

Friends, Part 3 | Do your kids have bad friends?

I. Do your children have enemies in their lives? Do they have fake friends?

- Definitely.
- If you have a 100% Friend, then you're not concerned at all that they will be a bad influence. Unfortunately, God is our only 100% friend. On the other side, the 100% Enemy is someone from whom you want your kids to stay far away. So, what about the 75/25 Friend and the 75/25 Enemy? What about the person who acts like a friend 50% of the time and an enemy the other 50% and the various shades in-between?

II. Your kids have more enemies in their lives than they have friends, so how do we help them tell the difference?

- You as the parent need to know what true love and friendship are.
- You have to know the kids with whom your children associate.
- You have to teach your children what the Bible says about love and friendship.
- You need to guide your children through a mature and biblical informed evaluation of the kids with whom they associate.
 - You need to ask a lot of questions.
 - You're going to have to push for biblical conclusions.
 - You can use the "7 Trademarks of an Unhealthy Friendship by Paul David Tripp" as well.
- You have to teach your kids how God wants them to relate to enemies.
 - God wants all of our relationships to be redemptive relationships. That means that every person with whom we interact should be drawn closer to God because they were with us.
 - So, if the individual is unsaved, then there's clear biblical teaching that I am not to fellowship with them. I John teaches us that there is no fellowship between light and darkness. To fellowship is to share or to contribute, but it can also refer to intimacy and intercourse.
 - The idea is that things that fellowship are similar — light with light. Oil and water don't mix. Light and dark can't exist in the same space at the same time.
 - God doesn't command us to ignore and run away from unbelievers. He simply points out that we don't have anything in common and cannot — therefore — fellowship.
 - But we are commanded to love them and share God's Truth with them. If we're being a true friend to them, there should be nothing more important to us than sharing the Gospel with our unsaved friends.
 - Our redemptive relationships with the professing Christians are to be identical to the unsaved in that our interactions must draw them to God. And in the case of a professing brother or sister in Christ, if they are living in unrepentant sin, God says, "*Don't rub shoulders with them.*"
 - God wants us to admonish Christians who act like enemies. But he definitely wants us spending less time with them than with unbelievers.
 - Jesus ate with unsaved sinners, but He commands us to not even eat with professing Christians who are living in sin.
 - Of course, our relationships with our actual friends should very similar, but instead of calling them to the Gospel, we're to walk with them in the Gospel, encouraging growth and continued submission to Christ.

III. 7 Trademarks of an Unhealthy Friendship by Paul David Tripp

- **Does the relationship have a tendency toward self-indulgence?** Ephesians 4:17-24 lay out two warring kingdoms: the kingdom of self and self-indulgence vs. the Kingdom of Christ and self-sacrifice. Every day in your friendship, a battle will be fought on your heart. Will you allow the relationship to be driven by what you want, or by God's purpose? On the other hand, does your friend always push toward what they want, or God's purpose?
- **Does the relationship have a tendency toward deceit?** Verse 25 says that we must speak honestly in our friendship, but because we are often driven by our own purpose and not the Lord's, we will be tempted to manipulate the truth to get what we want from the other person. This is one reason Jesus says, "*Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.*" (Matthew 5:37) Does your friend ever lie to you, exaggerate, deceive, or manipulate you?
- **Does the relationship have a tendency toward anger?** Verses 26-27 quote Psalm 4:4. It's not a sin to be angry; you should be righteously angered when a friend sins against you. However, sin comes into play and the devil gets a foothold when we attempt to control the relationship by venting our anger or by holding it over our friend's head to manipulate them. Does your friend frequently get angry with you? When was the last time they got angry and about what were they angry? As a side note, you may want to teach your children about biblical anger by listening to episode 153, "Is It Okay to Get Mad?"
- **Does the relationship have a tendency toward selfishness?** Verse 28 may feel hard to relate to at first if you're employed or a hard worker and not a thief by definition of local law. So think about it in a more simple way: how often do you protect or hold on to what you have, rather than offer it to your friend in an effort to serve them? On the other hand, how often does your friend protect or hold on to what they have, rather than offer it to you in an effort to serve you?
- **Does the relationship have a tendency toward unhelpful communication?** Verses 29-30 warn us that rather than using our language to build others up, we tend to use words to ensure that we have the top spot in our friendship. Proverbs 18:21 offers a more severe warning: "*Death and life are in the power of the tongue.*" Does your friend tear you down, make fun of you, or complain about you?
- **Does the relationship have a tendency toward division?** Again, verse 31 may feel unrelatable at first, especially if you haven't gotten into a brawl with your friend! However, it's much more common for us to view our friend as some type of adversary, rather than a companion in the struggle of relationship. Has your friend ever set you against herself?
- **Does the relationship have a tendency toward an unforgiving spirit?** The final verse in the chapter is the ultimate definition of a gospel friendship. Rather than want to make a friend pay for their wrongs against us, we should be the first to forgive, because no one forgives more freely than the person who knows how much they've been forgiven in Christ. Does your friend forgive or do they hold grudges?