

XP3

NEW FRIEND REQUEST: Home XP

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Series Overview

We all want friends—even if we don't want to admit it. We all want someone to hang out with, someone to talk to, someone who knows us. But friendship requires something from us. It's not just what we get or what makes us feel comfortable or happy. There's a smart way to do friendship, a way with intention, a way that will draw us closer to God's heart—if we surround ourselves with the right people. That doesn't mean our friends have to be clones of us—but it does mean that they at least help us move in the right direction.

Session One: Accept? (5 November 2010)

Having friends is great. Whether you want one, or you already have one, there's just something about having other people in your life who you can count on. For many, friendships just happen. A new friend is in the right place at the right time. And while friendships may start out randomly, there is an intentionality about who we allow close to us—and that's not necessarily a bad thing. Because the people who are closest to you have influence on your life. They help shape who you are. So who are the friends closest to you . . . and how are they influencing you?

Session Two: Respond? (22 November 2010)

Someone to listen to my problems. Someone to do stuff with. Someone to talk to constantly. Someone to hang out with. When you make a list of what qualities you want in a friend, how many of the things on your list involve what that person can do for you? Most of us would have to admit that it's a lot. But the best friendships are ones that are not just about what the other person can do for you—the best friendships also involve how you can be there for someone else. How you can listen, instead of always talking. How you can give someone space when he or she needs it, or just hang out when your friend needs that too. In other words, the best friendships are not centered solely on you—and that's a good thing.

Session Three: Ignore? (3 December 2010)

Relationships=conflict. It's natural. It's part of two people relating to one another because at some point, you're not going to agree. One person will do something the other person doesn't like. One person will let the other person down. One person will say or do something stupid. It happens. And at some point, it happens to us—either we're the person making the mess, or the one who is feeling the effects of the mess. So how do you navigate your way through the drama? Do you just ignore it and hope it goes away? Do you just drop that friend? Or do you find a way to work it out? The choice is yours.

Family Experience: Imagine the End

The Family Drift
By Tim Walker

My wife is the kind of person who always asks big questions—usually at times that blindside me and knock me unconscious. For example, the other day, she asked me, “What's important for us as a family?”

Not, “What do you want for dinner?” or “Do we have money to buy the boys some shoes?” (It seems like we're always buying shoes.)

Nope, it was “What's important for us as a family?”

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Now my first reaction was, “What? Are you kidding me?” I mean, I’m an analytical person. I think a lot—sometimes too much. But I have so much stuff I’m already thinking about that I don’t have time for a question like this. It just requires too much effort. In fact, it makes my head hurt a little bit.

But there was something about her question that wasn’t so easy to dismiss. I have a son in middle school, two more in elementary. I’m realizing every day just how quickly time is passing and I’m also realizing that there are some things I want to make sure my boys learn and know before I start losing my audience with them.

I know I have a few years before the oldest moves out, but the reality is that someday he will and it will come much faster than I think. Someday he’ll walk into adulthood. And it’s important for me to prioritize the knowledge and experiences he needs in order to move forward confidently.

That may or may not happen if we keep moving in the direction we currently are. Our schedule is crazy. Our time at home is disjointed with everyone doing his or her own thing. And the reality is that without intentionality, our family will always drift along. Our tendency will always be to drift towards disconnection and randomness. My kids are not always going to just instinctively learn things from me. Sometimes it requires me putting time and energy into helping them learn those things—whether it’s how to read the Bible, make a budget, how to do laundry or how to change a tire. Sometimes it means that I let them face some consequences that I want to save them from.

For example, we were a little reluctant on the whole cell phone thing for my middle schooler. He doesn’t really talk on the phone very much, and he really only needs a phone occasionally. So we bought him one of those pay as you go phones. He has to pay to add minutes or text time to his phone. And the phone company requires that he adds to that balance every couple of months.

One weekend, he was on a retreat with our youth group. I needed to get in touch with him so I sent him a number of text messages. We talked back and forth, and while I was talking with him, I realized that I was using up his precious minutes.

My first instinct was to be generous and maybe swoop in and buy him some more minutes. But then I caught myself. I knew that if I did that, he would expect anytime I talked with him to be reimbursed. And that was not a precedent I wanted to set. So despite my “dad saves the day” intentions, I decided to just let it go and not say a thing. I would have loved to show him generosity, he’s a great kid. But I also knew that part of what makes him great and will continue to make him great is his sense of responsibility.

So what’s most important to your family? Think about it. Take a week and marinate on that. What do you want your child to walk into adulthood with? Beyond a diploma or a scholarship, what does he or she need to know to get to where he or she needs to grow? The reality is that unless it’s on your “to do” list, it won’t happen—and even then, you are going to have to work at making it happen. I know, it shouldn’t be that way, but it is. So how are the decisions, experiences and wisdom you are giving your child preparing him or her for the future?

Imagine the end. You’ll always be a parent. You’ll always be a part of your child’s life. But there will come a time when your “parenting” will end, when he or she will be making their own choices without your guidance or input. What does your child need when they get there? What are the important things you made sure they knew or experienced along the way to arrive at that point?

It may mean that you sacrifice some time on your part. It may mean that you make your child do something that he or she complains about the whole time. But when you are intentional about imagining the end, a few years from now, you’ll feel like you’ve done what you need to do to prepare your child for adulthood. It doesn’t mean you were perfect at it, but it does mean that instead of drifting, you steered your child in the right direction.