

0 (0s):

My name's Melissa Webb. I am a social worker in the VA medical center in Denver, and I work in the substance use disorder clinic as a addictions therapist.

1 (16s):

After the message on habits on Sunday, you came up and said, oh, you know, this is something I always tell and encourage people to do. So what was it that you recommended?

0 (26s):

Community, community, community. I, I can't, I think that's, I tell them that I preach this all, you know, this is what I preach in this, in this clinic, is that we cannot do this alone. A veteran in one of my groups said that one time you said, opposite of addiction is connection. Sometimes you're gonna have to lose people in your life or, or say, look, this is not kind of the path I'm on anymore. And you have to kind of attach yourself and connect yourself with people of like mind that are trying to do the same things. Everybody that's come through this program, if they get connected in the community with a group of people that are sober, they tend to do better.

0 (1m 6s):

Yeah. Cause it does, it might not just happen, right? I don't think it does. Like, even if we show up to church and we're just sitting there, it takes some effort. I'm gonna get in a community group, I'm gonna do the, you know, I'm gonna make the commitment. What

1 (1m 18s):

About the people that are on this end of it? They're like, well, no, I'm, I'm doing okay in my life right now. I don't need to join a community group

0 (1m 25s):

In terms of community group. It is a connection in faith. So this idea of a community group is going to encourage me in a different way than say somebody at work. And it is proactive because you can, now you have people to go to. We have a text string with my community group with just the women, right? Like when we're just like, pray for this, pray for that instead of going through a hard thing by yourself. Yeah. You have somebody already there. I I, and I have a story for one of the coup, one of the groups that we were in prior to the one I'm in now that I, I did not know a soul other than Chris and the community. And you know, I was pregnant with my first, and we got into this group. They, they showed up on my doorstep with diaper.

0 (2m 5s):

I didn't even ask like, just, just donating whatever they were done using. I was going through some postpartum and she recognized it before I did. She had been through that and she was showing up on my door, knocking on my door, giving me coffee. And I was just like, what are you doing? I don't want you here. You know, like this is, I don't know why you're here. And she just did it. Did it, did it. And, and now we're

friends for life. I tell people, I don't care how introverted you are, we people need people.

1 (2m 37s):

Thank you Melissa, for that interview. I did a whole interview with her after she told me some stuff after the service last week. And if you want to hear the full interview, it's about 25 minutes. You can go to ariseinvert.com/slash/habits and it's linked. If you're using the u version bible app, there's a resource page at ariseinvert.com/slash/habits. And you can listen to the full interview with Melissa Webb because we need people, we need community. And I love what she said, the opposite of addiction is connection. And I thought that was so powerful that she's seen that over and over again. Something I shared last week about meeting with my neighbor who's been sober 11 years, very highly involved in aa. He said the same thing. He's like, you need people, you need people, you need people. He keeps saying it over and over again.

1 (3m 18s):

And that's why today's message is about that final component with habits. That you can't do it alone. You need friends, you need connection, you need community. So I want to challenge you to choose your community because whether you like it or not, you have people in your life and they may not be the best people. So we're gonna actually choose your community today. So last week, man, it was, it was powerful if you weren't here for message three, in this habit series we talked about how to break a bad habit. So if you're like working on that, go back and listen to that message, rice.denver.com/media. But what was really powerful was at the end of the service, we had people come forward and they were hundreds of people who came forward and they wrote down their bad habit they're trying to break and they put it on the tables up here.

1 (4m 2s):

We gave you guys those cool little wristbands and if you want one, there's some in the back. You can grab those in the baskets on your way out to so that you can take off the old and put on the new. And then we burned all those bad habits on the way out. It was really powerful to see that. But I want to wanna take a little informal poll and you can raise your hand if you want to, if you're bold enough. Who in here was either tempted to go back to their bad habit or they actually did their bad habit again this last week? Okay. And yes, I am raising my hand. Okay, so I am raising my hand. I'll be bold enough to say it because it's hard to break a bad habit, whether it's chewing our fingernails or overcoming substance addiction or anything in between. It is hard to do it. And that's why we need each other.

1 (4m 43s):

We need each other. So I'm gonna challenge you today with this simple concept. Your friends define your future. Hear me on that. Your friends define your future, the people who you're connected with regularly, those people in your life. And they can be family, they can be people that you know from work, but your friends are those people who are there for you, for good or bad. Your friends define your future. And we're gonna see this. Not only does psychological research say this and and groups have figured this out, but it's

in the Bible too. Okay? So that's what we're gonna look at today. And we are really gonna be centered on one verse today. And it's Proverbs 1320.

1 (5m 25s):

So if you have a Bible, you can open up with me to that verse. Some of you're gonna highlight it, mark it up right in, in your Bible. If you have the U version Bible app, you can highlight in there too. But you can use our right church Denver event and save the notes that we'll be covering and we'll jump in, in back and forth to several other verses as well in this message. So Proverbs 1320, your friends define your future. So I wanna read this verse to you. So, so follow along with me. In Proverbs 1320, we read, walk with the wise and become wise for a companion of fools Suffers harm. Pretty simple.

1 (6m 5s):

Some of you should memorize that today. Walk with the wise and become wise for a companion of fools suffers harm. It's pretty simple. These, these proverbs, they're these nuggets of wisdom. And, and it, it's showing this, this one, it's like there's two different passive life. That's a lot of the wisdom. It's like there's two different ways you can go. You can walk with the wise and become wise, or you can be a companion, a friend of fools, and suffer harm. It's interesting because when you walk with the wise, it's changing you, it's almost like an active thing. You're becoming wise as you go about life with your friends. But if you just hang around with people who are fools, you suffer harm. It's things that happen to you.

1 (6m 46s):

It's like, I, I didn't choose harm, I didn't choose bad, I didn't choose all these awful things in my life, but it's happening to you. I, I'm sure all of us can see this in our own life. And can I, can I get honest with you guys for a moment? Yes. Okay. I'm gonna share some stuff that, that I probably shouldn't in. Okay? I, I can think back in my life, I was thinking about it a lot this week about who, who the friends were at different points in my life. And I remember in high school, man, every night I'd be playing way too much video games, okay? I'm honest about it. Wasting a lot of time playing video games. Why? Because of my older brother and my friends that were around. But when I got to college, I stopped playing video games altogether because I wasn't around those guys anymore.

1 (7m 27s):

But then in college I got a roommate who smoked clove cigarettes and I smoked way too many clove cigarettes. Okay? I don't even like smoking, okay? But I was doing it because of that roommate. And actually all of the roommates started doing it, right? Because it just getting around those people who do something, you start to do these things, even if you're like, what the heck? I moved out. I never smoked another clove cigarette for the rest of my life. Okay? I still haven't. And probably I won't ever. But then I, in, in seminary my freshman year of, of seminary, so I'm training to be a pastor, right? But this is before Melissa and I were married. I had a roommate who drank like a fish, okay? Drink like a fish. And I started drinking a glass of whiskey every night.

1 (8m 7s):

Yeah, there was one semester, man, I barely pulled it out cuz I drank too much whiskey. Okay? I'm, I'm confessing to you guys right now. I'm being open and honest. I moved out from that roommate. I don't drink whiskey anymore. Seriously, it, the people that were around draw us into things and they can be some very bad habits. And I'm glad I didn't stay with that roommate that would drink a lot of whiskey cuz man, that could have really ruined my life. I, I also think back at some of the positive elements in my life. When I was in high school, I, I got in a band and, and we started playing and, and gigging and I was working so hard to become a musician and I got so much better as a musician because I was around a bunch of guys who loved music.

1 (8m 49s):

These guys propelled me forward, right? And then in college, yes, I had roommates that, that smoked clove cigarettes, but I also had some close friends and a mentor who memorized scripture. So I started memorizing bible verses like, who does that in college? But I was doing it because the people I was around. And then in seminary, yeah, there I had a roommate that's drank a lot, but I also had a lot of friends at the seminary and people who loved the bible so much and devoted their life to studying the Bible. So what did I do? I grew in love for God's word and studying it and just, just reading it. And I loved it. See the people were around for good or for bad, drastically change our lives, walk with the wise and become wise for a companion of fools.

1 (9m 34s):

Suffers harms your friends define your future for bad or for good. So yes, I am encouraging you, I am challenging you to choose your friends. Some of you're like, well we've been friends for a life or, or you know, this is the person I work with are this one my family. You can't choose your family, right? But we can choose the people that influence us in our lives. And in fact we are told to do that in the proverbs. I wanna show you this other verse in, in the proverbs, if we could pull that up. Proverbs 1226. It says the righteous, those who are right with God choose their friends carefully, carefully.

1 (10m 15s):

If they think about it, they think this might be one of the most important decisions I ever make. The friends I choose to surround myself with, we are told we should choose our friends. We should be selective there. There's a lot of theory. You've probably heard this. The idea that you are the average of your five closest friends, you're the average of it. How much money you make is probably average between your five closest friends. There'll be a couple that make less than you and a couple that make more than you. It's you're the average of your five closest friends. And, and this actually is like proved by a lot of research.

1 (10m 55s):

There was one study that looked at 12,000 people over a span of 32 years. They tracked these 12,000

people for over 32 years. And in the area of health what they found that if one of your five closest friends is someone who is extremely overweight, then it actually increases the chance that you will be overweight by 57%. And on the flip side, if you have one of your five closest friends who you loses a ton of weight, you, you will actually, of the three closest friends, one out of three will also lose a ton of weight.

1 (11m 36s):

Okay? The people we surround ourself greatly impact us sometimes in obvious ways cuz they encourage us or say things. Sometimes we just see them doing things and we do it too well. They're spending the money that they don't have on a car. So maybe I should spend the money. I don't have to get nice car to buy a bigger house because that's what they're doing. And then you find yourself in debt because your friends are in debt with the foods you eat. The money you spend can be those five closest friends. You are the average for good or for bad. So who are the five closest people around you? Have you ever thought about this? Maybe you should write it down.

1 (12m 17s):

I can give you a second. You can pull out your phone. Who are the five closest friends? And it can be your five closest fa family members or your five closest people at work. But who are those five people that you are around the most in your life? Who are they for good or for bad? They impact you a lot. I, I heard it once that I, I love this image. So I wanted you guys to see it. That that your friends can either be anchors or engines. Your friends can either be anchors or engines, they can be anchors who hold you down. And no matter how much you're trying to change your habits and change your life, they just keep pulling you back.

1 (12m 60s):

You go real quick. Ah, and they just pull you right back. Do you have any friends like that in your five closest that are anchors to you? Or do you have some friends that are engines? Even if you don't want to move, they're pushing and chugging and they're pulling you along on the track, right? And sometimes you're like, ah, I don't want to do, I don't want to go to church. I don't feel like it community group. Ugh, okay, I don't want to give up this bad habit. And they're just like, no, we're doing it, we're doing it. Come on, let's go. And they pull you out and they push you forward. Do your friends anchor you or do they propel you forward like an engine?

1 (13m 40s):

Think about those five. You could label all five of 'em if you're writing them down. Put an anchor and egg, draw a little anchor next to 'em or draw an engine. I don't know, maybe you could just write engine if you're not a good drawer. Okay? Are, are your five closest friends anchors or engines? The scriptures tell us we should choose our friends carefully. I wanna surround myself with engines. I want the five closest people around me to all be engines to be pushing me forward. Cuz then I will be able to move forward in the direction that God has called me to. Particularly I want to walk with the wise who have knowledge about life and they can apply it to different situations that they've been there before me.

1 (14m 25s):

Or they can think through things that I could never think on my own. They see things that are blind spots to me. I want those people around me. And I hope you do as well because your friends define your future. I heard a great interview with leadership guru John Maxwell recently, and he's in his eighties now. He's been going around forever. If you know anything about John Maxwell, he's the best. And in the interview they were asking him, they said, okay, you've got your 21 irrefutable laws, you've got these eight things over here for teamwork and all these different things. If you've ever heard John Maxwell, you know, he's got a ton of different lessons. So they said, well what's the one most important lesson you've learned and your 80 plus years of life and 60 plus years of being a leader and a leader coach, what's the one most important thing?

1 (15m 13s):

And he said, intentionality. The most important thing you can do, he said is to live on purpose. A lot of people let life happen to them. He said, the most important thing you can learn is to live life intentionally. And I was like, yeah, that's so true. Do you let life happen to you? And if so, you're going with the companions and suffering harm, it's happening to you. Or do you choose, no, I'm gonna be intentional and walk with the why's. Is life happening to you or are you taking life and owning it and walking the way you want to go? And I think if we want to do that, we have to choose our friends.

1 (15m 57s):

We have to be careful about those five, especially who we surround ourself. We can't just say, well we've been friends for life. We were best friends. Well, we went through that thing together. Some of those people maybe were great even for that season of your life, but now they're anchors. I had a friend like this best friend growing up, he became an anchor into college. And at some point, kindly and lovingly, you have to cut 'em loose, cut 'em loose. Because look what happens in in in verse thir verse 20, Proverbs 1320. I wanna look at this verse again. It says Walk with the wise and become wise changing your very character. You are becoming the wise person just by being around wise people.

1 (16m 39s):

For a companion of fools suffers harms, it changes our future, it impacts our character. The things that happen to us are because of the people we surround ourselves with. That we surround ourselves with. There's a lot of different proverbs that that say the the negative side of this, I wanna show you a few. Proverbs 22, it says, do not make friends with a hot-tempered person. Do not associate with one easily angered or you may learn their ways and get yourselves ensnared just by being around an angry person. You become angrier. If someone's complaining and negative, you become more complaining and negative.

1 (17m 21s):

You guys ever experience that? There are workplaces that are so negative because everybody starts complaining and it's this downward spiral. Proverbs 2320, or I'm sorry, 22. Is that the right one? 23? I don't

think that's the right reference up there. Maybe it's proverb 2320. Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat. And it goes on to say for drunkards and gluttons become poor and drowsiness close them in rags. Okay? You go and hang out with people and they're ordering another drink and another drink. Man, alcohol when you go out is expensive, okay?

1 (18m 3s):

You know it, right? All of a sudden your bank account is gone and your drinking too much and gain some weight, right? Just by being with those people, well I guess we gotta order a bottle of wine cuz every time we get together, we order a bottle of wine. Right? In the New Testament says something similar too. Paul says this in First Corinthians. He says, do not be misled. Bad company corrupts good character, changes your character to be around people who are negative. You do not become the person you wanna become. And you become someone who you look at and you're like, how did I become that person?

1 (18m 42s):

Why am I so angry? Why am I so broke? Why am I so awful? And, and you look at yourself, how did I do this thing? I've said that. How did I fall into this habit? It's because the people were around. It changes our very character. We have to think very carefully about who we surround ourselves with because your friends define your future. I don't know if you've seen any news about this, but there was, there's a big study that's been going on now for 85 years. 85 years. There's been a study out of Harvard called the Harvard Study of Adult Development. So they started way back in 1938 in Boston and they, they started with a group of 724 men that they were gonna track, just see what happens in their life and follow 'em and study 'em.

1 (19m 33s):

They've had already an 85 years, 85% retention rate, which is great like that. That's a very long term study. And it started with those 724 men. They got married, they had kids. Now there's grandkids. There's over 1300 descendants of this group now that they're tracking for 85 years to look at the choices they make, the things they do in their life because they want to figure out, okay, what separates people to have a better life, a happier life, a healthier life from others? And what's interesting is they've seen over and over there are things like a diet that help. There are things like exercises that help with life, but there's one thing that they've concluded from their study for 85 years. That's the most important thing. If you wanna live a happy, healthy life, do you know what it is?

1 (20m 15s):

Good relationships. They found that the relationships that you develop in your life are the ones that keep you healthier and happier. Interesting, right? I think they could have just opened up the Bible and found it in there. But it's okay if they wanna do an 85 year study to prove what the Bible says. I'm cool with that too. 85 years. And it's showing that the relationships are the most important thing in your life. Walk with the, and become wise for a companion of fools. Suffers harms your friends. Define your future. Just imagine what could happen to your life if you surrounded yourself with the people that you wanna become.

1 (20m 59s):

You wanna become better at money. Get surrounded by people that have a budget, okay? And stick to it that know how to manage money. You talk with them, they're just gonna slip in little these nuggets that you'd have to pay somebody thousands and thousands of dollars for. They're just gonna slip it in. And then you'll find yourself, wow, I actually have more money than I thought I did and, and I can buy the house that I've been dreaming of for years. Or, or, or maybe you wanna get healthier. Just imagine spending time with, with people who eat healthier and exercise. You're gonna find yourself doing it too. And you're gonna be coming like them. And then you're gonna be living longer and having more energy to be with your kids and with your grandkids. And you're gonna be like, wow, this was totally worth it. Not just that I can live longer, but I can live better longer because the people that I've surrounded myself with.

1 (21m 44s):

Imagine your faith. What could happen that you surround yourself with people who are strong in their faith, who pray, they're gonna be praying for you. That's a nice perk. But then you're gonna find yourself praying for them and asking God for big things and seeing him come through in amazing ways that you thought were impossible. Your faith has grown. You've learned so much just because you've surrounded yourself with people of faith. It's almost like you've become wise when you walk wise. Imagine what could happen with your life. Imagine what could happen. Now, there's one more concept with habits that, habits that I want to teach you guys. We've covered a lot in this series, haven't we?

1 (22m 25s):

We've talked about the habit loop, about how it works with the cue, the routine and the reward and, and how that reinforces itself again and again. And, and you can make it go in a positive direction or you can take a bad habit and break it just by understanding the habit cue. We also learned a skill called habit stacking. Do you remember that? That you already have hundreds and thousands of habits in your life. So instead of creating a new one, like out of nothing, you say, well, I'm already doing the same thing every day. What if I stacked on top of it this other thing that I want to do? So that's a couple different things we've learned about habits. I wanna teach you one more thing, and I have talked about this before. So if you've been around our church for a while, you, you've heard it. But it's the idea of a keystone habit.

1 (23m 8s):

A keystone habit. Because there are some habits that if you put in your life, don't just affect the one thing, they affect a whole host of things they keystone out, right? And, and, and from that one stone, it can impact all the different areas of your life. A couple ones that are talked about a lot when you, you read about habits, one of 'em is, is working out in the morning. If you work out in the morning, it's actually a keystone habit because not only does it help you work out and and get a little healthier physically, but, but then you start eating better. Cuz every morning, like you're having breakfast and you're planning out your lunch and you're thinking, well, I gotta eat healthier because just worked out.

1 (23m 47s):

And then you find yourself going to sleep a little earlier because you wanna wake up in the morning to make sure you get your workout in so you're sleeping earlier and then you sleep better. And then when you start working out in the morning, you have more energy and you're less likely to be depressed. So you feel better. And then your relationships get better. Your work actually improves because you're working out in the morning and then you can live longer and all this other stuff, okay? Like it's a keystone habit because it impacts so many different other areas of your life. You guys understand that Another keystone habit is eating a meal every night with your family, family dinners. It's like, well, why is that such a big deal? Because you sit down every night and you start having meals, and then you start talking about life and you ask your kids, what'd you learn today?

1 (24m 33s):

And the kids are much more likely to do their homework because now someone's checking up on 'em. Okay? So the, so the kids are getting better grades and, and going on to have better education and get a better career. A and then when things crop up and people are mad at each other, well, you don't wanna sit at the table with someone who's mad at you every night. So you're gonna figure out how to work it out. So it's gonna lead to better relationships. A and your kids will more likely to be your friends into the future. A and therefore you're gonna have better relationship for life. And as we saw in that Harvard study for of 85 years, you're much more likely to be healthy and happier for a lifetime just by eating dinner together every night as a family. It's a keystone habit. Do you guys understand this?

1 (25m 13s):

One of the biggest keystone habits that you can have, and I think it's probably the most powerful one that you can only do, that you only have to do once a week. This is interesting, right? It's to worship weekly. And it really is to worship weekly to say, Hey, as an individual, as a family, if you have a family as a couple, if you're, you're dating or married, okay? We are gonna choose every single week no matter what. This is our habit. We're gonna worship weekly. I don't care if we're traveling or on vacation, we're gonna find a tiny little Baptist church or whatever it takes and we're gonna go worship weekly. A And when you make that a habit in your life, it actually is a keystone habit. It actually is a keystone habit. And, and I have the research to back it up once again.

1 (25m 54s):

Another study out of Harvard in 2016, track people for a couple decades and, and listen to some of the benefits that they found for people who choose to worship weekly. Listen to this, it boosts your immune system. A lot of times we're like, oh my gosh, you go to church in the winter, that's where you, everybody gets sick. I wonder if that's why your immune system gets boosted eventually, right? Your blood pressure goes down, your cholesterol goes down, you're much less likely to smoke, You're less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol.

1 (26m 38s):

You're less likely to commit crimes. Kids GPAs go up. There's less poverty for those who go to church weekly. You're likely to be more generous with your money and to volunteer your time more. It's even more amazing. It impacts your marriages. They're healthier and happier. You have better sex just going to church every week, okay? There is less incidents of mental illness and you will live longer, happier lives. I, I can't think of one thing you do just once a week that ha can have that big of an impact on your life.

1 (27m 24s):

It's almost like God knew what we needed. Imagine that. It's amazing to worship Weekly is one of these keystone habits, and I'm telling you do it guys. I'm telling this for your good, for your good. I don't even care if you go here. If you're like, oh man, just wants to grow the church. Like go somewhere else. Seriously. Just get in a church and get there every single week no matter what. Rain or shine, dusting of snow or blizzard. Get to church weekly. And if you're traveling, you're online every single week. Some of you are online right now, okay? You get there and you get into it because it's amazing how many things happen just by worshipping weekly.

1 (28m 8s):

You get reminded of the things, okay? Most Christians know way more than they need to, okay? But they get reminded every week, oh, I'm not living the way I should. I need to be more loving, more kind. It's amazing what could happen if you just choose to worship weekly. So set your alarms right now, okay? Clear your schedules. You can afford an hour and a half every single week to worship weekly. You think you're gonna benefit by working that hour? Okay? There's no financial benefit that will give you more stress and shorten your life. Okay? You think, oh, I, I got the game's on. Okay? The Broncos will never give to you what worshipping weekly will give you. And definitely not the Cowboys.

1 (28m 49s):

Okay? Hey, is that too low too soon? Neither will the Bengals. Okay? Hey There, there is nothing that is worth that hour and a half of your time that can have that big of an impact on your life because it's gonna be the people that you surround yourself with. And I'm gonna encourage you to take a, a step even farther. So, so the first thing, you gotta worship weekly. The second thing is to get in a group. To get in a group. Because a, as our church grows, you cannot know everyone in here. It's impossible. You can't even know the people's second service cuz you come first.

1 (29m 30s):

You just can't. If you're online, there's no way you can know people cuz you're not here physically, okay? But you can get in a group and yes, we have a couple online only community groups. You can get in a group and you can develop the relationships you need. It's interesting, in, in Charles Duhigg's book, the Power of Habit, I mentioned it a lot last week. He literally has a whole section studying Rick Warren's church, Saddleback in

California, because they're so big on small groups that they, they call it, he's in the book. He says it's the one two punch. It's that powerful because yes, you worship weekly and that's the most powerful keystone habit. But then you're talking about what you learned, okay? You get in the big group and you're like, wow, there's other people who believe like I do. That's a huge thing.

1 (30m 9s):

It's gonna change you. But now I'm in relationship with people who see my life and know me and pray for me and encourage me and challenge me and call me out when I'm a jerk. I, I need that, that second punch. And it too can be impactful because it studies show will lead you to read your bible more, pray more regularly, confess your sins, and therefore overcome them more likely to share your faith with others who need to hear the good news, to give more and to serve more just by getting in a group. So get in a group. Get in a group. That's why today we have signups. That's why upstairs at start, we're gonna tell you to get in a group because you need that group of people. Even if you're like, well, I don't know if I can make it every way.

1 (30m 51s):

Get in the group and show up every time you can get in a group, it really makes an impact in your life. Get in a group. Gina Welch was a, a reporter. She is a reporter and, and she wanted to do some investigative journalism on, on us Bible believing Christians, okay? She wasn't one herself. So she faked a conversion to Christianity. I don't recommend this, okay? But it's interesting. She faked a conversion to Christianity and got baptized and became a member of, of a big megachurch out in the DC area. So I don't recommend it, but, but she wrote, and, and you know, there's things that she, she wrote a book about this two years that she was a fake member of this church, right?

1 (31m 37s):

She wrote about her experience, what happened, the interaction she had. But what what she found that I find fascinating is, is that she said, I wanted and craved the community that they had. She said, these people were genuinely happier than people I knew and I wanted it. She even wrote this, and I want to show you this quote from her book. This is one of her conclusions. She says, what I envied most was not the God thing. It was having a community gathering each week a touchstone for people who share values. A safe place to be frank about your life struggles. A place to be reminded of your moral compass.

1 (32m 19s):

Having a place to guard against loneliness, to feel there are others like you. Even an atheist knows you need community. She figured it out. And I wanna encourage you and challenge you the same. Your friends define your future. Don't let it just happen cuz then you will suffer harm. Be careful. Choose them wisely. Because when you walk with the wise, you become wise. Your friends define your future. What's amazing when Jesus calls us to follow him just says follow and follow implies walking, right?

1 (33m 6s):

It's almost like walk with the wises and become wise. See that that walking is a direction, isn't it? And and we hear a lot of us may, maybe you're not there yet, but we have decided to just follow Jesus. And I love how even at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus just said, come and see. Come follow me and just see who I am. You don't have to believe yet. Just follow me. So there are some people here today who are just following Jesus cuz they're like, I wanna find out more good. We love it. That's what Jesus is all about. He invites us to follow him. What's amazing is that yes, at some point we do believe, but at any point as we're walking, follow him, we can look to our right and to our left and see other followers. We even see with Jesus' disciples, they look to the right and the left.

1 (33m 48s):

And yes, there were some people who said some boneheaded things like Peter. There were other disciples who, who were arrogant sometimes. And you're like, could, could you j James and John, are you kidding me? And, and, and don't we look at people to our right on our left and think that and then we realize we're the judgmental one. Okay? We look around and yes, there are imperfect people walking with us. There might even be a Judas or two in there who betray us and, and turn out to not be true followers of Jesus at all. But as we're walking, we find ourselves in good community just following Jesus with people who will encourage us and challenge us. And there will be people who are like Peter, who will go on to be incredible leaders. And you're like, I knew that guy. Maybe you will be that guy or that woman just because you're following Jesus, growing him and becoming like him.

1 (34m 34s):

Wise, mature, strong. But I think even better than that are the, the friends who are right in our left, is that Jesus, when we invite, are invited to follow him, invites us to become his friend. Did you know that? He says, those who obey me are my friends. We get to be a friend with Jesus. And that's pretty cool because this, Jesus went and died on the cross for our sins. Even though we are sinners, even though we have bad habits and we do very foolish things, he still loves us and forgives us of every one of our sins and invites us to keep coming and following him no matter what we've done.

1 (35m 15s):

And we walk with that Jesus. And he is our friend because after he died in our place, he rose from the dead on the third day ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. You want friends in high places. You got Jesus in heaven, your friend who you can talk to. And at your lowest point, your worst point, you can cry out to him and say, I need help. And he's your friend and he will help you in your time of need. That's the kind of friend I want. I want him and I want the people to my right, to my left following him with me. Your friends define your future. And if we have Jesus following him, you have the right friends. So I wanna encourage you, maybe you're here today and you have never made Jesus your Lord and Savior.

1 (35m 56s):

It's time to do it today. Time to follow him because you'll realize you have him as a friend and also those

people to your right and left that you need. So I'm gonna give you a chance to respond with that and, and then we're gonna do baptisms, guys. We're gonna do some baptisms as we welcome people into the family of God. That's one of the powerful things about baptism. It's that initiation, right? It's welcoming people into the family and, and we have one person in this service and and maybe we have somebody else who goes to the back and say, I'm ready to go public with my faith. I'm ready today. Today's the day you can head to the back. Pastor Sawyer will be at the back helping you out. But I want to give that opportunity for somebody who need to start that journey walking with the wisest man to ever live Jesus. And if you're ready to start walking with him, I want you to accept him as your Lord and Savior.

1 (36m 39s):

Today. I'm gonna give you a simple prayer to repeat after me. And what we're gonna do, if you're already a follower, Jesus pray, say this prayer out loud. You know what to do. So we can give courage to somebody who needs to pray for the first time. So let's all close our eyes together, close your eyes if you're able, and please repeat this prayer after me. Dear God, I'm a sinner. I need a savior. Save me. Forgive me in faith, I declare Jesus'. Lord, help me to follow you and to develop community. Fill me with your spirit.

1 (37m 21s):

Give me the gift of eternal life and help me to become wise Now with eyes closed. If today you made the decision to follow Jesus if to today, Jesus is your Lord and Savior, we wanna celebrate with you If you made that decision today. So on the count of three, you put your hand in the air. 1, 2, 3, put your hand in the air. We would love to celebrate anyone who made that decision. Praise God. Praise God. I see you. Praise God, Lord God, I bless those who are making the decision. He help carry them forward when it life gets hard. When they're trying to overcome bad habits. Give them strength, encouragement, and endurance and give them the person to the right and their left to encourage 'em and challenge them to become wise.

1 (38m 4s):

And Lord God, we're excited to celebrate welcoming people into your family. We rejoice, we celebrate. If the angels are throwing a party, we're gonna down here too. We are gonna cheer. We are gonna be excited God because of what you are doing in our midst. So Lord God, we worship you Jesus name.