

CIRCLES OF FRIENDS

INTRODUCTION: Last week we talked about true friends vs counterfeit friends. We don't want you to think that you shouldn't have friendships with peers who need Christ. We must be wise and put all our friendships in perspective.

I. Three Levels of Friendship:

A. Circle of Concern

These are friends who you are concerned about. They may be going through a tough time or may be you just have a burden for them. These are people you hope to influence, but they don't exert any influence on you. These may be some unsaved friends that you are praying for, listening to, and/or sharing with. These friendships are usually based on common interests.

B. Circle of Influence

These are friends that you allow to have influence in your life. So, obviously, they may be closer friends. People you would share your inner thoughts with. How many friends do you think you would have at this level?

C. Circle of Intimacy

This circle is reserved for the person you will marry someday (2 Cor. 6:14-16)

II. What Can We Learn from the Circles?

A. Someone we might date

1) What circle should they come from? Why?

2) Why do we sometimes feel compelled to date someone in the circle of concern?

(We have feelings of mercy, compassion, sympathy for them)

B. What should we do with counterfeit friendships that we might have in the circle of influence?

Three Choices:

1) Do Nothing. The problem with this is the longer we wait, the harder it will be to make a change. The longer the friendship goes on at that level, the longer we are open to their negative influence and we aren't able to be a true friend to them, if they are influencing us. Prov. 22:24-25. Matt 5:13-14: How does salt lose its saltiness? Contamination.

2) Take a Step Back.

- (a) Adjust the amount of time you spend with that particular friend
- (b) Take more control of the friendship so they aren't able to exert as much influence on you.

How could you do that?

- (1) Invite them to your house instead of spending time at their house
- (2) Begin choosing the movies, music, and videos you share
- (3) Be the driver instead of the passenger when you go places
- (4) You can choose where you will hang out

Matt. 5:14-16

What happens, however, if the friend won't go along with your choices?

3) Stepping Away from the Relationship Altogether

You may say, "What is going to happen to my friend if I do this?" But the real issue is what is going to happen to you if you don't?

- C. Making these changes may be very difficult, but remember: your circle of influence will determine the direction and quality of your life.

III. Our Most Important Relationship is our Relationship with God

- A. You need true friendships built on love and acceptance with others who are Christians that will encourage you in you relationship with God. (Heb. 10:24)
- B. Do you friends encourage or hinder your walk with Christ? You must never sacrifice your relationship with God for a relationship with another person.

APPLICATION:

Do I have any friendships in the circle of influence who are exerting a negative influence on me? If I do, what am I going to do about it?