Why Can’t We Be Friends
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Scripture: Proverbs 13:20
Idea: Friends still influence the direction and quality of your life.

Introduction/Review
1. Launching a new series: Guardrails.
2. We all know what a guardrail is:

   Guardrail: a system designed to keep vehicles from straying into dangerous or off-limit areas.

3. You are most likely to find guardrails in the potentially dangerous areas of a road.
4. Guardrails are not placed in the actual areas of danger.
   • They are placed just inside the danger zones.
   • The actual danger zones are just beyond the guardrails.

So, last week we asked, “What would it look like to have guardrails in other arenas of our lives . . . guardrails that are so strong and established that when we bump up against them they cause us pain in our consciences?”

Your greatest regrets could have probably been avoided if you had had some financial, moral, relational, and professional guardrails.

5. Guardrail: standard of behavior that becomes a matter of conscience.

Today, I want to talk specifically about your friends, associates . . . the people you run with and play with . . . your posse . . . your amigos.

I. When we were kids, our parents were fanatical about who we spent time with.

   A. They switched schools . . . paid for private schools.
   B. They wouldn’t let you play at ____’s house.
   C. They moved.
   D. They would have arranged your marriage.

   You thought it was ridiculous.

II. Now you are a parent and you are worse.

   A. We have electronic surveillance systems.
      1. You check your kids’ friends on Facebook.
2. You read their texts.
3. We know how many minutes . . . phone.

Why?

B. We know, like your momma knew, that your kids’ friends can determine the direction and quality of your kids’ lives.

Sara’s [Andy’s assistant] mom broke up for her while she was pitching softball. That’s the kind of thing parents do.

III. The things that make friendships wonderful are the very things that can make them dangerous:

A. We drop our guards.
B. We crave acceptance . . . acceptance leaves us open to influence.

Did anyone smoke that first cigarette alone?
A lot of addictive behaviors begin in a crowd.
Your greatest regret . . . were you with an enemy or a friend?

Singles: Are you a bit surprised at what you have done since moving to Atlanta? Going off to college?

Some things never change.

Your friends will influence the direction and quality of your life.

And this works both ways. Every baptism story is a story of people who met other people who became friends and influenced them in a positive direction. These are ADULTS!

Your friends will influence the direction and quality of your life. Not because you decide to let them. It is the nature of friendship.

Here’s how the writer of Proverbs puts it:

Proverbs 13

20 Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.

IV. This Scripture contains a promise and a warning.

A. Promise: You become wise by doing life with the wise.
   1. Wisdom is contagious. Wisdom rubs off.
   2. Walk with = do life with.
3. Wise people understand that life is connected and they live/act accordingly. Today’s decisions are connected to tomorrow’s outcomes. So, decide today based on tomorrow.

B. Warning: You run the risk of something bad happening to you if you run with fools.
   1. This is where the deception lies:
      • I tell myself since I am not really like them . . . since I’m not as “bad,” “wild,” or “freaky” as they are, I’ll be alright.
      • The warning is not, “The companion of fools becomes a fool.” It’s that the shrapnel of their lives will injure you.
   2. A fool in Proverbs is someone who knows right from wrong, but doesn’t care. He/she lives as if life isn’t connected. Today is today. Tomorrow is . . .
      • Can’t you see where that’s taking you? Haven’t you seen what happens to other people who . . .? Do you think they won’t find out?
      • When you warn a fool, he/she doesn’t say, “What? I had no idea! Thanks for the warning.”

The warning has to do with proximity. When they eventually go down . . . you go down with them. Wrong place/wrong time.

3. Friends who aren’t careful with their lives will not be careful with yours.
   • Friends who don’t take care of themselves . . . won’t take care of you.
   • Friends who don’t take care of their marriages . . . won’t look out for yours.
   • Friends who are irresponsible with their finances will be irresponsible with yours.
   • Friends who don’t mind abusing their bodies won’t mind if you abuse yours.
   • Friends who cheat will feel better about themselves if you will too.
   • Friends who break the law won’t confront you about breaking the law.

Friends can be dangerous. And danger requires guardrails. You need to establish a standard that informs your conscience. When you start veering, lights go on.

V. Your conscience should light up when . . .

A. It dawns on you that your core group isn’t moving in the direction you want your life to be moving. Where people are heading is a good indication of where they are leading. [Community group]
B. You catch yourself pretending to be someone other than who you really are—when someone tells you that you act differently around him/her.
C. You feel pressure to compromise—*not when you’ve compromised*. Something that has never been a real temptation becomes a live option. *Friends value what is valuable to you.*

D. You hear yourself saying, “I’ll go, but I won’t participate.”

E. You hope the people you care about most don’t find out where you’ve been or whom you’ve been with.

**Conclusion**

1. Don’t confuse guardrails with a lack of concern or love.
2. One day those same people may need you. Be in a position to help.
3. Creating margin in a relationship/friendship is painful.
4. *While I was talking, did someone(s) come to mind? If you could push a button and immediately be disentangled with no complications, would you push it?*
5. Face up to God’s will for you. Step back.
6. *A year from now, you might wish you could come back to today and act on what you’ve heard. So, why not pretend that today is your second chance and move back behind the guardrail?*

*Be intentional about walking with the wise, because the companion of fools . . . eventually suffers harm.*