual disabilities. Through consultation and with the help of resources that encourage spiritual development and relationships, Friendship Ministries helps churches to include people with intellectual disabilities in fellowship and service as members of the body of Christ.

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Illustrated by Michael Walker

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Contact Us

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Introduction

This course on the psalms introduces friends of all ages to the book of Psalms, with its honest expressions to God by psalm writers in diverse settings. A good way to begin your preparation for teaching this course is to set aside time each day to read and reflect on the psalms. Working your way into the psalms will not only offer you new avenues for expressing your own deep feelings to the Lord but will also enable you to listen sympathetically to those you teach as you encourage their personal and spiritual growth. These sessions are intended to familiarize friends with the psalms as expressions of trust in God's love and to stimulate them to respond to God with their own feelings, honestly and freely, as the psalm writers did.

As you teach, keep these general goals in mind:

- Friends will understand that the book of Psalms contains the honest words of God's people expressing their feelings to him.
- Friends will become familiar with a number of key psalms and the emotions they express to God.
- Friends will realize that God invites and accepts honest expressions of emotion from his people.
- Friends will express their own feelings to God more freely.

How Is This Course Designed?

Materials for this course include the following components:

- Leader/Mentor Guide (includes session plans for the large group session and the mentoring session, as well as appendices of songs, reproducible materials, and so forth)
- Group Leader's Resources: DVD Version (includes audio-visual psalm presentations, dramatic readings of Bible stories, and songs)

- Eight take-home cards for youth and adults (includes a set of psalm symbols for friends and mentors, as well as take-homes for sessions 2-8)
- **Optional:** If you're unable to use DVD presentations in your setting, we suggest purchasing the Group Leader's Resources: Print and CD Version (containing pictures for each psalm presentation as well as audio psalm presentations, Bible stories, and songs).

LEADER TIP

We hope you'll find the DVD a fine teaching tool for this course, but you'll also want to check out the Devotional CD. It would make a wonderful gift for each friend in your program and would serve to keep alive the meaning of these sessions in your friends' lives long after the course ends.

Leader/Mentor Guide

This course includes eight sessions, each focusing on a particular psalm and the emotion it expresses. Following these regular sessions you'll find a review session (session 9) with lots of ideas for crafts and activities that will help everyone recall the psalms and stories of the course. We've also included plans for a concluding celebration session (session 10). This culminating session is a time for your Friendship group to sing praises and share God's love with each other, with friends and family, or with your entire congregation.

In the back of the Leader/Mentor Guide you'll find

- copies of the psalms used in this course.
- scripts for each Bible story told in the course.
- words and music for the songs suggested in the session plans, along with signing directions or motions for key words in several of the songs.
- photocopiable patterns for the display board, nametags, and other activities.
- other reproducible materials, including the course litany.

Group Leader's Resources: DVD Version

If you've taught other Friendship courses, you'll notice that this is a new component. It contains all the audio-visual resources you'll need for the group sessions. (We'd love to hear from you how it works.) We hope the audio-visual presentations of the psalms will enhance your teaching of each session truth and will introduce friends in a deeper way to the expressions of God's people to him—in all kinds of situations. You'll also find the Bible stories recorded on the DVD, as well as the songs that are introduced and sung from week to week.

Take-Home Cards

The set of eight take-home cards has been designed for use during the one-on-one mentoring time for sessions 2-8. It's important to separate the first card from each set before distributing the cards to mentors. You'll notice that card #1 contains two identical sets of symbols—each symbol representing a particular psalm (and its feeling) you'll be teaching your group. You'll want to cut out all of the symbols (or enlist the aid of a volunteer) and put them in containers, a set for each session. As mentors and friends arrive each week, give everyone a symbol for the psalm you'll be introducing during the group session. (Note, too, that on pp. 154-157 of this guide there are larger versions of each symbol for use on your display board and in other teaching moments during the course.)

Optional: Group Leader's Resources: Print and CD Version

We hope the DVD will work well for you; however, if you do not have access to the equipment needed, you can purchase and use the optional Print and CD Version of the group leader's resources. Simply play the psalm presentations on the audio CD and show the group the pictures that illustrate the reading. The CD also includes all the songs and Bible stories for each session.

LEADER TIP

When you order your materials, you'll need

- one Leader/Mentor Guide for the group leader(s) and one for each mentor.
- one set of Group Leader's Resources (DVD Version or Print and CD Version) for the group leader(s).
- one set of take-home cards for each mentor/friend pair.

Here's a suggested schedule for a 60-90 minute session:

10-15 minutes	Conversation, getting settled, welcome, announcements
20-30 minutes	Group session Step 1: Praising God Together Step 2: Learning About the Psalm
20-30 minutes	One-on-one mentoring session Step 3: Reflecting on the Psalm Step 4: Responding to God with Our Feelings
10-15 minutes	Social time with refreshments and fellowship

Singing

Throughout the session plans we've suggested songs that are relevant to the psalms, Bible stories, and key truths of the sessions. You'll find words and music for new songs in the back of this guide, along with signing directions or motions for some of the words. You'll also find the songs recorded on the DVD (or the CD).

We encourage you to choose other songs that are favorites of your group. Choose songs

- with repetitive phrases.
- with easy-to-learn, catchy tunes.
- that are regularly sung in congregational worship in the churches your friends attend.

Consider adding rhythm instruments and signing for friends who are nonverbal. Draw on the gifts of your group members to sing solo parts and to lead the worship time.

Prayer

As we've watched friends grow spiritually over the years, we've marveled at their desire to praise God through prayer and to bring the needs of others to Jesus. Be creative when planning for this part of your praise and worship time. You might

- lay prayer card requests on an empty chair.
- list requests on a prayer board.
- make prayer chains with words and drawings to illustrate praise and petition.
- follow the ACTS prayer model: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication.
- celebrate answered prayers with balloons, photos, and other visual reminders.
- share prayer requests with the larger church family through bulletin announcements, phone calls, notes in mailboxes, and so on.
- use signing and movement to express praise and thanksgiving.

LEADER TIP

Looking for other ideas for your opening worship time? Check the Friendship Bible Studies units for songs, prayers, and other activities that you can adapt for this course. You'll find a list of these materials at www.friendship.org.

We'd love to hear from you as you teach this course—or afterwards. Please e-mail us at friendship@friendship.org with questions or comments. In the meantime, we hope this material will bless you and each person in your group.

SESSION I

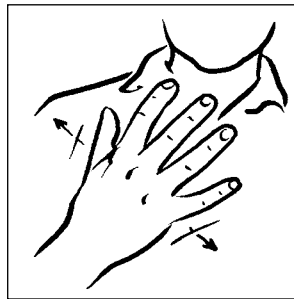
In Awe of God

Psalm 8

Symbol



Sign



Awe

Bible Story: Creation

Scripture

Psalm 8; Genesis 1-2

Key Biblical Truth

God made the world and gave me an important place in it.

Session Goals

Friends and mentors will

😊 realize God wants us to tell him what we're feeling.

♥ sense that God loves us and cares about our feelings.

👐 tell God how amazing and wonderful his world is.

Materials for Group Session

- Bible
- Printed copy of Psalm 8 (p. 114)
- Heart nametags (pattern and directions on p. 151)
- Symbols for session 1 (take-home card 1), one for each friend and mentor
- DVD player and course DVD (or CD player, CD, and Psalm Pictures)
- Globe or inflatable world ball
- Display board (pattern and directions on p. 152)
- Litany for course, two copies (p. 153)
- Session 1 symbol (p. 154) and tape
- Bible story script, two copies (p. 124)
- Props for storytelling (artificial floor plants, nature sounds), optional

LEADER TIP

To be prepared to lead session 1—and this course!—you’ll need to do a bit of up-front work. Consider asking a volunteer who enjoys organizing, designing, and putting things together to help you.

First, you’ll need to put together a display board that you’ll use in every session. (See p. 152 for materials needed and instructions for assembling it.)

You’ll also need to prepare a nametag for each mentor and friend in your group. (See p. 151 for directions.)

Also enlist the help of a volunteer in cutting out the session symbols (see take-home card 1—you should have a set of take-home cards for each mentor/friend pair in your group). Cut out all of the symbols for session 1 and put them in an envelope or small plastic bag for safe-keeping. Do the same for the seven remaining symbols, placing each set in its own envelope. (You’ll be distributing a new symbol each week to mentors and friends as they arrive.)

Focusing on God’s Word

Psalm 8 is a declarative praise psalm written by an individual who most Bible scholars agree is David. It is thought that David, on a clear night while watching his sheep, looked up into the skies and was awestruck by what he saw. The wonder of this star-lit sky was a glorious revelation of God’s creativity, a picture of marvelous majesty, which brought forth words of praise. But not only was David mindful of the vastness and beauty he was beholding, he also was in awe of his personal place in this created order.

Out of this comes a feeling of smallness: Why would God be mindful of humankind? Why does God care personally about each and every person? It was hard for David to fathom that a God who is so great, who made such a beautiful, massive creation, would not only recognize and care about each person, but give them a position in this creation that is a little lower than the heavenly beings—rulers of his

creation and everything in it. This is another reason for awe, wonder, and praise.

The Awesomeness of God

When we are confronted with the majesty and glory of God, our feelings, our expressions cannot easily be captured in words. Throughout the Psalms David, along with other writers, tries to put into words his thoughts and feelings. Look what God has done! How can that be expressed in a sentence or two? What David puts forth is a litany of adoration. Such adoration comes not only from the mouths of adults, but also, as David recounts, from the lips of children. God has made his wonder so clear that everyone from the greatest to the littlest can see and witness the glory of God. So all should see and revere God in every part of his created order.

The Awesomeness of God's Creation

When one examines the grandeur, as well as the detail of this universe, one cannot help but see a masterful designer behind all this. Yet, unlike in the day of David, we have made great progress in the examination of this world and the universe as a whole. Those who witness the awesomeness and intricacies of the created order can only conclude that there was a designer who put this all together with great care.

Psalm 8 bears testimony to the words written in the first two chapters of Genesis. The moon and stars were not simply put in place by God—he did it with his own fingers. Creation was a very personal project. So when we sing “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands,” let us remember his fingers at work.

The Awesomeness of God's Placement of Each One of Us

Not only does David feel very small in light of the creation, he also feels quite honored. He is honored because God has given David (and each one of us) the key role in taking care of his creation. He has put us in a place where we rule the work of his hands; we must not neglect, abuse, or mistreat this awesome gift. God has put us in charge—accountable caretakers, responsible royalty.

Praise God for this creation, for his people, and for the honor we have been given in his world! All of this should fill us with awe and wonder, so with David we sing: “LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in the whole earth!”

Group Session for Youth and Adults (Steps 1 & 2)

Welcome!

Especially if this is your first session of a new Friendship season, make everyone feel at home by

- welcoming each arriving friend and mentor by name and presenting each one with a necklace nametag to wear. (You'll find the pattern and directions on p. 151.)
- presenting each person with the symbol for this session (hands holding a globe). (You'll find these symbols on the take-home card for session 1. Keep the remaining sets of symbols to distribute each week at the opening of your group session. Be sure to give mentors the take-home cards they'll need for use in sessions 2-8.)

Also place the heart display board in a central area where everyone can see it. (You will find a diagram and assembly directions on p. 152.) You'll use this display board each week, adding new symbols session by session.

Have your DVD player set up with the course DVD ready to use for today's psalm presentation. (Or, if you're using the audio CD and Psalm Pictures instead, have them ready.)

LEADER TIP

The two halves of a heart are a popular jewelry item—each half is worn by one of two friends and symbolizes one's love for the other. In Scripture, the heart also refers to the human soul, which contains a person's thoughts and feelings. The psalms recorded the heartfelt prayers of God's people—people made in God's image, created with thoughts and feelings. The nametags for this course represent the heart-to-heart relationship that each of us has with God. Our prayer is that, as you work through this course, the hearts of everyone in your group will fit together with God's heart.

STEP 1: Praising God Together

Begin your praise time by singing "He's Got the Whole World" (p. 143; DVD; or CD, track 4). Ask someone to hold up high the globe or inflatable world ball as you sing. Then pass the globe from person to person as you sing, "He's got (insert name) in his hands."

Sing a few of your group's other favorites, too, especially those songs that refer to God's majesty and the wonder of God's creation. Then introduce the theme song for this course, "He Knows My Name" (p. 144). (You might want to listen to it ahead of time on the DVD or CD [track 1 or 21] and check out the signing suggestions on p. 144).

Please note: The recording of this song is available in two versions: a regular edition and a special-guest edition sung by Joe Covaci, a friend who lives in Waterloo, Ontario.

Introduce the litany for these sessions on the psalms (“We Come to You!”). Read the litany through for the group, asking a mentor or friend to stand facing you and read the responses. Then repeat the litany, asking everyone (who’s able) to join you on the response. End with the phrase “When we feel awe!” following it with the closing praise lines. (You might want to wait until next time to add the signing for “awe.”)

LEADER TIP

The introduction offers suggestions for singing and prayer (p. 7). For this first session stick to familiar routines and introduce only one or two new things.

STEP 2: Learning About the Psalm

Listening to the Psalm

Show the group how you can open and close the doors to the heart on your display board. Explain that you want to keep the doors open! Your big poster heart is like our hearts—we want to keep them open to God. We want God to know what we’re feeling in our hearts. Ask everyone to sit quietly, eyes closed, and think about what they’re feeling. Then ask everyone to open their eyes and look at the pictures (night sky, ocean, mountains) on the DVD or the Psalm Pictures for this session. Take time to share responses to statements like these: The night sky makes me feel like God is _____. The ocean makes me feel like God is _____. The mountains make me feel like God is _____. (Accept simple words such as “big” and “great.”)

Show the group where Psalm 8 is found in your Bible and say you’re going to listen to a psalm together. (Tell the group that a psalm is like a song with feelings in it.) This psalm was written by David when he was a shepherd boy who spent a lot of time outdoors in God’s creation. Then play the presentation of Psalm 8 from the DVD (or use the CD [track 2] and Psalm Pictures). (Darken your room a bit to help everyone focus on the reading and images.) Conclude by fastening the symbol (hands holding a globe) to your display board. (You’ll find the larger versions of the session symbols on pp. 154-157.)

Listening to the Story

Telling the story of creation to your group will give meaning and concreteness to David’s words in Psalm 8 and inspire awe in your listeners. Present it as a dialog between God and Adam using the text below and putting emphasis on Adam’s feeling of awe and his heart-to-heart relationship with God the Creator.

Get Set!

To set the stage for the story,

- arrange for two actors (the voice of God and Adam) and give them each a copy of the script. (It would be great if Adam memorized his part ahead of time.)
- set the stage with a few props that suggest a garden and provide some sound effects like bird calls or water sounds.
- introduce “Adam” and the actor who will read the part of God’s voice. Explain that they’ll present the story from the Bible that tells how God created this amazing world. (If your friends are familiar with the story, take a minute to invite them to recall some of the story details.)

Note: You may want to position the actor who speaks God’s part behind a screen or off to the side rather than in plain view of everyone.

The story follows:

Adam: Lord, your majesty fills the whole earth. This garden is full of your glory! **(Adam pauses to smell the flowers.)** Aahhh! These flowers fill the earth with a wonderful perfume. **(Adam points off in the distance.)** Over there is a waterfall. The crashing waters remind me of your power, Lord. A hush has come over the whole garden. That means it’s time to watch your sun set. **(Adam stands and looks off into the distance as if to watch the sun setting.)** Lord, you paint the most beautiful colors.

(Raises arms, palms up, in praise and awe, face lifted toward heaven.) When I look up at the heavens, you are there! **(Emphasizes words “You are there!”)** The nighttime sky is magnificent! Your stars are too many to count—they go on forever and ever and ever!

(Looking up with his hands raised in a questioning position.) Lord, I feel so small compared to your heavens. Who am I that you should even think about me? Why do you care about me? You’ve given me everything I need here in this beautiful garden. Why am I so important to you? **(Bows his head, gets ready to listen to God.)**

Voice of God: (Darken the room a bit.) Adam, I love you. You are my special creation. Before time began you were in my thoughts, but there was no world for you to live in. In the beginning there was nothing, only darkness. **(Darken room a bit more.)** I knew that I would have to make a world for you to live in. So I spoke and light filled the world. **(Brighten room.)**

I put the clouds, the sun and moon, and all of the sparkling stars in the sky. I created tall mountains and deep valleys, peaceful woodlands and great deserts. I made babbling brooks, raging rivers, and wide oceans. I filled the land with every kind of fruit and

vegetable. It was all good. But my beautiful world wasn't finished! My world needed more life. No birds flew in the sky above, no fish swam in the waters, and no animals ate the plants. How empty my beautiful world was!

So I filled up the sky, the waters, and the land. Birds, fish, and animals made my creation come alive with noises and movement. I looked at the creatures I had made, and they were good. But still there was no one to take care of my world for me! Who would rule over all I had made?

My world still felt a bit empty to me. I needed someone to take care of it. I wanted someone to talk to, too. I wanted someone who would love me like I loved him. So I made you, Adam. I made you from the earth. And I did something that I had not done to any other creature. I reached down and I breathed my very breath into you! **(Makes the sound of breathing.)** Adam, I breathed your life into you. My breath gave you life. That is why you are ruler over my creation. That is why you take care of my world. And that is why I share my heart with you! I love you, Adam. You are very good!

Wrap Up

Take a minute to interview Adam:

Interviewer: Adam, tell us what you were feeling when you looked at God's creation.

Adam: I felt that God was very, very, very big! **(Hold arms wide.)** Bigger than anything! And I felt very small! **(Hands together to indicate "small.")** I wanted to praise God with all my might! **(Lift up hands in praise.)**

Interviewer: You asked God some very important questions: *Who am I that you should think about me? Why do you care about me?* What did God answer?

Adam: God told me that he loved *me*! He said he created *me* to have a special place in his beautiful world. More than any other creature, he wanted *me* to love him back.

Interviewer: Adam, how does it feel to have a special place in God's creation?

Adam: It makes me feel very, very loved. It makes me want to love God back, to talk to him, and to share my feelings with him.

Interviewer: Thank you, Adam, for sharing your feelings with us today.

Praying the Psalm

Ask the group to look at their nametags and point out the two names on the tags—theirs and God's. Remind them that God made each of us, just as God made Adam. And God wants each of us to talk with

him and to share our feelings with him. One way to do that is to pray to God often! And a good way to pray is to pray psalms to God, like David did.

Ask everyone to bow their heads and close their eyes (hold hands if you wish) and listen to the psalm that David prayed to God. Reverently read the psalm as it's been adapted for this session (see p. 114) and end with an "Amen." Then ask everyone to sit very quietly for a few minutes and think about how awesome our God is; if they wish, they may say to God in their hearts how wonderful and awesome he is. Remind everyone that silence—being perfectly still and quiet before God—is also a way to pray to him.

If you introduced the theme song "He Knows My Name" in step 1, sing it again before dismissing your mentors and friends to their one-on-one sessions.

LEADER TIP

Getting used to sitting and reflecting in silence may be new to your friends—and to some mentors in your group as well. But it can be a powerful way for everyone to draw closer to God. One Friendship Ministries leader who leads a group at a Quaker meeting recalls how a friend in their group spoke during silent worship. He had recently lost a family member, and during silent worship he felt the presence of God reassure him that his family member was in heaven. He then shared John 3:16 with the others, which touched those present deeply.

Optional Way to Tell the Story

You'll find today's story recorded on the course DVD (or CD, track 3). You may wish to play the story narration and invite volunteers to pantomime the actions and feelings. Or invite guests to come prepared to present or pantomime the creation story for your group.

Mentoring Session for Youth and Adults (Steps 3 & 4)

Scripture

Psalm 8; Genesis 1-2

Materials for Mentoring Session

- Photos or downloaded pictures of living plants, animals, birds, sea creatures, people, and so forth.
- Symbols (hands holding the world), distributed during group session
- Nametag necklaces, distributed during group session
- Hand mirror, optional
- Envelopes (2) for keeping name tags and symbols
- Markers

Mentor Helpline

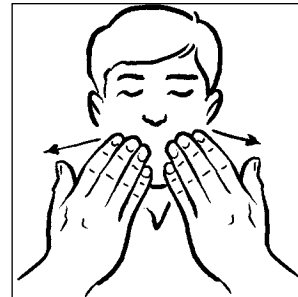
Note that there is no take-home card for your friend this session since the first card in the eight-pack contains sets of symbols for the first eight sessions in this course. Your group leader will be distributing these symbols session by session as you and your friend take your seats at the beginning of the group session. (If you haven't received the remaining take-home cards for sessions 2 through 8, ask your group leader for them.)

If the absence of a take-home for this session leaves you wishing for an activity to do with your friend, consider taking a short walk outdoors to identify natural beauty created by God. Or take drawing materials and draw some of your favorite things created by God. (You'll notice we've also suggested decorating the envelopes you'll both use to store your symbols from week to week.)

STEP 3: Reflecting on the Psalm

Begin your time together with prayer. Since this course is intended to help you and your friend learn to talk to God about your feelings, be sure to emphasize that prayer is the best way to do that together each week. If you know that your friend prays frequently, simply talk about what you want to share with God today. If, however, praying to God is new to your friend, ask her to repeat phrases like these after you and teach her the sign for "thank you":

Thank you, God, (friend repeats)
for making the world! (friend repeats)
Thank you, God, (repeat)
for creating me. (repeat)
Thank you, God, (repeat)
for loving me. (repeat)
I love you! (repeat)
You are awesome! (repeat)
Amen.



Questions/Discussion Starters

Spend some time looking at the nature pictures you've brought, laying them out around your small symbol of hands holding the world. Perhaps your friend can tell you what his favorite one is or what pictures he'd want to add to the collection. Then talk about the pictures, using questions like these (or make up your own based on the pictures you bring) to help you review the story.

Questions are listed in order of increasing difficulty:

1. (Show symbol of hands holding the world.) Did God make the world?

2. (Show pictures of nature.) Did God make the sun and flowers?
3. (Show picture of night sky.) Did God make the stars?
4. (Show picture of family.) Did God make people? Who was the first person that God made?
5. (Show picture of animals.) Name some of the animals God made.
6. (Show picture of a person at work.) What is this person doing? What job did God give Adam?
7. Show picture of sunset or mountains and talk about how you feel when you see such beauty.) How did Adam feel when he saw all of God's creation?
8. (Show picture of parent holding a baby and talk about how that mom or dad feels about that baby.) How did God feel about Adam?

Conclude this step by repeating the litany for this course. Read through the litany and tell your friend you'll be saying it together each week to tell God what you're feeling. (Note that each week you'll be building on the litany by adding the feeling of the day.) Remind your friend that today you're feeling AWE at God's wonderful creation, and AWE (amazement!) at his special love for people! Then read it again, cuing your friend on the words she's to say following your lines (for today, say each response and ask her to repeat it with you).

Mentor: God our Maker, you invite us to come to you.

Friend: We come!

Mentor: God our Maker, you ask us to bring our feelings to you.

Friend: We bring our feelings!

Mentor: God our Maker, you want us to talk with you.

Friend: We want to talk with you!

Mentor: God our Maker, we will talk with you. . .

Mentor says/friend repeats: When we feel awe . . .

Mentor: God our Maker, we praise you!

Friend: God our Maker, we praise you!

Memory Challenge

We're including a memory challenge each week, but only for friends who are able to memorize—and enjoy it. (Please go on to the next step if that doesn't apply to your friend.) Today we suggest memorizing Psalm 8:9 together, phrased this way: **"LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in the whole earth!"**

Begin by saying the verse in phrases, asking your friend to repeat them after you (as you did in the opening prayer). Say the verse again a time or two, giving your friend the opportunity to join you on words she remembers. You might want to add motions and facial

expressions as you repeat the verse. “LORD (*index finger pointed up*), our Lord, (*index finger pointed up*), how majestic (*hands raised, big smile on face*) is your name in the whole earth (*arms come down to form a big circle*).”

Mentor Helpline

You might want to photocopy the litany (see p. 153) and tuck it into your Bible for use each week. If your student is a reader, make a copy for him too. (And be sure to encourage your friend to take his Bible to class every week!)

STEP 4: Responding to God with Our Feelings

Conclude your time with your friend by looking out the window (or taking a short walk if time permits) to spot a few more of God’s created wonders. If you’ve got a mirror handy, look in it together and remind your friend that he’s one of God’s wonders. Together think of words to express your feelings about God the Creator—he’s big, he’s great, he’s awesome! If AWE is a new word for your friend, tell him your feeling about God is “awe.” That means you think God is amazing and wonderful.

Remind your friend that God really, really wants us to tell him what we are thinking and feeling—even when we are feeling sad or angry or scared. You might mention a situation in your life when you were troubled or upset (frightened during a storm, lost in a shopping mall, lonely, sad about someone’s death, angry after a disagreement with someone). Invite your friend to share a similar experience. Then talk about what each of you did about your feelings. Did you tell them to God? Emphasize that God wants us to talk to him about our feelings because God made us and knows our names. God loves us and cares for us. Take your nametags off and use them to reiterate this point as you read the names on both tags (your friend’s name/GOD and your name/GOD). God wants us to tell him what we’re feeling, what’s in our hearts.

Give your friend an envelope and ask her to tuck her nametag and symbol inside it for safekeeping. Do the same with yours. Ask her to (or help her) write her name in big letters on the envelope, and write your own name on your envelope too. Tell her you’ll keep both envelopes so that you can add new symbols each week as you talk about all the feelings you can bring to God. (If there’s time today, decorate your envelopes with stickers and markers.)

End your time together with prayer, thanking God for his awesome creation! Thank God, too, for loving you both and giving you a special place in his world. You could use the phrase repetition method you used earlier. Or you could simply join hands and pray a short prayer expressing to God the feelings you both want him to know.

In either case, give your friend a chance to respond first to a few “feeling” questions like these:

- Do you like looking at the world God made?
- How does it make you feel to know that God loves you?
- How does it make you feel to know that you can tell God what you are feeling?
- What would you like to tell God today?

Mentor Helpline

Be sure to take your envelopes to next week’s group session so that you and your friend can wear your nametags again. Check with your group leader to see if this is something that you should do each week for the duration of the course. It will be helpful to use your tags as a reminder that God has created us and knows our names.