

CHOOSING YOUR FRIENDS

Review from last week: Friends will determine the quality and direction of your life.

Big Idea: Acceptance by others exerts a powerful influence on your life, therefore, you need to choose what you want out of life before you allow someone to choose you as a friend.

INTRODUCTION:

How many of you would say that you choose your friends?

Make a list of the top five qualities you want in a friend.

Make a list of the top five qualities in someone you will date.

How many of you would say that the friends or your dates fall short of the top five qualities you wrote down?

If you choose your friends based on those qualities, why do your friends fall short of that?

I would suggest to you that it is because you didn't choose your friends, they chose you!

You became friends with those who were most accepting of you. Think about the teen who walks into a party. They will naturally interact with other people that make them feel accepted and will steer clear of those they sense dislike them or reject them.

Acceptance is one of the strongest drives in life. Everybody wants to be liked, right?

You guys make decisions about appearance and conduct, often based on how it will affect your standing with those you look to for acceptance.

You don't choose your friends, you gravitate toward acceptance. As a matter of fact, acceptance by a friend is more important than the friend. Why do I say that?

How many of you have friends who have self-destructive habits that you have never said anything about? Why? If you are really their friend, why don't you confront them? (Acceptance by the friend is more important than the friend.)

Bad company corrupts good character.

So what's the point, that acceptance is bad?

No, but wanting acceptance by the wrong people can be detrimental because acceptance paves the way to influence (1 Cor. 15:33)

How many of you want to be accepted by God?

We have this insatiable desire to be accepted and desiring acceptance by God is a good thing (Psalm 42:1-2).

Our relationship with God needs to be foundational, so we can weather rejection (Prov. 18:24)

Imagine how significant is it to be accepted by the one that matters most. Even if you are rejected by others, which still hurts, you can go on.

What does the Bible say about God accepting us?

1. Once we were enemies of God, but now He has reconciled us through Christ.
Col. 1:21-22
2. God loved us, chose us, and calls us his friends John 15:13-16
3. We are accepted by God in Christ. Rom. 15:7

One way to counter the influence of acceptance by friends is to make your friendship with God foundational. Another way to counter the influence of friends is for students to choose what they want out of life, before they allow someone to choose them for a friend (Prov. 14:8). Why is this so important? Because the friends you run with will guide you as to where you end up.

Setting a course for your life will help students steer clear of friends who will not help you reach your goals and potential.

Joe wanted to be the best football player that he could be but he never felt accepted by the other football players. When Joe was a freshmen the other football players made fun of him and made Joe feel rejected. As a result, he started running with a gang from his neighborhood. He felt accepted by them as long as he did what they told him. Toward the end of his freshman year one of his best friends in the gang got shot and died. This really upset Joe and he began to ask questions and eventually ended up going to church. It was during this time that he placed his faith in Jesus and began a relationship with God. As a result he

started hanging out with his youth pastor who encouraged him to try out for the football team the next season. Now Joe knew who he was and knew God's love for him. Some of the guys on the team still tried to make his life miserable but it didn't impact him. His old gang tried to get him to quit football and hang with them again but he kept working hard because he knew he wanted to be an athlete. He eventually developed friendships with other guys who encouraged him to keep pushing and working hard.

So what are your goals for your life? Where do you want to end up?

Let me suggest a few goals that we know that God would desire for you:

- 1) 2 Peter 3:9, Acts 1:8: become a follower of Christ and tell others about Jesus.
- 2) 1 Thess. 4:3, 1 Peter 1:14-15: Avoid sexual immorality; be sexually pure
- 3) 1 Thess. 5:18: Give thanks in all circumstances
- 4) 1 Peter 2:15, Eph. 2:10: To do good works
- 5) 2 Cor. 5:15, Matt. 10:38-39: Die to self and serve God
- 6) 1 Cor. 10:31: Live to the glory of God

CONCLUSION:

1. Your desire to be accepted by others will exert a powerful influence on your life.
2. If you are a Christian you are accepted by the one that matters most.

If you aren't a Christian, God died to prove His love for you and desires for you to know His friendship and acceptance.

3. You need to choose what you want out of life before you allow someone to choose you as a friend.
4. You will never make significant, long-lasting changes in your life without making some changes in the area of friends.

small group questions:

1. How has acceptance impacted who you have as friends?
2. In what ways do you think your desire for acceptance by your friends has impacted you? Your testimony? Your witness?
3. So what are your goals for your life? Where do you want to end up?
4. Will your present friends help you arrive at the destination God desires for you?
Why or why not?
5. Do you need to make any changes in your friendships? Who? Why? Will you make those changes?