



For the week of **March 2-7**

Bottom line: **your friends can make you or break you**

**DAY ONE: Truth in Love** Read Ephesians 4:14-16

Giving needed spiritual direction (an instruction or warning) can be one of the most loving (and most difficult!) things you can do for someone. We're not talking about the "I know better than you" kind of instruction, but instruction that is kind, true to Scripture, and given in a manner where your friend has a chance to hear and respond without being told what to do.

Because we want our friends to live the right way, any instruction we give should be to move toward faith and obedience. Spiritual direction needs to be given in an atmosphere of trust and biblical truth.

Today, because it's easy to get off track in our faith, memorize Ephesians 4:15. Use this verse as a reminder of how we're to speak into the lives of others as we help them grow in their faith. And ask God to help you choose friends who will do the same for you.

**DAY TWO: Travelling Partners** Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

A small group at Breakaway is just one of several "crews" in our life. Other crews include friends, work teams, sports teams, classes we attend, our neighborhood, and people with whom we volunteer. Each crew has the potential to influence us in one of two directions: toward or away from living like the Christ. No crew is neutral in this respect; each one moves us one way or the other.

This makes your small group especially important. It may be the only one in your life with the specific goal of helping you to become more like Jesus. Because of the challenges we face along the road (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12), it's critical we "travel" with others who not only help, but move us toward Jesus in the midst of the challenges. It's also important we build relationships before we need others and others need us.

Today, as you welcome God into your day, evaluate your crews and their role in moving you toward or away from being like the Christ. This might require you to step out of one crew and move into another because **your friends can make you or break you**.

**DAY THREE: Receiving** Read Ephesians 5:21

Loving, serving, accepting, and instructing each other are necessary elements for a small group to be successful. But receiving this kind of love can be challenging. Sometimes people in small groups think their group doesn't do enough for them. And sometimes group members are uncomfortable with others knowing their business and helping them.

The Bible teaches us *to submit to one another out of reverence to Christ* (Ephesians 5:21). In other words, we need to want to be like Christ so much, we're willing to receive his love through the serving and teaching of those in our small group and from other friends. In love we're to both give and receive warnings, encouragement, and help.

Take some time with God and ask him to show you where you land in the area of receiving from your small group. Maybe you take advantage of your group, feeling entitled to get their help with every need you have. Maybe you're unwilling to receive their help or instruction out of pride. Listen to the words of the song *Keep Making Me* by Sidewalk Prophets, that encourage us to welcome godly change with openness and gratitude.

#### DAY FOUR: Relational Discipleship Read 6:12-13

Jesus' strategy to teach the world began with his selection of 12 men (Luke 6:12-13). For the next three years these men would see him, hear him, be taught by him, and be encouraged and rebuked by him, all in a deliberate effort to prepare them to carry out his command to *make disciples of all nations...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded* (Matthew 28:19-20).

Within this highly relational environment, Jesus was preparing his disciples to do exactly what he did. It was "friendships with a purpose," the purpose being to train them to join Jesus in sharing his love and message with the world. It's the reason we're so passionate about small groups helping you develop an authentic faith in Christ. While we can make friends and enjoy common experiences in a variety of ways—sports teams, work, on-line, and hobbies—only a small group has the goal to help each other become more like the Christ. In a Breakaway small group, you partner with 8-10 others who desire to grow in their walk with Jesus.

Take a moment to memorize Proverbs 13:20 and reflect on **how** your crew became your friends. Are they helping to make you wise or leading you to foolish decisions? Ask God to help you be intentional about the people you allow to influence your life.