THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS
Discussion Starter - Friendship

In *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas,* the main character Bruno is forced to leave the house and friends that he has grown up with to move to an ominous new home. With only his older sister for company, Bruno becomes very bored and very lonely. As a great explorer, he soon makes his escape from the security of the house, and finds his way to a high fence. On the other side, at last, he meets a boy of his own age.

Shmuel is a young Jewish boy who is being held captive in the camp run by Bruno's father. Yet neither boy understands this so it forms no other barrier to their friendship save for an electrified fence that physically divides them. Finally Bruno has company – someone of his own age to talk to and with whom he has much in common. Shmuel is something of an outsider even in the camp and is also glad of this new friendship.

Bruno and Shmuel become firm friends – so much so that their relationship is even able to survive Bruno's terrible betrayal in front of Lieutenant Kotler. Though it leads them to an unexpected and terrible fate, it is the strength of their friendship that eventually brings them standing face to face, without a fence between them. When, as the film closes, we find Bruno and Shmuel standing together in the apocalyptic 'shower room', there is a single note of redemption in the midst of that tragic crescendo; they are holding one another's hand.

Ask your group the following questions:

- What defines a true friend?
- What would you do for friendship, even if there was nothing for yourself to gain? Why?
- Do Bruno and Shmuel's actions toward one another in this film reflect a positive kind of friendship? Why or why not?
- Who has been a good friend to you? What made them a good friend?
- Would your best friendships survive a betrayal like Bruno's? Why or why not?
- How do you feel about the fact that Bruno and Shmuel die together?
- Make a list of things that you think true friends should do for each other. Now think of your friends – do you do the things on your list for them? Why or why not?
- What about the other way around? Who does the things on this list for you?
- What might life be like if we all did the things on the list for each other?

Read 1 Samuel 18 v 1-4, and 20 v 16-17, then ask:

- How strong was Jonathan and David's friendship? How do we know?
- How do you think we should view friendship in the light of this?
- Make a list of things you could do to be a better friend. Pray for God's help, and then try to do some of them this week.