

Middle School News- February 2011

One of the greatest treasures I've found this year is the Family Devotion on Josh McDowell's website, www.Josh.org. When I came across this devotion, I had to share it with you because these "friendship smashers" are so relevant to the middle school world. It's during these formative years that students begin to establish communication skills and begin navigating through relational issues with peers. I hope you find this devotion beneficial, and I hope you will check out this website for yourself! McDowell also has a daily devotion for youth on the site.

The Friendship Smashers

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Bible Reading: Ephesians 4:31-32

Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Imagine a plateful of peas. Then think of what you do when you don't feel like eating those little vegetable yum-yums: You push them around with your knife. You smash them with your spoon. You nudge them off the table. And then you scoot them under your plate-or feed them to the dog.

Just as peas that have been speared, smooshed, or pushed out of sight are still peas, friendships that are badly treated are still friendships. But they aren't very appetizing. To make and keep friends, avoid these friendship smashers:

- *Jealousy*. Why envy a friend's achievements? Celebrate them instead!
- *Gossip*. It's the teeter-totter principle: You try to lift yourself up by saying mean things about other people. Sooner or later you end up splattered on the ground.
- *Disloyalty*. You say you're her friend—but you turn on her when someone more popular comes around. Real friendship stays true at all times.
- *Competition*. Friendship isn't a race. You aren't running as competitors. Friends cheer each other on.
- *Negativity*. Misery loves company-up to a point. After that, moaning leaves you minus your friends.
- *Comparison*. If you compare yourself to your friends and try to make yourself look better, you're asking for

friendship hassles.

- *Selfishness*. Make time to serve your friends' interests, not just your own. If you turn everything inward, you turn others away.

There's one more huge friendship smasher: *insecurity*. It often sounds like this: "What if he doesn't like me?" "What if I say the wrong thing?" "What if she laughs at me?" "What if I do something dumb?"

Those negative thoughts keep you from going any deeper into a friendship. They make you afraid to do anything—or not do anything.

But you can choose to meet your fears head-on. Every time you catch your brain stuck on a *negative fear question*, change it to a *positive faith statement*: "I know he will like me." "I am confident I will say the right thing." "She will accept me." "I will do something intelligent."

When you move out in faith instead of fear, you will be a quality friend.

TALK: How do you get along with the people around you? Do you have any bad habits that get in the way of good friendships? What would you like to change?

PRAY: God, we want to do friendship your way. Help us!

ACT: Pick a friendship you want to remake. Aim to get rid of one friendship smasher this week. And choose another to work on next week!

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