



Beyond the Sermon

A Sermon Application Guide

Title: The Power of Culture

Message Theme

Walking Together: How Your Circle Shapes Your Normal

Prayer Focus

Lord, open my eyes to see the true direction of the people I've let closest to me. Give me courage to invite sharpening voices into my life, even when their words are uncomfortable. Help me become someone who pulls others toward You rather than away. Where my circle has normalized what You call sin, break that blindness and give me the strength to walk a different path — even if it means walking with different people. In Jesus name, Amen.

Key Truths

We don't drift into sin or grow in faith alone — we're shaped by the micro culture around us. The people we walk closely with determine the direction we ultimately arrive at. If we want to become sharp, godly, and Christ-centered, we need to intentionally surround ourselves with people who sharpen us rather than dull us.

- **Every one of us has a micro culture** — a personal bubble shaped by family, friends, and community — and we usually don't realize we have one; we just think it's "normal."
- **Normal is not neutral.** What feels ordinary to us (how we handle conflict, spend money, talk about our spouse, spend free time) has been shaped by whoever we've let closest to us.
- **You are choosing a culture, not just a person**, every time you choose who to spend time with.
- **Sharpening requires friction.** Like a blade against a file, growth means having flaws and imperfections exposed and removed — and that process is uncomfortable but necessary.
- **Proximity determines direction.** As the message put it, if you walk with somebody holding hands, you will arrive at the same destination.
- **Isolation is dangerous.** A person who cuts themselves off from correction — including hiding in an echo chamber — is described in Scripture as a fool who rages against sound judgment.
- **The question shapes the answer.** Friends who ask "How do I get away from this?" lead you somewhere very different than friends who ask "How do I make this right?"

Declarations

Life is released when your words are in agreement with God. Intentionally speaking life and biblical truth out loud is extremely powerful. In fact, you have that very life in the power of your tongue. These words below, when spoken out loud, will cause an acceleration of the reality of God's words in your life. We encourage you to speak the following with an expectancy to renew your mind and see God's fullness.

- I will not let "normal" go unexamined — I will test my normal against God's Word.
- I give permission to godly people in my life to speak hard truth to me.
- I choose to walk with people who are walking toward Jesus.

- I will be a sharpening voice for others, not a dulling one.
- I refuse to isolate myself from correction and community.
- My circle will reflect my calling, not just my comfort.

Scripture References

- 1 Corinthians 15:33 — "Do not be deceived: Bad company ruins good morals."
- Proverbs 13:20 — "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm."
- Proverbs 27:17 — "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."
- Proverbs 18:1 (referenced) — the one who isolates himself seeks his own desire and rages against all sound judgment.

What's Next

Now it's time to put what you've learned into action. Here are three ways you can apply this message to your daily life:

1. **Take a Circle Inventory.** Each day this week, write down one conversation you had and ask: *Did this person push me toward Jesus or away from Him?* Over time, patterns will reveal who's sharpening you and who's dulling you.
2. **Give Someone Permission to Sharpen You.** Identify one person you trust and have a specific conversation: "I want you to call me out when you see me drifting. You have permission to say hard things to me." Follow up daily by checking in with them — even briefly.
3. **Start a YouVersion Plan With a Friend.** Pick a Bible reading plan (search "ResLife" in the YouVersion app), choose the "with friends" option, and text the code to someone today. Commit to comparing notes daily on what God is showing you — creating a micro culture that pulls you both toward Him.