



**Key Verses:** John 15:15, Proverbs 18:24, Proverbs 13:20, Proverbs 27:5-6, Proverbs 27:17

**Takeaway Thought:** Who you befriend is who you become.

### **Swiss Army Knife of Awesomeness**

For some of you, middle school might be fun because it's so new and exciting. For others, it may be the worst time of your life. If we're all being honest, middle school can be some of the toughest years of your life, it can and sometimes feel like you're just fighting to survive.

That's why we're starting this series tonight. We want to equip you with a swiss army knife of awesomeness that will not only help you *survive* middle school, but *thrive* in middle school.

For the next four weeks we're going to be showing you some game-changing tools from the book of Proverbs. Why Proverbs? I am so glad you asked, because I had no other way to transition into explaining why. Proverbs is a book of wisdom that was written by one of the wisest men who had ever lived.

Solomon's father was King David, and most of David's life was filled with mistakes. David was constantly running into success, but after that success, he'd run into failure.

Maybe you can relate to that. Have you ever felt like you couldn't ever catch a break in life? When Solomon was 10 years old, David started pouring into him. He started equipping his son to become the next ruler of Israel, and some of the wisdom in Proverbs can be traced back to the mistakes made by David.

David's reign as a king is known as a reign filled with mistakes and sorrow, whereas Solomon's reign is known as the Golden Age of Israel. Because of the wisdom passed on to Solomon, his career led to success, and he has gone down as one of the wisest kings in history.

But it all started with his dad passing on the wisdom of his mistakes to him, and Solomon listened to what his dad had to say. I think every parent wants their kids to do better than *they* did, and in this instance, Solomon did just that.

So as we start this series, I want you to keep your eyes open for that one thing that will change your life forever. Today's tool that will help you survive middle school is this: *Finding the right friends*.

### **Quality, Not Quantity**

I think we can all agree that friends are important. In fact, the topic of friends is so important that even adults even struggle with it. It's not a problem that you master in high school and never deal with again.

I'll be transparent here: I tend to struggle with getting out of my comfort zone and making new friends, and what's even worse is that I struggle with keeping friendships alive. Seriously! That's a problem I face every day. I think adults struggle with friendship for different reasons, though.

Adults don't really struggle with making lots of friends; adults struggle with making close friends. I'm talking about friends that are on a "best-friend" level of friendship.

They did a study on adult men recently, looking at how many close friends they had. In 1980, the average adult man had five close friends. In 2000, that number dropped to three close friends, and today that number has dropped to almost zero close friends. The average adult male has zero close friends! That doesn't mean they didn't have any friends ... it means they don't have that one friend that they can trust no matter what.

That's a future that we want to save all of you from. Remember, adults don't tend to struggle with the quantity of friends, but the quality of friends.

Now, you might be that kid who is everybody's friend, or you might be that person who has just a handful of friends. So, what's wrong with having a bunch of friends but zero close friends? Some of you probably have hundreds of followers on Instagram and Snapchat, and they compliment you and like your stuff all the time.

Let me ask you this, and I want you to think about it: what does it take to be your friend? Is it someone just following you on Instagram? Or is it more than that? Do they have to prove themselves to be worthy of being called a friend?

**Proverbs 18:24:** *A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

In this verse, Solomon is telling us the danger of how we look for friends today. When troubles come your way—and they will—you need a friend who will come to you even faster than your family. A person with many “companions” will look to them all, but no one will come to help. Why? Because they are companions, not real friends. Solomon is warning us that we need to set the bar high for who we call our friends.

A companion is someone we interact with frequently, but with companions, you never have to sacrifice anything for the relationship. You never have to call or text each other, you don’t have to meet outside of school, and you don’t have to challenge each other when they’re wrong. A companion requires no sacrifice at all.

A friend, however, requires lots of sacrifice. Friendships require constant communication to see how the other person is doing. They require meeting outside of school to grow closer together. And they require you to push each other to be better. That’s what friends do.

When you get sick or something terrible happens, a companion will never call you to see how you’re doing. A friend is different. There is a friend who sticks closer than family. That’s the friend you should be looking for.

So what if you already have some friends but aren’t sure if they are “best-friend” material? How do you know if they’re worth investing in? I’ll answer that question with another question: will this person give you a better future? If you befriend that person, will your life be better in one year? Five years?

### **Show Me Your Friends, and I’ll Show You Your Future**

To a middle school student, you might not be thinking about how a friend can impact your future. But to an adult, it's all we can think about. Am I

wasting my time on this friend? Will this person impact my future in a positive way? An educator once told me this phrase, and I've never looked at making friends the same: "Show me your friends, I'll show you your future."

Are your friends constantly getting into trouble with teachers, and starting fights with other people? Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future. Do your friends make good grades and treat people with respect? Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future.

Raise your hand if you've heard this Southern proverb: "Run with dogs, you'll get fleas." Raise your hand if you've heard a teacher say this: "Guilty by association." I know it sounds like an unfair way to judge you, but who you hang out with will always change you as a person. Hang out with someone who likes video games or a particular music style, and you'll probably start liking those things, too. Hang out with someone who doesn't treat their parents right, and you'll start picking up that habit, as well.

**Proverbs 13:20:** *Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*

Solomon is very blunt about the effect of friends. Who we hang out with is who we will become. Jim Rohn, an entrepreneur and author, puts it like this: "You will always be the average of your five closest friends."

Whichever five friends you hang out with the most, you will be the average of them. If your five closest friends cause harm to other people and disobey their teachers and parents, you will be the average of that. You won't be as bad as them, but they will change you for the worse. If your five closest friends make wise choices and treat others with respect, you will become the average of that. Show me your friends and I'll show you your future.

Let me make this more real for you. As middle school students, you probably aren't thinking about the future. You've got too much to worry about in the present, to worry about the future. So when I say, "Show me your friends, I'll show you your future," it may not strike a chord. So let me phrase it differently to impact your present: **who you befriend is who you become.** The people you hang out with today, is who you will become

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