

All Of My Best Friends-The Purge

This is our final week of this series! Thanks for hanging in! I've learned a lot and I hope you have as well!

Tonight, brings us to the most difficult part of this series, the awkward part, the uncomfortable part, the ugly part. I think we all know by now what a good friendship is and what a bad friendship is. Tonight, I want to step past the theory and into the messy reality of our own friendships, or in some cases, lack thereof.

Tonight's lesson is called The Purge because ultimately, when we are finished here tonight, you will have some decisions to make. Do I need to keep my current friendships, nurture them, develop them, invest in them, because at the core they are God-honoring and leading me down the right path? Or, do I need to end these friendships and in some cases, completely cut off these people, because lack any God-honoring behavior and attitude is leading you down the wrong path, a path that leads to destruction?

Let's hop off into this!

Before we talk about purging our friendship reservoir, if you will, we must address making friends in the first place. Otherwise, there wouldn't be anything to purge, right? 😊

Making Friends

How does one go about making friends? The simple answer—to be friendly. Proverbs 18:24

The complicated answer is friend-making doesn't come as easily for some. In fact, interaction with human beings doesn't come as easily to some. So, I pose a couple of questions, or rather statements and you decide if you think they are true or false.

Being an introvert is a sin. True or False.

I would say false. Having a reserved personality does come with its own share of struggles but introverts can often connect with those who are hurting on a level extroverts cannot. The meekness and humility can be a strength in these people.

Choosing not to make or have friends is a sin. True or False.

I would say true and I will justify my answer with scripture. 😊

Let's go back to the beginning. As God began creating everything around us, including us, he followed each day with a statement, "It is good." The first time in the Bible where we hear of something being not good was in Genesis 2:18

Then the Lord God said, "It is **not good** that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him."

So, we see from the beginning, even before the fall, God's plan for us was to live in community, not alone, but in relationship with another human being.

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We fast forward to the life of Jesus. He is about to be crucified and He is preparing His disciples for His death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven. He's telling them about the Holy Spirit which is to come in His place as a guide and comforter. Here He is giving them instructions as to how they should live as His followers. Let's take a look...

John 13:34-35

John 15:11-15

Three times in these two short passages, Jesus refers to us as friends. Three times, He commands us, as friends, to love one another. We know, by context, He is not talking about romantic love. What is non-romantic love? Friendship. Jesus is in effect commanding us to have friends and be friends. He says, "I have spoken these things so that your joy may be full." We can establish here, from the mouth of our Creator, friendship is a GOOD thing and Christian community is not just a suggestion but a commandment.

James goes so far in James 4:17 to say, if we know to do good and refuse, it is sin!

If that isn't convincing enough...Proverbs 18:1 says that being a self-proclaimed "loner" or "introvert" if you use that term as an excuse, you are being selfish and unwise.

Long story, short...Friendship (healthy Christian friendship, of course) shows the world that we belong to Jesus. As Christians, these relationships are not optional.

Alright, here comes the difficult part...we've been around long enough to accumulate a fair number of friends. Now, what do we do with them?

Keep or Cut?

I think the keep decision is pretty straight forward. We spoke about most of that last week. Here are a few of the traits of "keeper" friends from last week.

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

But how do we know when we need to cut a friend loose?

It's time for a Fruit Check!

Let's review the fruit of the Spirit or the evidence you should see in a Christ-follower's life.

Galatians 5:22-23

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All these things should be seen in the life of a Christian, including in their relationships.

There are only two reasons that fruit would not be seen in a person's life:

1. They do not have a saving relationship with Christ in the first place, to which I would respond with 2 Corinthians 6:14-15. As Christians, we are not to be in "fellowship" with unbelievers. We are to love them and share the Gospel with them but not "walk with" them through life.
2. They are saved but are not in fellowship with Christ due to unchecked sin in their life. To this I would respond with Galatians 6:1. We are to make an effort to restore our Christians brothers and sisters with Christ, all the while being careful that we do not get caught up in their same sins.

No fruit, you get cut! Sounds harsh but let's look at how God views our relationship with Christ, the ultimate friendship.

John 15:1-5. We see here that unfruitful limbs are removed from the tree. Some translations say lifted up instead of taken away. This seems to imply a period of encouragement before being thrown into the fire due to lack of fruit. Even the good branches are pruned, the bad parts removed, in order to produce growth, more and better fruit.

In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus speaks of managing unfruitful relationships. He gives ample time for the relationship to be salvaged but if it can't, we are instructed to treat them as any other non-believer, love them, share the Gospel, point them to Christ but do not "do life" with them.

But what about Jesus, was He not a friend with sinners? Am I not supposed to be like Him? What if I am there to share Jesus with them?

Let's look at a few things...Matthew 9:10-13. You must understand something here, and you will hear this even from non-believers as an excuse as to why it's supposedly okay for you to hang with people you know you shouldn't be hanging with...Jesus was not a friend WITH sinners—He was a friend TO sinners. There is a huge difference. He did not hang out with them, going where they go, doing what they do, saying what they say, identifying with them. He broke through the social barriers of associating with bad people to bring them the message of salvation through repentance. He was sharing the Gospel with them. His story. The one He wrote to save us from our sins!

Last week we looked at a passage that confirms this for us...Psalm 1:1-2. We are not to "do life" with sinners (non-believers...we are all sinners) or those rebelling against God. We should follow God's instructions set forth in His Word.

1 Corinthians 15:33...Paul tells us not to be deceived or tricked into thinking we can hang out with non-God-honoring people and not be affected by them.

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Ask yourself, honestly, are you there to share the Gospel with your lost friends? Really? How arrogant are we to think we will not be corrupted? In that sense, we should not compare ourselves to Jesus. We are not perfect and on the contrary are warned about giving into temptation.

Let's do a little exercise: Who are your five closest friends right now?

Think about those friends and watch this video.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7Gt75MM6AU&feature=emb_logo

(Video is cut to the end with the car scene and the story about the birthday party.)

Your friends are taking you somewhere. Is it somewhere you want to go?

Assessment of current friends (from the video)

LOOK

Where are your friends going?

How do they treat their family and other friends?

Is that where you want to go?

LISTEN

What do they say about others?

Does lying, gossiping, and drama come easy for them? Does it seem to follow them?

Proverbs 12:26

Proverbs 13:20

Surround yourself with people you want to be like.

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

Paul told the church at Corinth...Follow me as I follow Christ! 1 Corinthians 11:1

Some translations say "imitate me as I imitate Christ."

It's time we considered where we fit into this instruction.

Are we following those that are following Christ?

Are we someone that other Christians would look to follow because they see Christ in us?

It might be time to lovingly cut some of our friends loose. You may have known them all their life. You may be related to them. You may think that without you, they wouldn't have any friends left.

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Maybe you are the one that needs to be lovingly cut loose 😞 if so, this is a great time to consider some serious changes in your life.

Let me tell you, the most loving thing you can do is step away from that relationship and stop enabling them to rebel against God. God knows what is best for each of us! He should---He made us! He has instructed us very clearly about the results of good and bad friendships. It would benefit us greatly, maybe even eternally, to listen to our Savior who showed us what a true friend looks like by giving His life for us. If we know Him, it should show, in all parts of our lives but especially in our friendships!