

**Big Idea:** Our friendships shape our future.

**Primary Scripture:** Proverbs 13:20; Proverbs 27:17

**Supporting Scripture:** Proverbs 12:26; Proverbs 27:6; Romans 15:2

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**CAPTURE (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)**

- Have you ever realized that half the songs on your playlist are ones you used to hate?
  - Think about the first time you heard that artist. You probably thought, "This is terrible." But your best friend loved them. Played them constantly in the car, had them on every time you hung out... and now, somehow, without deciding to, you were into it.
  - You didn't change your mind. It just happened.
- And it's not just music. You've probably caught yourself using the same phrases as your friends, the same jokes, the same way of looking at things.
- Or your whole attitude about something shifted because of the people around you. Something you used to think was weird or off limits just became normal because everyone in your circle does it.
- That's how influence works. Spend enough time with someone and you start to become like them. You don't have to try. It just happens.
- And we all know this is true. But most of us act like it doesn't apply to us. "I can hang out with anyone. It won't affect me."
- It makes sense that we'd think that way. Admitting you're being shaped by other people feels like giving up control.
- It doesn't matter how grounded you are. Influence isn't about strength or weakness. It's just a part of life.
- The question isn't *if* your friends will shape you. It's which friends you'll let shape you.
- This isn't about telling you that your friends are bad because even good friendships can pull us in directions we didn't mean to go if we're not paying attention.
- We're in week 2 of ***Choose Your Own Adventure***, and who you choose to walk with is one of the most significant choices you'll make in this whole adventure of life.

- Proverbs doesn't just warn us about the wrong friendships. It actually paints a picture of what the right ones look like.

### **SCRIPTURE (What does God's Word say?)**

- We talked last week about how Proverbs was written primarily by King Solomon, and how it was written for young people facing real decisions.
- A significant portion of Proverbs is dedicated to friendship. Who you spend time with, who you listen to, who gets access to your life.
- The people around you shape you in ways you can't always see coming. Solomon knew that if you're going to live wisely, you can't talk about wisdom without talking about who you're walking with.

***<sup>20</sup> Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble. (Proverbs 13:20 – NLT)***

- Proverbs isn't being overprotective. It's being honest.
- The people closest to you are shaping you right now... how you think, what you care about, what you're okay with, what you're not okay with.
- In Proverbs, a fool isn't just someone who does dumb things. A fool is someone who has decided they don't need wisdom.
- It's not about intelligence. It's about perspective. And according to Solomon, that perspective is just as contagious as wisdom.
- The question Proverbs is really asking is this... where do you want to end up? Because the people you're walking with are taking you somewhere.
- Wisdom isn't just about avoiding the wrong things; it's about pursuing the right ones.

***<sup>17</sup> As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. (Proverbs 27:17 – NLT)***

- When this was written, sharpening iron wasn't a metaphor people had to think about. It was something they saw every day.
- A blacksmith would take a dull blade and grind it against another piece of iron. And through the friction, the heat, the pressure, the blade became sharper. Stronger. More useful.
- The process wasn't gentle. It was rough. It was loud. Sparks flew.

- The blade didn't become sharper by sitting on a shelf. It became sharper through contact with something just as strong as itself.
- That's the picture Proverbs is painting about friendship.
- Real friendship isn't just about having fun together or agreeing on everything. Sometimes it involves friction. Honest conversations. Moments that are uncomfortable because someone cares enough to tell you the truth.
- Through that process, through two people actually sharpening each other, you both come out stronger.

### **INSIGHTS (What might this Scripture mean?)**

#### **1. Who you walk with determines where you'll end up.**

- Let's go back to that first verse for a moment.

***<sup>20</sup> Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble. (Proverbs 13:20 – NLT)***

- Think about the friend group you spend the most time with.
- What do they talk about? What do they care about? What's normal in that circle?
- Now ask yourself honestly... is that shaping you in the direction you actually want to go?
- Because whether you've noticed it or not, it's shaping you either way.
- This doesn't mean you can't be friends with people who don't follow Jesus. That's not what Proverbs is saying.
- But it is asking you to be honest about who gets the loudest voice in your life.
- There's a difference between being friends with someone and letting them set the direction for where your life is headed.

***<sup>26</sup> The godly give good advice to their friends; the wicked lead them astray. (Proverbs 12:26 – NLT)***

- Friends either move you closer to God or further away from Him.
- Take an honest look at your closest friendships right now. Where are they leading you? Is it where you actually want to go?

#### **2. Good friends sharpen your faith.**

- Have you ever had a conversation with a friend where they just agreed with everything you said?
- A friend who just tells you what you want to hear isn't actually helping you.
- A real friend cares enough to tell you when you're the one who's wrong.

***<sup>6</sup> Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy. (Proverbs 27:6 – NLT)***

- A good friend will push back when you need it. They'll challenge you to grow. They won't just let you stay comfortable. They'll call you higher.

***<sup>2</sup> We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. (Romans 15:2 – NLT)***

- That's what real friendship looks like.
  - Friends who don't just hang out with you but actually help you become more like Jesus.
  - Friends who build you up in your faith, not just in your feelings.
- If you have a friend like that in your life, that's one of the most valuable things you have. Don't take it for granted.

### **3. The kind of friend you are matters.**

- Proverbs isn't just asking you to find the right friends. It's asking you to be the right friend.
- If everyone in your friend group was looking for someone who would sharpen their faith, encourage them toward Jesus, and help them make wise choices... would they find that in you?
- Because you're not just being shaped by the people around you... you're shaping them too.
- Every conversation, every text, every moment you spend with someone... you're either building them up or pulling them down.
- Be intentional about who you walk with. But be just as intentional about who you are to the people walking with you.
- Because the adventure you're choosing isn't just shaped by who's beside you. It's shaped by what you bring to the people beside you.

**ACTION (How could we live this out?)**

#### **1. Thank God for friends who sharpen you.**

- Think about the people in your life who actually make you better. The ones who challenge you, encourage you, and point you toward God.
- This week, take a minute during your prayer time and specifically thank God for putting those people in your life.
- Then go a step further and tell one of them. Send a text. Pull them aside after school. Let them know what their friendship means to you and how they've helped you grow.
- If you honestly can't think of anyone like that right now, that's okay.
  - That's not something to feel bad about. It's something to pray about.
  - Ask God to bring that kind of friendship into your life. And be open to the possibility that He might already be answering that prayer through someone you haven't considered yet.
- If you want to go even further, write down the names of two or three people you want to become closer to. Then ask God to show you one specific way to invest in those friendships this week.

## **2. Encourage a friend in their faith.**

- Think of a friend who is trying to follow Jesus. Your job this week is to encourage them.
- Send them a text about something you see God doing in their life, tell them one specific way they've helped you grow, or simply ask how they're doing with God right now and actually listen to the answer.
- If you're not sure who to encourage, look for someone this week who seems like they could use a friend.
- If you want to take it further, ask that friend if they'd be willing to pray together once a week.
- Even a five-minute prayer before school or over text can change the dynamic of a friendship entirely.

## **3. Have an honest faith conversation.**

- This week have a real conversation with one friend who follows Jesus about where you actually are with God right now.
- When you let someone into the real version of what's going on spiritually, you both walk away a little more accountable to who you're trying to become.

- If you want to go further, make it a regular thing because that's what iron sharpening iron actually looks like in real life.
- The right friendships don't just make life more enjoyable. They make you more like Jesus.