

Look Up and Choose Good Friends

By Larry Davenport, ldavenport@mhbs.org



In John 8:44, we find Jesus teaching in the temple talking to some Pharisees, some are coming to believe in Jesus and some are not. In verse 44, Jesus tells the unbelievers that

their father is the devil and that as such they act on the devil's desires. Jesus says that from the very beginning the devil was a murderer, and that whenever he opens his mouth, the words that he speaks are lies since his very nature is lying. He is a liar and the father of all lies.

Satan comes to us every day telling us his lies. He uses anyone and everyone and everything he can to spread his lies. He will even use our friend groups. To illustrate this with my middle schoolers we play a game called "the blob." In this game, the boys will become a blob – they will link arms and legs to become one large singularity – a blob. The girl's task is to break the blob apart, which is difficult. The technical term in the south is "pert near impossible." But when I tell the girls to concentrate all their efforts on just one boy (maybe the smallest/weakest), this usually takes the blob by surprise and often they are successful in breaking the blob. The boys normally want to try again, but this time the boys tighten up even more around the smaller boy and they prevail. Then we compare the game to our lives, and we talk about how Satan has trouble getting to us when we are unified with our Christian friends (a blob), but he is searching and attacking the weakest of us, and when that happens, the rest of us need to hold on much tighter to the one being attacked.

Choose good friends.

Take an inventory of your friends.

Storeowners take inventory of their products. The inventory tells the storeowner how effective their business is. There might be products on the shelves that aren't moving. These are a liability because an investment was made that isn't producing any benefit to the storeowner. Other items are really hopping off the shelves requiring an increase in supply that add value to the storeowner.

The same can be said for our friendships. When they were young, we taught our daughters that in this life you have two kinds of friends. There are the friends you are helping get to heaven and there are friends that are helping you get to heaven. You are investing your life in your friends. Are your friends producing the kind of energy that is bringing you closer to God? Are they adding value to your life in that you are growing spiritually? Frequently conduct a friend inventory to be sure the group you are spending your time with consists of those who will help you get to heaven. Choose good friends.

Some other verses to consider: Deuteronomy 13:6-9 If a friend is trying to get you to do bad things, don't keep it a secret. Ecclesiastes 4:12 Good friends will help you overpower Satan. Psalm 119:63; James 4:4
Choose good friends

Discuss James 4:4

James 4:4 says, "...friendship with the world is enmity with God." Sometimes we play this dangerous game of flirting with the unrighteous things of the world. It may be something that our friends are doing. Our gut says to stay away, but it looks like a ton of fun, and we convince ourselves that we can play around and still be okay. Have you seen this happen to friends or family in real life? If so, how did it turn out? Do you consider hanging around with people who do unrighteous things to be wrong? Why or why not?

Look Up And Set Your Mind On Things Above (Colossians 3:1-17)

By Dale Jenkins, dale@edge.net



My first year of High School football was also my school's first year to have a football team. Not shockingly we lost EVERY game. More than that, we only scored ONE TIME all season.

Year two not much changed. Well, except our team's all time leading scorer, Keith (the guy who scored our only touchdown the previous year), left the school. We also had a coaching change. We went from Coach O'Conner to Coach Barnett.

Game one: We lost 14-6. BUT we had scored in our first game of the season.

Game two: We went in at half-time behind 13-0. Coach Barnett called us around him. He changed a couple of blocking patterns, told our quarterback and running back about something he had seen the other team doing that could change things. Then he said: "We will win this game." And, we did. We went on that season to every other game but one!

What changed? We had a coach we believed in who told us what to do differently. He didn't just tell us what not to do. He told us what to do!

This is one of the things that is so neat about the **Lord**. We are told to repent, to change, but we are also given the path to that change. "Set your mind on things above" (Colossians 3). Look up Paul

instructs. God sent us a pattern of how to live life, an example. Jesus. Follow Him.

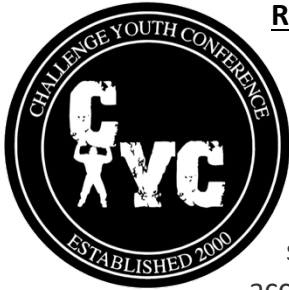
Thinking like Jesus means not only changing from our sin-filled life but turning our heads upward! Looking to Jesus.

Peter wrote that "baptism also now saves us..." Jesus said a person must be baptized. On the birthday of the Lord's Kingdom, the Church, the instruction to be a part of it was "repent and be baptized." But, why? The why was based on WHO they believed Jesus to be. It is still our WHY today.

Discussion

1. What does it mean to "set your mind on things above" as instructed in Colossians 3:1-17? How can we apply this concept in our daily lives, especially during challenging situations?
2. In my story, the football team changed because they believed in a new coach who gave them clear guidance. How is this similar to how our relationship with God can transform our lives?
3. Paul and Jesus emphasize not just turning away from sin but also following a new path. Why do you think it's important to focus on what we should do, rather than just avoiding wrong actions?
4. The "why" of our faith is grounded in who we believe Jesus to be. How does understanding who Jesus is shape the decisions we make and the way we live?

Look Up and Be Transformed
By Jerry Elder, jmelder@charter.net



Romans 12:1-2

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which

is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

If you were to look a photograph from 5 years ago, what would you say? Would you like the way the person in the photo looked?

I am quite sure that we all have that one picture we want NO ONE to see!

Fast forward, you look different, you dress different, you even act different. With all the transformation taking place people might not even recognize you!

What if we were talking about your spiritual life? What do people see in you when you are talking about the word of God or you are having a conversation about Jesus?

Do they see a person that is still immature? Weak spiritually? Little to no transformation?

Why? If we were concerned about the transformation of our life with Jesus as

much as the changes of our physical appearance, how would we look?

Romans 12:1-2 is a statement that shows the urgency of change in the life of all of us.

1. A change in our presentation...(How the world sees us)

- a. A Living Sacrifice...(Showing that Jesus is our life)
- b. Holy and acceptable - (God Approved)
- c. Your Spiritual Worship - (It's not that difficult)

2. A change in our frame of life.

- a. Do not conform to the world. - (Show the difference)
- b. Be transformed - (let the difference be seen)
- c. Renewing your mind - (change your attitude)
- d. Let it be seen in your daily life in all things (People will notice it)
- e. It is good and acceptable - (God approved)

Let the transformation begin...or continue!