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News Release

For Immediate Release

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Gallup Survey Connects Friendship, Food, and Faith

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LOVELAND, Colo.— A new study commissioned by Group Publishing, Inc. and conducted by the Gallup Organization provides a direct link between human friendships and spiritual maturity. Research shows that people with close friendships in their church are very satisfied with their congregation, less likely to leave their place of worship, and have a strong friendship with God.

“Church members who have a best friend at church are 21 percent more likely to report attending church at least once a week and 26 percent more likely to report having a strong, more active faith in God,” said Michael D. Lindsay, Sociology Research Affiliate at Princeton University. “Respondents with a best friend at church were also more likely to say their faith is involved in every aspect of their lives and that they have a close friendship with God.”

Thom Schultz, CEO of Group Publishing, said the research also connects faith and food. According to survey results, 77 percent of highly satisfied members have eaten a meal with people in their congregation (who are not members of their family) at some point over the last year. Only 56 percent of somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied members have shared a meal together. Hence, mealtime fellowship appears strongly correlated with high levels of congregational satisfaction.

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And 62 percent of those who eat meals together report regularly spending time in prayer and worship daily compared to 49 percent who have not eaten meals with other church members.

“This study asked church members important faith questions that have never been asked before,” survey researcher George Gallup said. “The connections we’ve discovered between human friendships, spiritual maturity, church satisfaction and even feelings of intimacy with God are absolutely remarkable. Senior pastors, youth ministers, and children’s workers will all benefit from the powerful information this study has produced.”

An analysis of research findings from Gallup has been compiled with ministry application ideas from Group Publishing in a new book titled *Friendship: Creating a Culture of Connectivity in Your Church*. “This new resource will provide church leaders with information on churchgoers’ thoughts and attitudes,” Schultz said, “and it will also empower them with activities to help nurture long-term friendships in their church.”

Each year, Group Publishing gives a portion of its profits to churches. This year, Group is offering research findings and analysis compiled in *Friendship: Creating a Culture of Connectivity in Your Church*. The free resource, valued at \$29.99, includes research data, handouts, a CD, and a 90-minute training session for church-wide use. Pastors and church leaders may request a free copy for their church by calling (800) 747-6060 ext. 1324 or by visiting www.group.com/giveback.

Gallup Survey Findings

—84% of respondents who are very satisfied with their church say the leaders in their church care for them as a person. That figure drops to 36% among those only somewhat satisfied.

—Church members with church friendships that extend beyond weekly worship services are 26% more likely to report that their colleagues, friends, and neighbors would say that they, the church members, love God.

—Church members who worship with a best friend are 14% more likely to describe their spiritual life as a friendship with God.



Fact Sheet

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Really, really neat facts about Group Publishing:

- Group was founded in 1974 by Thom Schultz
- Group employs 300 people in Loveland, Colorado
- Group was voted “Best Place to Work” by the Fort Collins Coloradoan in 2004
- Group was selected “Best Christian Workplace” by Christianity Today in 2003
- Group offers life-changing ideas for churches including:
 - ministry books
 - children’s church
 - midweek programs
 - adult small groups
 - websites
 - devotionals
 - youth Workcamps
 - leadership training
 - Bibles
 - ministry magazines
 - Sunday school curriculum
 - vacation Bible school
 - HomeBuilders Couples Series®
 - Bible studies
 - worship, music, and dramas
 - CDs, videos, & DVDs
 - ministry training
 - volunteer management services

Group Gives:

- Group has gathered and trained more than 185,000 students who have worked on more than 31,000 low-income homes in the past 28 years at no charge to the residents through Group Workcamps Foundation.
- Group gives a portion of its profits back to the community and churches every year. Since 1997, Group has donated \$465,000 to non-profit organizations in Northern Colorado through Group’s Community Service Awards.
- Group gave 50,000 *After the Fall* videos free to churches in 2004 through Group’s “Give Back” program.
- Group’s Operation Kid-to-Kid™ has become one of the largest forces mobilizing children in serving other children around the world. Millions of kids have been impacted with gifts of school supplies, Bibles, hygiene kits, Christmas gifts, and Bible coloring books.