



[Leader note: Begin the message with your typical welcome and introduction.]

Today, we are starting a new series called Swipe Right. The idea behind this series is to lay out the principles that God gives us for friendships, relationships, love and sex – stuff that will change your life forever either way – whether you get it right or whether you get it wrong. How you manage these relationships will either will bring you lots of joy and success or a ton of remorse and regret if you don't play by the rules.

So, to kick off the series today, we're going to talk about friendships. Friends are super important in high school – and you know what – it doesn't change when you get older either. Friends are still important to adults, even old people. In our culture, you use social media to keep in touch with your friends. Some of you are probably communicating with your friends right now on your phone, even though you're sitting right next to them! For some of you, not looking at your phone for an hour is impossible so you sneak a peek while you drive or even during this message. I know the feeling! But it goes further than that; many people base their quality of life on the relationships and friendships around them. Friends are a big deal. [pause] You might recognize some of these more famous friendships, right? Here are a few that came to my mind right away this week:

[Leader note: You'll want to update the famous friendships list below to use ones that are current and relevant to your students.]

- SpongeBob and Patrick [picture]
- Bob the Cucumber and Larry the Tomato [picture]
- Frodo & Sam [picture]
- Harry Potter & Friends [picture]

[Leader note: Next, I displayed a couple of pictures of me obviously Photoshopped with celebrities. This created a light moment and would work for you too. But it isn't necessary to the success of the message.]

I have some really close friendships, too. Here's a shot of me and some of my close friends, too. **[picture] [picture] [picture]**

[Leader note: Next, I showed a brief Woody and Buzz "You've got a friend in me" montage.]

But there's one friendship that is clearly above all others ... you'll recognize this one right away I'm sure. Watch this:

You've grown up with some friends, maybe you've known each other or been in the same schools since kindergarten. Maybe your family moved around a lot so you know that having friends isn't necessarily easy even if you're a friendly person. But this idea of friendship is all around us: the many forms of social media we use are all focused on friends.

Let me show it to you this way: **[Circle appears on screen, you are in the middle]**

- You're right here in the middle
- You have family members who are your friends (There's no choice here. You have to be friends with them, sorry.) **[a few dots appear, plays some sort of "bubble pop"-type sound]**
- You may have a boyfriend or a girlfriend **[a new dot appears]**
- You have your BFFs **[a few dots appear]**
- You have really close friends, some at school, others here at church **[a few dots appear]**
- You have your friends with benefits (Just kidding! Please don't have those!) **[a dot appears, then is removed]**
- You might have a few acquaintances **[a few more dots appear]**
- You have distant friends and relatives **[dots appear]**
- You have people you met once who are now friends with you on social media **[a few more dots appear]**
- And you probably have people you don't know at all, but you wanted more friends on Facebook so you approved their friend request **[lots of dots appear]**

Social media apps leverage your broad network of friends! These apps know you! For example, behind the scenes, Facebook news feed uses complex algorithms to show you the posts of people it decides you really care about. When you look at your feed, it is calculating every second you've spent on the site, every comment you've made, every click you did and how much time you spent stalking someone. You know you've done it!

So, these apps can make educated guesses about who your friends are – the virtual ones, at least. But what it CAN'T tell you is what kind of a friend you ARE. And that's what I hope to focus on today. We all have good friends and we all know what a bad friend is like, because we've either been a bad friend at times, or we've experienced them.

So today, I want to help you think about friendship a bit from God's eyes.

5 Ways to Be a Genuine Friend

A good friend ...

1) ...goes above and beyond

There's a story in the Bible that is now known as the Good Samaritan. It is all about a guy who went above and beyond for someone he hardly knew. He befriended him in a time of need and shows us a lot today how to be a good friend.

Parable of the Good Samaritan

Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

"By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

"Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man

on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.' "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same." Luke 10: 30-37

A bad friend does the least amount of work possible. A bad friend ignores another person's needs. A bad friend makes sure that everything revolves around themselves and no one else. Don't be a bad friend!

Here's your first action step ... **THIS WEEK: Care**

Also, a good friend...

2. ...is loyal

There are "friends" who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24

[Leader note: Below, I shared my dog story as a way to convey the concept of loyalty. If you've had a loyal pet, share your story. If you are a cat person, sorry, everyone knows cats aren't loyal, but you can share a general observation about dogs and loyalty.]

When I was growing up, I had an incredible dog. It was a golden ... mixed ... mutt. It was a dog we rescued from the shelter that fell in love with our family. We loved that dog, but as kids sometimes we terrorized the poor thing. You could lock it in the trunk of the car for two hours, come back, and he would lick your face and be happy to see you. The loyalty dogs have to humans is amazing! True story: I was riding my bike down a hill when I was like 10, and going super, super fast – and our dog darted in front of me and I ran over him and flipped over my handle bars – broke my arm in the middle of the street. My dog, who was super injured as well, ran home and got my parents to come find me. My dog was like Lassie! Super dog. So loyal ... a total friend.

We need to be this way, too. The Bible says that ...

A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.

Proverbs 17:17

We are taught to be loyal to products in the marketplace, too. We're taught that if you like Coke you can't also like Pepsi; if you like USC you have to hate UCLA fans. Actually, both of those are totally true! Just kidding... But more importantly than what you drink, what school you cheer for or what phone you text on is who you ARE. And God is looking for loyal teenagers: ones who are looking for needs and offering to help, and being there when someone needs you.

A bad friend turns his or her back on their friend when things get ugly. A bad friend spreads others' weaknesses because of their own insecurity. A bad friend is loyal in front of your face, then kills you behind the scenes. Don't be a bad friend! So, the challenge for us is...

THIS WEEK: Show loyalty

But a friend sometimes has to say some difficult things. Real friends refuse to let being loyal get in the way of doing what is right. A genuine friend also...

3. ... tells the truth

[Rapid fire these verses.]

Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.

Proverbs 27:6

Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends. Proverbs 17:9

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. Proverbs 27:17

You may be noticing a lot of verses this week from the book of Proverbs. It contains a TON of God's ways about how to be a good friend. Maybe read it this week. If you have a Bible then great, if not let us know, and we'll get one to you right away.

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