



1 Youth Ministry

March 16, 2014

Lesson:

This week, we concluded our 3 part series preparing us for our viewing of the movie, "God's NOT Dead" on Friday, March 21st.

We started with a scene from the movie "God's NOT Dead" in which Josh has a confrontation with his girlfriend because she does not want him to go through with the challenge put forth by his professor but Josh feels he is being led by God to do it.

We discussed similar situations in which we were doing something we felt compelled by God to do or even just something we were really passionate about and somebody close to us was totally against it. We talked about how it made us feel and discussed why close relationships and friendships hold so much weight when it comes to advice or their opinion.

We said that our closest friends, the ones that are in our "inner circle", are important because they protect us and help us grow in our faith as well as holding us accountable. We also trust their opinion and they have the biggest influence on our decisions. We said it's really hard when one of these friends is totally against something that we're very passionate about.

We read **2 Corinthians 6:14-15** and discussed what Paul meant when he said that we should not be yoked together with unbelievers. We said that while it is not impossible, it was much easier for somebody with little or no faith to pull us down to their level than it is for us to pull them up. That isn't to say that we should not have friends who are not yet Christians but it IS to say that our close friends, in our inner circle, should share the same core values and beliefs because they have the most influence on us.

From the movie clip that we watched, we noted that while Josh and his girlfriend met in a Church youth group, they did not seem to be "equally yoked". Josh seemed to be Christ-centered but his girlfriend was definitely more self-centered. You could see how much of a hard time Josh was having with the decision he was making and his girlfriend was not helping at all.

We said that friendships can make us better but sometimes we find ourselves in friendships that don't make us better or maybe even make us worse. Paul is not saying we should just ditch these friends, he's saying to think about how our different friends influence us and to keep the ones who influence us in a positive way the closest to us.

We agreed that Christians can make bad choices just as easily as non-Christians can make good choices. However, a general rule of thumb is found in 1 Corinthians 15:33. We read **1 Corinthians 15:33** and talked about two ways that bad company corrupts good character. Hanging around with "bad" friends can present temptation that corrupt otherwise good moral character (especially if they are close friends). The other thing that can happen is that hanging around with "bad" friends can give others the appearance that we also have corrupt moral character even when we don't. This can affect whether people listen to us when we tell them the good news of the Gospel.

We also discussed how Jesus had some close friends who he surrounded himself with (his inner circle) and while they didn't always get it right, they all shared his mission, his vision and his passion. Jesus also befriended people who were not Godly at all such as thieves, adulterers, prostitutes, etc. We said that Jesus was able to change the hearts of these people but the pharisees also used his befriending these unGodly people to attack his character to try to get people to stop listening to him and following him. We said that Satan can use our relationship with "bad" friends to attack our character in the same way.

When it comes to friendships and any relationships, Paul tells us to think about it and be aware who our friends are and what they bring to our life. We need to be aware of which are helping our faith and which are hurting us. We were given worksheets to place our current friends in their proper circles of influence in our lives and then pray for the Holy Spirit to help us make sure they are in the correct circles. We said that this should be continuous throughout our lives and we shouldn't be afraid to move friends to different circles of influence or to let them go completely if needed.

2 Corinthians 6:14-15: 14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial[a]? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

1 Corinthians 15:33: 33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."