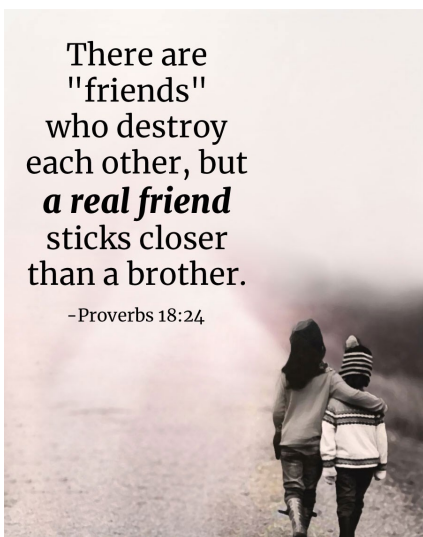


Who's Your Friend?

What was a problem two thousand years ago is still a problem today. The temptation to sin and conform to the world is strong. **Romans 12:2** states, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." The power of influence cannot be overlooked. We are influenced by the people around us every day in numerous ways. The clothes we wear, the cars we drive, the entertainment we enjoy, the food we eat...these choices and more are made as a result of the influence of the society in which we live. However, God calls us to be truly different from the world, so different that they will notice, maybe wonder why, and might malign us. **1 Peter 4:2-4** tells us, "Christ suffered for us in the flesh, so arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you." And maybe, when we appear positively peculiar to the worldly mind by not doing what "the flesh" would do, they may ask us why we follow Jesus. Are you ready to give an answer? Satan will tempt us slyly, subtly, just as he did with Christians of ages past, to conform to the world. Have you been "conforming" to the world or are you "transformed by the renewing of your mind?" Who are your friends and what is their influence on you?

As a Christian, we need to remember that we became part of the body of Christ when we obeyed the gospel ("we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" **Romans 6:4**). In "newness of life," He added us to His church (**Acts 2:47** "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved," **Acts 5:14** "Believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women," **Acts 11:24** "a great many people were added to the Lord," **Ephesians 1:22-23**, "He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all"). We are committing spiritual adultery by conforming to the sins of the world rather than striving to live as God would have us to live. By doing so, we become the enemies of God. Are you seeking to be His enemy or His friend?

Please consider this: the Laodicean church was rebuked by Jesus for basically wanting to have it both ways: to be recognized as followers of Christ while still embracing the sin of the world. That's why He called them "lukewarm" and wanted to spit them out of his mouth (see **Revelation 3:14-22**). **Revelation 21:8** shares this startling truth, "the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." We may want to ask: Where will friendship with this person lead me? Decide for yourself...who are your true friends?



There are "friends" who destroy each other, but **a real friend** sticks closer than a brother.

-Proverbs 18:24