



Date: _____

Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

Fitting In and Finding Friends Series, Lesson 17

Lesson Title: Choosing Friends? What Are You Looking For?

Take Home Point: Choose friends that bring out God's best in you.

Warm-Up:

How often we hear the story or read it in the newspaper. A person is caught in a crime of some sort, perhaps shoplifting, robbery, drug dealing, or even homicide. The parents declare their child to be a "good kid" who fell in with a bad crowd. "He's really a good boy who wouldn't hurt anyone," they say, "He just picked bad friends who led him astray." Do you ever wonder where these bad friends come from? Do you suppose the person caught in the crime got to know them because he or she wanted to be a positive influence on them, or that they were met in a positive setting that promoted developing godly character? Not too likely. These bad friends seem to be everywhere, yet it appears they are almost never the ones caught or harmed. Why is that? And does it strike you that the term "bad friend" is really sort of an oxymoron?

Read: 1st Kings 12:3-18 and John 15:16

Observation (What happened?):

What was the reason the elders gave for their recommendation? What reason did Rehoboam's young friends give?

Why did Jesus choose his disciples, including you and me?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

Why do you think Rehoboam rejected the elders' advice and listened to his young friends?

How can the right friends help produce lasting fruit?

Insight:

How can we choose our friends? Is there any guidance in the Bible that might give some insight into the kind of friends that can bring out God's best in us? Yes, there is. The friendship that developed between David and Jonathan provides an example of two young men who helped each other, were loyal in doing good, and who did not drag each other into sinful behavior. Contrast that with Rehoboam's friends. Jesus himself gives us a pattern for choosing friends in selecting his disciples. Remember these were men with whom he would spend the next three or four years. He prayed for wisdom. He wasn't at all concerned about their occupation or their reputation, either as "righteous" or "sinful" in the eyes of others. He didn't select them because of any social advantage they might provide. He didn't try to find perfect people, either, because of course he knew he would never find them. They were men who wanted to do right, who sought God and his ways, who were willing to live and learn together.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

How do you choose your friends? What traits and characteristics do you look for?

What can you do for one of your friends this week that brings out God's best in them?