



ABIDEROOTED

Friendship & Influence: Choosing Who Shapes You

A 6-Session Discernment Workbook for Youth

YOUTH · DISCERNMENT WORKBOOK · FREE RESOURCE

Begin Here

A 6-session workbook for youth on discerning healthy friendships and godly influence, using Scripture, reflection questions, and practical activities to help them choose friends who point them to Christ and become such friends themselves.

Friendships are one of God's greatest gifts—and one of the areas where we need wisdom most. The people you spend time with shape your thoughts, your habits, and even your faith. But how do you know which friendships are healthy? How do you know when to step back? This workbook will help you think biblically about friendship and influence, so you can choose friends who point you to Jesus and be a friend who points others to Him. You don't have to isolate yourself or fear relationships; God gives you His Spirit and His Word to guide you.

TEACHING

The Power of Influence

1 Corinthians 15:33

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”

Have you ever noticed how you start to talk like your friends after spending time with them? Or pick up their inside jokes, their music, even their attitudes? That's influence. God created us to be shaped by relationships—it's part of being human. But because we live in a fallen world, influence can be either good or bad. The apostle Paul warns us: 'Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.' In other words, don't fool yourself into thinking that bad company won't affect you. It will. Spending time with people who mock God, encourage sin, or drag you down will slowly erode your faith and character. But the opposite is also true: good company can build you up. Think about your closest friends. Do they help you follow Jesus or pull you away from Him? This isn't about being judgmental or having a checklist of 'perfect' friends. It's about being honest about the power of influence. You are not stronger than the pull of your environment. That's why you need wisdom to choose friends who will help you grow in faith, and to be a friend who does the same for others.

Put It Into Practice

Make a list of your five closest friends. Next to each name, write one way they influence you positively and one way they might influence you negatively. Be honest. Then pray for each friend by name.

Reflect & Talk Together

1. What are some ways your friends have influenced you, for good or for bad?
2. Why is it easy to think we are the exception to the warning in 1 Corinthians 15:33?
3. How can you be a positive influence on your friends without being preachy?

Prayer

Lord, thank You for the gift of friendship. Give me wisdom to see how my friends influence me, and help me to be a friend who points others to You. Amen.

TEACHING

Friendship in the Bible

Proverbs 17:17

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

What does the Bible say about friendship? It gives us many examples. There's David and Jonathan, whose friendship was marked by loyalty and love. There's Ruth and Naomi, where Ruth left her homeland to stay with her mother-in-law. And there's Jesus Himself, who called His disciples friends. In Proverbs 17:17, we learn that a true friend loves at all times—not just when it's easy or convenient. A real friend sticks with you through hard times, celebrates with you in good times, and tells you the truth even when it's hard to hear. But we also see warnings. Proverbs 13:20 says, 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.' The Bible doesn't tell us to have no friends who are unbelievers—Jesus ate with sinners—but it does warn us about making ungodly people our closest companions. Your closest friends should be those who share your faith and encourage you to love Jesus more. That doesn't mean you ignore people who don't know God; it means you are careful about who has the most influence in your life. Ask yourself: Are my closest friends helping me become more like Christ?

Put It Into Practice

Read Proverbs 13:20 and Proverbs 27:17. Write down what these verses teach about the kind of friends you should seek. Then think of one person who encourages your faith and thank God for them.

Reflect & Talk Together

1. What qualities do you look for in a friend? Do they match what the Bible values?
2. How can you love your friends 'at all times' even when it's hard?
3. Who is someone in your life that helps you grow in your faith? How can you spend more time with them?

Prayer

Father, thank You for the friends You have placed in my life. Help me to be a loyal friend and to choose friends who will help me follow You. Amen.

TEACHING

Signs of a Healthy Friendship

Galatians 6:1-2

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

How can you tell if a friendship is healthy? Look at the fruit. A healthy friendship is marked by love, trust, honesty, and mutual encouragement. In Galatians 6:1-2, Paul describes two key aspects of Christian friendship: restoring a friend who stumbles and bearing one another's burdens. A healthy friend doesn't ignore your sin or cheer you on in it; they gently help you get back on track. They also come alongside you when you're struggling, carrying the weight with you. But unhealthy friendships often have warning signs: constant criticism, jealousy, pressure to do wrong, gossip, or making you feel bad about yourself. Sometimes we stay in unhealthy friendships because we're afraid of being alone or because we think we can 'fix' the other person. But God doesn't call us to be saviors—that's Jesus's job. He calls us to love others, but He also gives us wisdom to set boundaries. A healthy friendship should make you feel more like Jesus, not less. Ask yourself: Does this friend point me to Christ? Do we build each other up? Can we be honest with each other?

Put It Into Practice

Think of a friendship you have. Rate it on a scale of 1-10 for each of these: trust, honesty, encouragement, and pointing to Christ. Write down one area you want to work on in that friendship.

Reflect & Talk Together

1. What are some warning signs that a friendship might be unhealthy?
2. Why is it important to have friends who will gently correct you when you're wrong?
3. How can you bear a friend's burden this week in a practical way?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for being the perfect friend. Teach me to be a friend who restores and bears burdens. Give me wisdom to recognize healthy and unhealthy friendships. Amen.

TEACHING

When Friendship Turns Toxic

Proverbs 22:24-25

“Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.”

Sometimes a friendship becomes toxic. It might be constant drama, manipulation, or pressure to do things you know are wrong. It might be a friend who puts you down or makes you feel trapped. The Bible warns us to be careful about such relationships. Proverbs 22:24-25 says not to make friends with an angry person, 'lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.' That's strong language—a snare, a trap. Toxic friendships can trap you in sin and keep you from growing in Christ. But how do you know when to step back? Ask yourself: Does this friendship consistently lead me away from God? Does it harm my mental, emotional, or spiritual health? Have I tried to help, but the pattern continues? If so, it may be time to distance yourself. This doesn't mean you hate the person; it means you love them enough not to enable their sin, and you love yourself enough to protect your heart. You can still pray for them and be kind, but you may need to limit your time with them. Remember, you are not responsible for fixing everyone. God is the one who changes hearts.

Put It Into Practice

Write down any friendship that you think might be toxic. List the specific behaviors that concern you. Then write a prayer asking God for wisdom about what to do.

Reflect & Talk Together

1. What are some signs that a friendship is toxic rather than just difficult?
2. Why is it hard to step back from a toxic friendship? What fears do you have?
3. How can you love a toxic friend from a distance without being drawn into their unhealthy patterns?

Prayer

God, give me courage to set boundaries when a friendship is harmful. Help me to love others without being trapped by sin. Guide me in wisdom. Amen.

TEACHING

Choosing Friends Wisely

Proverbs 13:20

“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”

Choosing friends is one of the most important decisions you'll make as a young person. The people you walk with—your closest companions—will either make you wiser or lead you to destruction. That's why Proverbs 13:20 is so clear: walk with the wise and you'll become wise; hang out with fools and you'll be destroyed. But what does it mean to be 'wise'? A wise person fears the Lord and seeks to live according to His Word. They aren't perfect, but they genuinely love Jesus and want to grow. So how do you choose friends? Start by praying and asking God for wisdom. Look for people who share your faith and values. Look for people who are kind, honest, and encouraging. Look for people who challenge you to be better, not worse. But also remember that you are called to be a friend to those who don't know Jesus—you just need to be careful that they don't become your primary influence. You can be a light to them without letting them pull you into darkness. Ask God to bring godly friends into your life, and be the kind of friend you want to have.

Put It Into Practice

Write a 'friendship resume'—a list of qualities you want in a close friend. Then write a list of qualities you want to develop so you can be that kind of friend. Pray over both lists.

Reflect & Talk Together

1. What does it mean to 'walk with the wise' in your daily life?
2. How can you be a friend to unbelievers without being negatively influenced by them?
3. What is one step you can take this week to build a friendship with someone who encourages your faith?

Prayer

Lord, help me to choose friends who will help me follow You. Make me a wise friend to others. Lead me to people who will sharpen my faith. Amen.

TEACHING

Being a Friend Like Jesus

John 15:13-15

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

Jesus is the ultimate example of friendship. He didn't just talk about love; He showed it by laying down His life for His friends. And He calls us friends—not servants—because He has shared with us the truth of the Father. As followers of Jesus, we are called to love our friends sacrificially. That means putting their needs above our own, being willing to forgive, and pointing them to Christ. But we can only do this because Jesus first loved us. He is the friend who sticks closer than a brother, who never leaves us or forsakes us. When we fail in our friendships, we can find grace in Him. When we are lonely, He is with us. When we are hurt by friends, He understands. So as you think about friendship and influence, remember that your identity is not found in having the perfect group of friends. Your identity is found in being a friend of Jesus. And because He is your friend, you can be free to love others without fear—knowing that His love for you never changes.

Put It Into Practice

Read John 15:13-15 slowly. Write a prayer thanking Jesus for calling you His friend. Then think of one friend you can show sacrificial love to this week, and do it.

Reflect & Talk Together

1. What does it mean to you that Jesus calls you His friend?
2. How can you love your friends sacrificially in practical ways?
3. When you feel lonely or rejected, how does knowing Jesus as your friend help you?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for loving me enough to die for me. Thank You for calling me Your friend. Help me to love my friends the way You love me. Amen.

Continue Abiding

Friendship is a gift from God, but it requires wisdom. As you navigate relationships, remember that you are not alone. The Holy Spirit lives in you to guide you, and God's Word is a lamp to your feet. You don't have to isolate yourself in fear, nor do you have to accept every influence that comes your way. You can choose friends who help you follow Jesus, and you can be that kind of friend to others. And when you fail—when you've chosen poorly or been a poor friend—remember that Jesus is the friend who never fails. He died for your sins, rose again, and offers you grace and forgiveness. Abide in Him, and let His love shape you into a person who loves others well. May you experience the joy of godly friendships and the peace of knowing that you are deeply loved by the Friend who sticks closer than a brother.



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