

Axioms: Show me your friends, I'll show you your future.

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1 Kings 12:1-15 FRIENDSHIP

May 1, 2022 (Grad Sunday)

Graduation often marks a significant change in life. While we move ahead when we graduate, we also leave some things behind. Like flying on a trapeze—soaring in midair has an uncertain ending. Graduation puts us in a neutral zone of trying to figure out what will happen when we reach the other side. Our family of origin holds the greatest influence on us when we are young. However, a shift in the most influential voices often occurs in our teen years. Those we hang out with and listen to shape us to be like them. Scholars study with scholars. Athletes run with other athletes. Partiers hang out together. People of faith lean into that community.

In northern Israel, we visit the remnants of an altar built to worship a false god. The story from 1 Kings 12:1-15 is the exact illustration of this axiom: *Show me your friends, I'll show you your future.* Our friends, regardless of our age or position, exert tremendous influence on us. King Rehoboam trusted the wrong people. As President Reagan said about the Soviets, *"Trust, but verify."* Rehoboam did not consider the source. He listened to the wrong voices. Another axiom is: *Big doors swing on small hinges.* Rehoboam's decision had a devastating effect. Had he listened to wisdom, not folly, the north-south split of Israel and Judah might have been avoided. Our theme this week is about **FRIENDSHIP**. Our daily scripture readings will revolve around this topic. The axiom is true for any age: *Show me your friends, I'll show you your future.*

APPLICATION: Two points. First, who are you friends? For better or for worse, what stories do you recall about the affect your friends have had on you? Are they mature voices? Who is your best friend? Why? Do they have your best interest at heart, or will their friendship lead you astray? Should you seek new friendships? Whose voices do you listen to when seeking advice? My favorite book in 2022 has been "You're Invited," by Jon Levy. There is a wonderful quote in bold print on page 7. I will reference it on Sunday. If you listen to my voice, you will get the book.

CONTEXT: King Solomon was a great king until he wasn't. 1 Kings 2 records him following his father, David, after David's death. 1 Kings 3 says the first thing Solomon did was to ask God for wisdom. Wise people often become wealthy (not always, of course), but he became fabulously wealthy. An Old Testament highlight was when he built the Temple and they brought the Ark of the Covenant into it & the glory of the Lord filled the Temple. Solomon's prayer in chapter 8 is beautiful. Tales of his wisdom, fortune and building accomplishments spread. He was famous. The Queen of Sheba (Ethiopia or Yemen) came to meet him & was greatly impressed. He had it all wealthy, wise, & famous. However, chapter 11:1 begins with an ominous word, "**NOW....**" The bad news follows.

1 Kings 11:2b-4 Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. "Show me your friends & I'll show you your future."

The last verse of chapter 11 = Solomon's death. His son, **Rehoboam**, became king. Rehoboam has 3 problems.

- 1.) **TRANSITION.** There's a big change. He is the new king, but he has very limited experience. How will he handle his new position? With confident humility or with arrogance?
- 2.) **APOSTASY.** His father had turned from the faith and was worshipping idols. This was a spiritual crisis. How would Rehoboam respond? Would he walk with the Lord or would he worship idols?
- 3.) **PEOPLE.** The Lord was displeased with Solomon & so were the people. The crushing taxes had made the Israelites feel like Solomon was the new Pharaoh & they were in slavery back in Egypt. They had to pay for his buildings and his women. The people demanded change.

Rehoboam's response. When Solomon dies, the good news is that he asked for advice. He sought counsel from two groups: the elder statesmen, & his young buddies. The bad news is he followed the wrong counsel. He may have known in his heart that the old guys were right, but he wanted to be with the *young men who had grown up with him and stood before him*. They told him what he wanted to hear. That was job security. He was inexperienced, full of pride, & listened to the wrong people. It wasn't an age issue, but was about experience, humility, and wisdom. An obvious application for us is: who are we listening to and who influences us?

I have a personal story connected to all of my axioms (which are available here ____). As a 2nd semester freshman @ ORU, a good friend, Jim, was one of the funniest and cleverest people I've ever met. We were in a humanities class together. I did not like the class, but Jim made it fun. The classroom was a small auditorium that held about 100 students. Jim would save a place for me, and we'd cut up together. He was a skilled cartoonist, and we had a great time. Eventually, I had to take a mid-term test. I failed. Then I was faced with a choice: sit next to my buddy, goof off, have fun, and flunk OR not sit next to him, be bored but pay attention, & pass. I chose the latter. I graduated 3 years later. Jim did not. I'm not saying we must have a college degree to have a productive life – I don't know what happened to Jim – but I know had I goofed off in college, I'd never have met my wife, gone to seminary, and probably never have become a pastor. That's when I realized *"Show me your friends, I'll show you your future."*

In his book, ***"You're Invited,"*** Jon Levy shares what he learned in a seminar when he was 28: ***"The fundamental element that defines the quality of our lives is the people we surround ourselves with, and the conversations we have with them."*** Jean Nidetch had always been overweight, but when she was 38, she was 5'7" tall, weighed 214 pounds & wore a size 44 muumuu. She made herself feel better by relabeling it as a size 20. Embarrassed, she told the clerk at the supermarket that the boxes of cookies she was buying were for her children, when she would hide the cookies in her bathroom and binge eat them at night. She was at a supermarket and an acquaintance told her how great she looked & then asked, *"When are you due?"* She thought Jean was pregnant. Jean promised to use those words to motivate her to lose the weight. She believed that through self-control & determination she could achieve her goal. That works for some, but it not for Jean. She tried every form of diet & fad. The moment she knocked off a few pounds was followed by overeating. Then the pounds returned, and she gained more weight. Another axiom is: *"Insanity is trying the same thing over & over again & expecting different results."* Jean realized she needed a new system. So, she created it. She invited 6 other overweight women to her house. They talked about their struggles. They came up with one rule – they should all go see a doctor before starting a new program they created. A year later Jean had lost 70 pounds & kept it off over the next 53 years until her death in 2014. Word spread. Hundreds of women started asking for help. She organized a support system that helped tens of millions of people around the world lose weight that helped them live better and longer. Jean died at age 91. She also became a multi-millionaire because that support group she created was "Weight Watchers, International."

The church is also a support system. We all need to know we're not alone in our struggles. We all struggle with something (anxiety from school or work, depression, finances, or health issues). Life will not be perfect. We will not always find simple solutions. We need consistency, direction, encouragement, guidance, & safe places where we can be honest. Hebrews 10:24-25 ***Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...*** *"Show me your friends, I'll show you your future"* means we become like those we spend time with. This is why every

Christian needs to prioritize being in church. We will become like the people we hang out with. Our companions' habits, behaviors, language, and emotions are contagious. If we want to excel, we should surround ourselves with people who share the values or traits we admire.

A global positioning satellite (GPS) draws a map that tells us how to reach our destination. John, a pastor, was using a GPS while driving with his wife. The voice said go left, but John felt he knew better so he went right. The voice said, "*Recalculating route. When safe to do so, execute a U-turn.*" He turned it off & got lost as a goose. His wife enjoyed it immensely. They turned it back on and it said, "*I told you so, you fool. You think I'll help you now? Find your way home by yourself.*" No—it didn't say that. It said, "*Recalculating route. When safe to do so, execute a U-turn.*" As soon as we're ready to listen and follow the instructions, God says, "*Execute a U-turn. Here is the way home.*" That's repentance. "I'll bring you home." That is grace. That's Jesus.

Paul said, "*Don't be deceived, bad company ruins good morals.*" (1 Cor. 15:33) We are easily deceived. Hanging around the wrong types encourages us to turn off "God's Positioning System."

Solomon was supposed to have been the richest, most famous, & wisest person in the world. He let his "friends" destroy his heart for the Lord. "*Show me your friends and I'll show you your future.*" Those "friends" could be a family member or people we go to school or co-workers. Other "friends" could be sports or entertainment that divert our attention from the Lord. If people don't show up for Weight Watchers what are the chances their investment will work? Solomon got lost by turning off his spiritual GPS. As James said, "If we're friends with the world, We can, too. The scriptures, church, & the Holy Spirit can be like our own GPS. They will help us follow the right path.

Show me your FRIENDS & I'll show you your future.

1st with His CHURCH. Jesus told Peter after R, "*Peter, if you love me – feed my sheep.*"

If you love the Lord, make a commitment to Help Others Follow Jesus. When we HOFJ, we can help our entire family. A pic of our 11:00 Director of Modern Worship, Adam (Kate) Heare, & his 4 yr old daughter, Rue, baptized a few weeks ago; 12 yr old daughter, Tasha, confirmed last Sunday, & 18 yr old daughter, Gwen, graduating from HS. The church is a great place to make friends. We are headed in the same direction. You are not only welcome here, but you also need us, and we need you. We are truly Better Together.

Show me your FRIEND & I'll show you your future.

2nd w the LORD The one w authoritative wisdom about life. He is the only one who brings about possibility of forgiveness for our sin, of having Spirit of Jesus, and of conquering death.