

FUTURE YOU.



FUTURE YOU, PART 3: MISSING INGREDIENT

We all drift. We begin with great intentions, determined to stay the course, but along the way we find ourselves falling back into the places and behaviors we intended to avoid. Somehow our commitments and convictions just aren't able to help us on their own. There's a missing ingredient that is necessary if we're going to accomplish more in this life.

BIG IDEA: Having convictions and commitments isn't enough — you have to have connections.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Can you remember a time when even though you were really committed to do something, you didn't do it? Or have you ever had a strong conviction not to do something and you did it anyway? We want to stay committed. We want to stick to our convictions. But somehow we fall short. We don't usually wake up in the morning planning to abandon a commitment or jettison a conviction. It's more of a slow drift. We are tempted to do something we shouldn't, and then we talk ourselves out of doing it, and then we decide to do it anyway—but just this once. We are all incredibly adept at self-deception. We never intend for the “just this once” to become the norm. But before we know it, we've drifted away from our exercise programs, our diets, our schedules with margin, our budgets, or our moral convictions. It is how affairs begin; it is how honest businessmen become dishonest; it is how social drinking becomes alcoholism; it is how good dating relationships go places we never intended.

Commitment and conviction just aren't enough to keep us from drifting. Two out of three functioning legs on our proverbial spiritual stools just aren't enough to support the weight of our lives. We need the third leg of connection if we're to remain upright.

1. Have you ever had crystal clear clarity into someone else's poor decisions? Did you say anything? How did it turn out?
2. Why is it so hard to see clearly when it comes to our own lives?
3. Has anyone ever pulled you aside when you were about to make a poor decision?
4. Describe a time when a friend told you the truth when you needed to hear it. How did you respond to it and how did hearing this truth affect you?
5. *With your Bible or YouVersion, [read Hebrews 3:12-13](#).*

¹² See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. [Hebrews 3:12-13 \(NLT\)](#)

6. What does *encourage* mean in this verse?

These verses from the book of Hebrews provide us with the solution we've been looking for. We are corporately commanded to encourage one another. The Greek word that's translated into English as encourage is not the equivalent of a slap on the back. It's not a casual “way to go,” or “good luck,” or “hang in there!” Rather, it's an urgent appeal, an exhortation—a begging even. The author implores us to join with a group of people willing to do whatever it takes to keep each other faithful. It assumes a connection where accountability is welcomed and reciprocated.

7. In what areas of your life would you like to be encouraged?
8. How can we encourage one another in this group?

9. Why is accountability so important if we are going to move forward and accomplish some things in our lives? Do you agree with this statement: *If a person does not have accountability, they are prone to self-deception. Agree or not agree? Why or why not?*

The purpose of all this is to help us recognize and survive the deceitfulness of sin. You can deceive yourself, but if there are people who know what's going on in your life, you can't deceive them as easily. Self-deception is a powerful force, but it loses its power in community. Have you ever had friends announce their engagement and they were convinced it was right and everybody else was convinced otherwise? How about your child's dating patterns? Ever had any concern about that? Or maybe you've watched a friend make an ill-advised purchasing decision. It's amazing how we can have such clear insight into the poor choices of our friends and family members. If you're connected to other people, there's a good chance somebody has equally clear insight into implications of the decisions you're faced with. The only way to benefit from their clear thinking-the only way to avoid the deceitfulness of sin-is to invite their input. Too many good people have drifted horribly because there was no one in their lives to help keep them on course. It can happen to any of us.

10. Why are solid commitments and deep convictions not enough to move forward? How is it like a two-legged stool?

We must understand that solid commitments and deep convictions just aren't enough. We need strong connections as well. Who, outside of your family, has permission to talk to you and challenge you, if need be, about the things going on in your life? Who is close enough to warn you if you begin to drift?

"The missing ingredient is connection."



11. What friend from your past has significantly impacted your life?
12. We need friends who will help us become better, find strength in the Lord, and tell us the truth. What type of friend are you missing?
13. What's your next step to develop the relationship with the person you need as a friend?
14. Do you think your current friends have made you a better person? If so, how have they helped you?
15. What's one thing you hope to become, accomplish, or achieve? How might having the right friends help guide you to success?

You might be one friendship and community away from changing the course of your destiny.

16. Even though giving others permission to speak into our lives seems like such a wise thing to do, we're often hesitant to do that. Why? Why do we attempt to go it alone?

MOVING FORWARD

Who has access to your life? Who has permission to pull you back on course when you drift?
How can you be more intentionally about leveraging the power of connection in your life?
If you don't have people in your life to keep you on track, where are you likely to drift?
Will you give the members of this group permission to help you stay on track?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.
Hebrews 3:13