


Who's in Your Inner Circle?

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

2026-5-24



A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a “transforming church”. We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” Since “Talking Points, Walking Points” is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to “dive deep” too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled “Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time”, are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- Read Proverbs 13:20. What's an example of wisdom you've gained from walking with the wise? What's a harm you've experienced by virtue of being in relationship with a fool?
- Pastor Doug distinguished close friends from mere acquaintances. Tell us a bit about your closest friend from your adolescent years.
- All types of relationships create different kinds of pressure. Which type are you most dealing with now?
- Pastor Doug identified excessive drinking, crude speech, flirting, selfishness, and pursuing pleasure without regard for others as negative influences. What biblical principles come to mind about each?
- Pastor Doug noted from Proverbs 18:24 & 27:6 that true friends are loyal, enter into our pain, tell us hard truths, and lovingly confront us when we go astray. Tell us about a time when someone else played one of those roles in your life. Did it help? If so, how? If not, why not? Tell us about a time when you provided one of those blessings to someone. Did it help?
- Whereas foolish influence is “a proximity thing”—that simply being closely connected to foolish people gradually affects us, even if we are not directly participating in their behavior—wisdom requires intentional effort. How have you intentionally brought yourself under the influence of a wise person?
- Tell us about a time when a friend “faithfully wounded” you. Did you receive it well? How do you now wish you would have responded?
- Who currently has the greatest influence on your thinking and behavior?
- What practical step can you take this week to prioritize meaningful friendships?



Make plans as a group to use this summer's conference as an outreach to neighbors and co-workers.

Jim Dieffenderfer will speak the first three Sundays:

- Sunday morning, July 5 Entering into the Debate
- Sunday morning, July 12 Evaluating Evolutionary Icons
- Sunday morning, July 19 Evolution's Fatal Flaw

Then, Dr. Terry Mortenson of Answers in Genesis will speak the final Sunday morning, followed by evening sessions Sunday, Monday and Tuesday:

- Sunday morning, July 26 Evolution v. Creation: Why Does it Matter?
- Sunday evening, July 26 Ape-men, Adam and the Gospel
- Monday evening, July 27 Millions of Years: Unscientific Origin, Catastrophic Consequences
- Tuesday evening, July 28 Noah's Flood: Washing Away Millions of Years

Sermon Summary Proverbs 13:20

Solomon talks about relationships over and over again in the book of Proverbs. He says these kinds of relationships are a source of wisdom for our lives. There are several types of relationships in our life where we feel pressure. This is true whether you are a Christian or not.

Romantic Relationships If you are married, you feel pressure to have a certain kind of marriage. If you are dating, you feel pressure to have a certain kind of dating relationship. If you're single, you still feel the pressure to be in a romantic relationship. The Bible assures us that you can be single and still be a complete person, because it's our relationship with Christ, not marriage, that completes us.

Work Relationships There is pressure to be connected to the right people in your company or firm, because after all, knowing the right people can advance your career. Connections sometimes trump competence! There is work-related pressure to know the right people so you can enhance your pay and gain greater job security or job satisfaction.

Family Relationships There is another kind of relational pressure we all experience, and it has to do with maintaining family relationships with our parents, siblings, and children.

Friend Relationships And there is a kind of relationship for which you will never feel any pressure to make a priority. But Solomon highlights it over and over as being foundational to becoming a wise person. This is the kind of relationship that gets squeezed out because we are so busy cultivating and maintaining all these other kinds of relationships. They are Friend Relationships. Friends are people that you have to make a conscious choice to spend time with. This is something that Solomon comes back to over and over again in the book of Proverbs saying, "If you want to be wise, you need to be careful about who you choose to surround yourself with. You need to choose your friends very carefully." According to Solomon, if we don't align ourselves with the right kind of friends, we cannot be wise. In hard times it's friends who stepped up and loved us and consoled us and advised us and encouraged us, and sat with us in the hospital, and brought a meal, or mowed the grass. That is where we find our consolation. Think about those milestones in our lives – graduations, anniversaries, birthdays, etc. We talk about surrounding ourselves with our friends. And yet in the busy world we live in, cultivating friendships will get squeezed out. Friendships should be elevated in our hearts over other relationships, because of the critical role they play in helping us become wise (Prov.13:20).

You may not be aware that you are either benefiting or suffering because of this truth. But if you surround yourself with wise people, if you allow yourself to be influenced by those who are wise, if you imitate the wise choices that they make, you are benefitting from that. But if you are a companion of fools, even if you are unaware of it, you're being influenced by that group of people. For Solomon, we are either benefitting or suffering because we are either obedient to this truth or we are ignoring it. The kind of people we surround ourselves with will dictate the kind of life that we have. For Solomon, it's not even a behavior thing. It's a proximity thing. When we feel accepted by someone, we tend to let our guard down. We become more vulnerable to their influence. We all crave acceptance, and so we are all vulnerable to influence from whomever we surround ourselves with.

Some of you have had a certain group of friends for a long time, but you've decided that you want to go down a different path—a wiser path. You want to pursue God. You want your marriage to reflect Biblical values. You want your friendships to reflect Biblical values. These people can't remain in your inner circle of friends because the companion of fools will suffer harm. If you begin to surround yourself with wise people, you can begin to become wise, not even by something that you are doing, but merely by surrounding yourself with wise people. It's about limiting the access of foolish people to our lives and granting access to wise people (18:24). Solomon says, there's a kind of friend who will stick closer to you than your own flesh and blood.

Proverbs 25:20 describes a shallow friend. But what you need is someone who will enter into your pain and share in it. Solomon says you need friends who will be there for you when you need them. They're vulnerable to your pain. They are emotionally connected to you as a friend. A fool can never do this because they're far too selfish. The sticky kind of friend that Solomon is talking about doesn't view you as a means to an end. They're just there for you. A true friend will tell you what you need to hear, not just what you want to hear. An acquaintance, on the other hand, will just flatter you. A true friend will confront you when they see you veering off the wisdom path. We need these kinds of people to support us in our pain, but there also needs to be candor in these relationships, where we are open and honest with one another.

Jesus models this kind of relationship again and again in the New Testament (Luke 10:17). There were three disciples/friends that He was very close to—Peter, James and John. They're with Him in the highest of highs and in the lowest of lows. The good news of the gospel is that no matter what we have done, or how foolish we have been, we can become friends of God through faith in Christ. The gospel announcement is that we can become a friend of God where we begin to drop our guard around God and we become friends of Jesus, where His influence becomes paramount in our lives.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Monday—Relationships Shape Character

Study: Proverbs 13:20 & 1 Corinthians 15:33

The Bible consistently teaches that the people around us influence our thinking, speech, priorities, and behavior. Relationships are never spiritually neutral. What kinds of influence have most shaped your life? Why are people often blind to unhealthy influence? How does Scripture connect companionship with character?

Tuesday— Good Influence Encourages Godliness

Study: 1 Thessalonians 5:11 & Hebrews 10:24

Healthy relationships strengthen faith, encourage perseverance, and promote spiritual growth. For example, Jonathan strengthened David in God (1 Samuel 23:16–17). What does biblical encouragement look like? How can friends help one another persevere spiritually?

Wednesday—Bad Influence Corrupts Gradually

Study: Psalm 1 & Galatians 5:9

Negative influence often works slowly and subtly. Sinful patterns are usually normalized before they are embraced. Notice the progression in Psalm 1—walking with the wicked ⇒ standing in that path ⇒ sitting with scoffers. Compromise often begins with exposure and ends with identification. Why is gradual compromise hard to detect? What kinds of voices most shape modern believers?

Thursday—We Must Influence Others Without Joining Their Sin

Study: Matthew 5:13–14 & 11:19

Believers are called to influence the world for good, not isolate themselves from unbelievers. Yet they must avoid participating in sin. How can we find engagement, yet without compromise, compassion without approval, friendship without conformity? What dangers exist on both extremes: isolation and compromise?

Friday—Loving Relationships Sometimes Require Correction

Study: Proverbs 27:6 & Galatians 6:1

A godly influence is not affirming of sin; it speaks truth lovingly. Think about it: Nathan confronted David and Paul rebuked Peter. Why do we resist correcting others who are straying? What makes correction loving instead of harsh?

Saturday—Christ Is the Ultimate Transforming Influence

Study: 1 John 2:6 & 2 Corinthians 3:18

The controlling influence in a believer's life must be Christ Himself. Human relationships are helpful, but spiritual transformation ultimately comes through communion with Him. How does closeness to Christ reshape relationships? What habits help us remain under Christ's influence daily?