

All Of My Best Friends-The Purge2

HAHA...you just thought you were done with this theme song 😊

My original intent was to wrap up last week but I felt like we ended with a few things left unsaid. I wanted to take the time to dig a little deeper into a few issues before this series is closed. So here is the plan:

We are going to do a very quick review of last week.

Then we are going to look at a few examples of good and bad friends from the Bible.

Then we are going to wrap it up with some open discussion and practical advice about what to do with good friends and bad friends. Last week we talked about when we should keep them and when we should cut them. This week, it's the how. Here we go...

Review:

Making friends—true friendship shows the world we belong to Jesus. Making, having, and keeping friends is not an option as a Christian but a command.

Keep or Cut—we talked about the traits of a good friend and the traits of a bad friend and how to tell the difference. Fruit Check! Regularly check to see if your friends are bearing good fruit (Galatians 5:22-25). We should also regularly check ourselves! If there is no good fruit, it might be time to do some cutting before you start bearing the same kind of fruit. (1 Corinthians 15:33)

Surround yourself with people you want to be like.

More importantly, surround yourself with people who want to be like Jesus.

Biblical examples of Good Friends: 1 Corinthians 11:1

Naomi and Rachel—Ruth 1:16

Jonathan and David—1 Samuel 18-23

Biblical examples of Bad Friends: Proverbs 13:20

Rehoboam—1 Kings 12:1-20

Now, think of your top five friends, same as I asked you to do last week. But this time, not out loud, I want you to put them in one of two categories based on our discussions over the last few weeks. Keep or Cut. Here's what we do with each category.

Have you determined they are keepers?

All Of My Best Friends-The Purge2

Proverbs 18:24 says *A man who has friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

- Shared hope in the gospel
- Unconditional Love
- Realistic Expectations
- Family Commitment
- Heart of Edification
- Gentle Admonition
- Boundaries

These are not only important traits to look for in a good friend but they are also important traits to display as a good friend. Take time to intentionally focus on these areas of your relationship. The only way you can do this is to spend time together, IRL time (See lesson 1-The Friendship Pill). As your relationship with one another grows under these conditions, so should your relationship with Christ.

Have you determined they need to be cut?

Make no mistake, keeping friends is hard work and doesn't happen by accident but cutting them can be excruciating! It will require some determination, intestinal fortitude (guts), and patience. You will want to give up and just let things be. "Things are fine. No need to rock the boat. It's best for me" Let's be real, things are not fine. You know that now. You probably already know but now you don't have an excuse. As Christ-followers, if that's what we truly are, we are called to live a life that is set apart, different, "sanctified" from this world. Often, living that life requires tough choices and uncomfortable situations. So...how do I do this?

As we have talked about, you potentially have two scenarios:

- 1) A believing friend who is not living as they should
- 2) A non-believing friend, living as non-believers do

Ending a friendship with a believer:

Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15-17

Understand that this was in the context of a close-knit group of fellow believers. Your believing friend may not be part of your local church or currently involved in church at all. In this case, I think our best judgement would lead us to always follow the first step of going directly to them in private. The second step...I would only follow it if you have other solid Christian friends who have first hand witness of your friend's actions, not a recount of what you have told them. Approach them with love and patience and with a true desire to repair the relationship. Step three will rarely be followed in your case since more often than not, your friends are not a connected part of your local church. If it ever were to reach this step, parents and pastors should get involved and work together to reach a Biblical solution. It might even be a good idea

All Of My Best Friends-The Purge2

to get parents and/or pastors involved before proceeding to step two for some of you, depending on age and maturity. If it gets to a point where ties are cut, we are instructed to treat them like a Gentile and tax collector. How did Jesus treat such? Lovingly, truthfully, mercifully, and always with the intent of leading them to salvation.

I CAUTION EACH OF YOU: **Matthew 7:1-6**

¹ *“Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured again for you.*

³ *“And why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how will you say to your brother, ‘Let me pull the speck out of your eye,’ when a log is in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite! First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.*

⁶ *“Do not give what is holy to the dogs, nor throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn around and attack you.*

This does not mean “Only God can judge me!” As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to “judge” one another, or in other words “hold each other accountable” using Christ as our control, as our measuring point. This passage is telling us not to hold others to a different standard than we do for ourselves. The measurement should be used for both.

Jesus ends this passage instructing us not to continue to fight with someone that is not receiving the truth. It will only make things worse. Paul also speaks of this in

1 Corinthians 5:11 *But I have written to you not to keep company with any man who is called a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. Do not even eat with such a person.*

This is where you must use some wisdom. Is this a person you believe you can truly help restore their relationship with Christ? Without pulling you into their sin? Or have they made a decision to continue to live in unrepentant sin? In this case, the best thing you can do for them and yourself is to let them go, cut ties, and pray for them. It sounds harsh but it is the most God honoring, loving thing you can do for them.

Ending a friendship with a non-believer:

First things first...your best friend should not be a non-believer. If we are being honest, it’s impossible unless the believer is not living according to the instruction of scripture.

Amos 3:3; Psalm 1:1-2

Now, if you have a non-believer “friend”, I would still follow the first step used for a believing friend, but with a slightly different approach and with different expectations. We cannot expect

All Of My Best Friends-The Purge2

lost people to act like, feel like, talk like, walk like, or even have the same thought processes as saved people.

Romans 8:8 *and those who are in the flesh cannot please God*

1 Corinthians 5:12 *For what have I to do with judging those who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But God judges those who are outside. Therefore "put away from among yourselves that wicked person."*

I believe we should approach our lost friends directly, not judging them for their actions but making it clear that you have chosen to live a life pleasing to God and what they are doing, where they are going, what they are saying, is not that. Maybe you have been participating in these things as well. If so, I think it would be a good time to apologize for leading them astray. Make sure they understand that you are not saying you are better than they are. It's not an "I'm a good person, you are a bad person" kind of deal. We are all bad people without Christ. You've just decided to follow through on your commitment to Him and you'd love to tell them more about this Jesus that you have neglected to talk about in the past. You will pray for them. You will be there for them if they "need" you. This doesn't mean to bail them out for doing stupid things or enabling them to sin. It does mean being there for them when they finally realize there is no joy without Jesus. Being there to help them understand His love better. If there is a tragedy in their life, certainly be there as a shoulder to cry on but with a finger pointing to Christ when they lift their head and dry their eyes.

You may think this separation should be a gradual process. It shouldn't. Have the conversation and separate yourself. Don't be rude, hateful, or disrespectful. But be loving and firm, committed to pleasing God not others.

Let's hear from the leaders...

We finished up hearing some personal testimony for Stephen and Kruse. For those that weren't here, Stephen shared with us about his journey and how he grew up in church, was saved at an early age, knew all the right things to do, but ended up choosing the wrong friends. These friends led him down a road that encouraged him to make decisions about drugs, alcohol, and the lifestyle that comes along with it, that nearly killed him. By the grace of God alone, he survived and has been blessed with a loving wife, two amazing kids, and a second chance to serve God as he should have. In contrast, Kruse shared his story of very similar beginnings but he chose the friends in his youth group, the friends connected with his church, those he knew were focused on the same things he was focused on. Not that his life was without heartache or pain or challenges, but he did not allow his friends to lead him down a road to destruction. He too has been blessed with a loving wife and they have their first child on the way.

All Of My Best Friends-The Purge2

This is not to say that Kruse is better than Stephen or that Stephen has a more compelling testimony than Kruse. This is not a comparison of them as people. They are both princes, sons of the King, children of God. Both loved equally by their Creator.

What I do want you to see, and I think I can speak for both of them, is that your friends have a more significant impact on your life than you could ever really imagine. They truly can make you or break you, especially when it comes to your walk with Christ. The decisions you make right now, not a few years from now, not after high school, not when I get out on my own...the decisions you make RIGHT NOW will affect you for the rest of your life, perhaps even more than other times. Make them count! Don't use your age as an excuse to not take life seriously.

Paul told Timothy, a young pastor over the church at Ephesus...

1 Timothy 4:12 *Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.*

If you ever want a good example of a young person serving God, even when things got uncomfortable and difficult, Timothy is your man! I encourage you to read about the life of Timothy.

Listen, you can take all the scripture and instruction we've learned over the last few weeks and let it go in one ear and out the other. Some of you will do that. If that's you, here is one last thing I want to share with you from this series:

Proverbs 10:17 *He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses instruction goes astray.*

Proverbs 13:20 *He who walks with wise men will be wise, but a companion of fools will be destroyed.*

If that's not you, then you have some tough choices to make. Some of these choices may result in tears, hurt feelings, and loss of sleep. Things will get uncomfortable. Friends you thought you had may turn their backs on you. They may say mean and ugly things about you, true or false things. Hurting people often hurt other people. They may take their pain and embarrassment out on you. Be prepared. Jesus said not to be surprised if this world hates you, they hated Him first, and He was here to ultimately save their lives. How do you think they are going to treat you? But be encouraged, this is also what Jesus had to say...

John 16:33 *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*