

GUARD RAILS

PART FIVE: WHY CAN'T WE BE FRIENDS

What makes friendship so great is the same thing that makes it so dangerous. With friends, we drop our guards. We're most open to influence from others when we're with people who accept us the way real friends do. Acceptance leads to influence. And it can work for us—or against us. Some of the most addictive behaviors imaginable are those that people began as pastimes with friends. Our friends greatly influence the direction and the quality of our lives. In fact, they can actually determine the direction and the quality of our lives. Think about it: how much have your friends impacted who you are? Friendships are valuable. But because friendships can also be dangerous, we need guardrails.

BIG IDEA: Friends influence the direction and quality of your life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who are some of the most influential friends you've known, and how did they influence you? What did you appreciate most about them and their friendship? What did the relationships teach you about friendship?
2. In general, how would you describe the value of friendship?
3. "In the Bible, we see an important principle about friendship stated in an unmistakable way by Solomon. It's in Proverbs 13:20, which offers both a promise and a warning: *"Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm."*
4. How fully do you agree with this statement: "Our friends ultimately influence the direction and quality of our lives"? As you see it, how strong is the connection between being accepted by others and being open to their influence?
5. If it's true that "friendships can be dangerous," how would you describe the danger? How would you define "wisdom"? And what are the most important ways it can be learned from our friends?
6. If a fool can be biblically defined as "someone who knows the difference between right and wrong, but doesn't care," how can we discover whether this is actually true of someone we know? What kind of pressure do you experience in your circle of friends? Is it mostly positive or negative?

MOVING FORWARD?

Take time to evaluate your circle of friends. Are they moving in the direction you want your life to go? When you're around them, do you find yourself pretending to be someone you really aren't? Do you feel pressure to compromise?

