

BEING A REAL FRIEND

(not a counterfeit friend)

REVIEW: Two weeks ago: Friends determine the direction and quality of your life.

Last lesson: We tend to develop friendships with those who accept us even though they may not have a positive influence on us. Therefore, we need to know where God wants us to end up and have friends who will help us to get there.

OBJECTIVE: To help students understand what true friends look like.

INTRODUCTION: I want you to examine your friendships tonight to determine if your friends are counterfeit or real friends.

What is a counterfeit? It looks real but when you examine it closer you find out it is a fake. This is important because if you are counting on your friends and find out they aren't real friends you can get hurt.

I. What is a Real Friend?

A. How would you answer that question?

B. Definition:

- 1) A true friend is someone who will love you and not just accept you. (Prov. 17:17) "A friend loves at all times."

What's the difference? (I can accept someone and not love them, but I cannot love them and not accept them)

- 2) A true friend is someone who accepts you just the way you are, but who loves you too much to leave you that way. (Prov. 27:5-6, Prov. 27:17).

True friends are committed to saying the hard things.

Have you ever had a friend say something to you that was hard for you to hear but you needed to hear it? What was it? Were you glad they said something later?

Friendships based only on acceptance avoid things that might create conflict, even if it is best for the other person. (telling a person about Jesus)

- 3) True friends are more committed to their friend than to the friendship.
 - a) More concerned about what's best for their friend than about being accepted by that person.

b) Chris Farley was a comedian/actor who died a tragic death from drug and alcohol abuse. Many of his friends bemoaned the tragedy of his death but never confronted him about his drug and alcohol abuse. They chose to ignore it to keep his acceptance and it very well may have cost him his life. They were more committed to the friendship than their friend.

c) What have been some issues that you have had to talk to your friends about that have been hard but, they needed to hear?

1) destructive habits - lying, gossip, bad attitude
- disobeying their parents

2) the gospel

The truth of the matter is, that as a friend you can exert tremendous influence in your friend's life. I would suggest to you that sharing the gospel in the context of a friendship is one of the best ways to do it. You are able to continue to answer their questions, live Christ in front of them, and when they accept Christ, you are there to help them grow.

C. God's definition of a true friend

1) They believe God

James 2:23 "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness", and he was called God's friend.

What does it mean that he believed God?

-God told him to leave his home and comforts and He would make him into a great nation.

-God told Abraham to offer his only son Isaac on the altar.

2) They obeyed God

John 14:15, 21

According to this verse what does God look for in His friends?

(Those who believe and obey Him)

If God calls true friends those who obey Him, can you come up with any better criteria for the people you consider worthy of being close friends?

3) What are the implications of this if you are to be worthy of the friendship of others? (I must be someone who believes and obeys God)

4) According to 2 Cor 5:9 "So we make it our goal to please Him (God)...", what principle should guide us in all we do, especially our friendships?

(Our goal in friendships must be to please God, not just to please ourselves or even just to please our friends)

II. Counterfeit Friends

- A. People who accept us but don't have our best interests at heart. (Prov. 19:4, 6)
What are reasons why they may accept us?

B. Counterfeit friends are dangerous

- 1) We put our guard down because we feel accepted and open ourselves to their influence.
- 2) They keep us from developing authentic friendships. (If I have all kinds of friends who accept me - even if they don't really care about me - am I going to feel the need to be developing other friendships?)
- 3) It is really difficult to leave behind a counterfeit friendship, even when you are convinced it is the right thing to do.

We said last lesson that your friendships will determine the direction and quality of your life. I wonder if some of you felt like you should leave behind some friendships. Did you?

III. Evaluating Our Friendships Against Counterfeits

A. The Direction of the Relationship Prov 14:7-8,15

- 1) What is the direction that this relationship is headed?
- 2) Is that where I want to be?
- 3) We can't just look at the present, but also where the friendship is headed

B. Self-Destructive Behavior Prov 22:24-25

- 1) Do my friends display any type of self-destructive behavior? Do they tend to get in trouble over and over? Do they scorn authority?
- 2) Why is this so important?
 - (a) If they aren't watching out for themselves, they certainly won't be watching out for you.
 - (b) If they don't take care of their own car, I would think twice before loaning them my car.

C. Lack of Solid Convictions

- 1) If you hear someone saying:
"You have to do what you feel is right for you."
"Everybody has to decide for themselves."
"No one can tell other people what is right for them."

Why should red flags go up about them as a friend?

- 2) What's to keep them from turning against you? (They have to be true to themselves not to their friends)

It's like the guy who is having premarital sex with his girlfriend and is

thinking about marrying her. What makes him think she will be any more faithful to her convictions after they get married than she was before they got married?

Tell the story of Stuart Briscoe who would not lie for the bank president.

- 3) When you must stand up for what is right in the sight of God (but unpopular), these friends will abandon you.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- 1) What kind of friend am I? Do I say what is best for the other person, even though it may be hard?
- 2) Why do I think I am accepted by my friends? Is it because they really care about me, or is it because I am just meeting some of their felt needs?
- 3) What direction are my friends headed? Is that where I want to go?
- 4) Do some of my friends display self-destructive behavior?
- 5) Do some of my friends lack basic solid convictions
- 6) What should I do if I find that some of my friends are really not healthy for me?