

CHOOSING FRIENDS FOR LIFE

OBJECTIVE: To help students understand that their friendships will determine the direction and quality of their lives.

MIXER: Pass around a container with 13 buttons in it, and ask each student to count how many buttons there are and tell the whole group. Have the second to the last person take out one button when they count them, so when the last person counts them, there are really only 12 buttons.

Usually the last person will say there are 13 buttons, even though they only counted 12. This illustrates how powerful peer influence is on us.

INTRODUCTION:

According to a recent survey, the top three influences in a teenager's life today are: friends, media (tv, movies, music), and parents. Do you agree or disagree?

- I. The friendship you choose will determine both the direction and quality of your life.
 - A. Friends often have a greater influence on a teenager than their own convictions. (Gen. 3:6)

How many of you have ever temporarily abandoned a conviction at the urging of a friend?

That's one of the reasons why you may make a decision at camp to live for Christ, decide to stop lying to your parents, but when you back to hanging with your friends, your decision becomes short-lived. Your friends have a greater influence on you than your conviction.

- B. Friends often have a greater influence on a teenager than the teen's parents. (Prov. 1:8-10)

How many of you know students who would rather disobey their parents than be rejected by their friends?

How many of you know students who will listen to the advice of their friends over the advice of their parents?

- C. Friends often have a greater influence on a teenager than God does.

Have you ever done something you know was contrary to God's will because of

the influence of your friends?

- D. Your friendships exert a tremendous amount of influence on you! Do you agree?
- E. Proverbs 13:20, "He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm." This includes both a promise and a warning.
 - 1) Promise: If you spend the majority of your time with wise people, you will become wise.
 - (a) What does it mean to be "wise"? (To have a knowledge of the truth and put it into practice.)
 - (b) How might you be able to identify friends who would be wise?
 - (1) Make note of those who make poor choices and are getting into trouble. I state this negatively, because wise people usually don't bring attention to themselves and blend in.
 - (2) Friends who have positive attitudes and are respectful of authority.
 - 2) Warning: If you spend the majority of your time with foolish friends, you will experience painful consequences.
 - (a) What does it mean to be a "fool"? (To have a knowledge of right and wrong and to chose to do wrong. It's not being ignorant, they just don't care. They do what they want to do when they want to do it, regardless of the consequences.)
 - (b) Hanging around fools doesn't mean you'll become a fool. It's worse than that. Something bad will (not might) eventually happen to you. (Sometimes we argue, "I don't do what they do, I just want to be where they are", or "I don't drink, I just go to parties.")
 - (c) It is not always what you do that causes you to get hurt. It is whom you are with. The verse says, the companion of fools will suffer harm.
 - (d) ILLUSTRATION: Saturday, April 9, 1994, Josh Ming was driving his cousin and two female passengers to a house in Shreveport, LA, when four teenagers began firing on the car. Josh was shot in the head and killed. When the police investigated, Josh was shot by a gang. His cousin and the two girls were members of an opposing gang. Josh was just giving his cousin a ride. Josh wasn't a fool. He was a dedicated follower of Christ. But on this night, he was a companion of fools and he suffered harm.

CONCLUSION:

Your friends exert a tremendous influence on you. Your friendships will determine the direction and quality of your life.

APPLICATION:

If friends exert a tremendous influence upon each other, that means you also have the potential to influence your friends. Are you influencing your friends in a positive way for the cause of Christ?

DISCUSSION IN SMALL GROUPS:

- 1) Have any of you ever given into your convictions because of a friendship? What happened?
- 2) Have any of you ever lied to your parents because of a friend's influence?
- 3) Would you say that most of your present friendships are healthy or unhealthy? Why do you say that?
- 4) Do you agree that your friends exert a tremendous influence upon you?
- 5) You also exert a tremendous influence upon your friends. Are you being a positive influence for the kingdom of God? What does that even look like?