

THE DANGER OF THE WRONG CROWD



PASTOR GREG GRIFFITH

Good morning, church. I love our church, and I love our church because truly, on Sundays, regardless of whatever campus I'm at, we're not alone. And we are gathered, and we have an amazing community of togetherness, of love, of kindness, of support, and also of ability to walk with us in difficult times and good times.

And I want to ask you a question right now to think about your community outside of this community. Like, how are your friends? Are they good friends, or are they bad friends? And I think on a natural, like, when we hear this, we'd be like, well, they're good friends. Like, I wouldn't be friends with them if they're bad friends. But I would actually say, are they really? Because we're going to discover today how important our community and our friendship is, and those around us as those sages that God has entrusted to us and we've been entrusted with as well.

And I want to tell you about when I was a kid, I had a bad friend. His name was Todd. And we were like, probably first grade through third or fourth grade, we were like, close. We were really tight. We were in band together. So like, we would go out to eat beforehand with our parents and our families. And then we would go to band practice. And I still remember our band teacher's name, Mr. Tulga, which was an interesting name for a band teacher. But, you know, Todd, I played the trumpet and the flute, and then Todd played the drums. So I would always try to go to his house and play the drums, because my dad was like, no drumming in our house.

So, but then, and then we played Little League together. So we would go to baseball and do the same rhythm and routine. And then we just hung out a lot. And here's the things I remember about Todd. I remember a lot of times conversations on the way home where my dad and mom would say, hey, Greg, did you hear the way Todd talked to his mom and dad? That's not how you talk to adults. I remember hearing things like, hey, Greg, did you see how Todd didn't clean up after himself at the McDonald's? Because we always went to McDonald's. Like, Greg, you always clean up after yourself and clean up for others. I remember conversations like, hey, Greg, when you get frustrated, did you see how Todd threw his drumsticks on the ground? You don't have tantrums like that.

I remember the one that probably broke this camel, the straw that broke the camel's back for my parents, was Todd may still go down in history as the only seven-year-old to ever be ejected from a Little League baseball game for having a tantrum against an umpire. I doubt it. I mean, I'm sure there are other kids doing that. But I remember that. And I remember on the way home, it was, hey, Greg, we're not going to hang out with Todd much anymore. Now, that was our companionship, my friendship.

I do want to say, I just saw a study this week on this. And I just want to pivot because the scriptures are clear that we do need companionship, we need friendship. And we can't just sit there and say, well, I

don't know who's going to be good for me. So I'm going to just try to find some sort of non-person that will be good for me. Common Sense Media just released a study that said 13 to 18-year-olds, 72% of 13 to 18-year-old kids have at least once used AI as a companion. So a computer as a friend. And asked and said, asked friendly advice as a friend of what to do.

And the study also went on to show that 22% of them use AI and would say AI is one of their closest friends. Now, there's a lot here that we can go into. There's a lot of blessings with AIs, but I will say one of the dangers, AI is not your friend. It is not designed to be a friend. It is impossible for it to be able to speak true life into you and be present with you without words. It will not walk through with you in a valley and it will not walk with you on a mountaintop.

And in a generation, which our teens are in a generation where loneliness is an epidemic, a true epidemic, but I would also say loneliness is an epidemic for adults and for older people as well. I want to share just really quickly about this. We, because this series is so important, Not To Be Alone, this series is so important and because we recognize the importance of this and because that's been shared, we've had an amazing benefactor who has said, I want to ensure that anyone who needs counseling and who would be helped by recognizing how they are not alone and that in the days of spiritual isolation, of physical isolation, emotional isolation, if that counseling would help them, that there's no barriers.

And so we've had someone who has donated to our core counseling center here at King of Kings to ensure that finances are available for you, whatever campus you're at, and to ensure too, and we have too, plenty of openings. So right now, if you're walking through, if you're saying AI is my companion, I want to say, please come alongside and don't walk this journey alone. You don't have to, God doesn't want you to, and we in our community want to make sure you know that there is help and that help is good and godly. So it is there.

Because the truth of the matter is, friendship isn't neutral. It does shape you. It shapes who you are. It shapes how we live. It shapes how we behave. Your friendship really matters in that. And as we think about our friendship and that neutrality of our friendship, like a couple things, like it is there for you and for me, so that we don't have to carry the weight alone of what's going on.

And parents, I want to tell you, I think you need to be involved in your children's friendships. And I don't think this goes away when they turn 18. I think you need to be involved in your children's friendships that you're saying, don't choose your friends based on proximity, that just because they live next door to you, and it's easy for your kid to just go over to them. Don't choose your friends based on popularity, that everybody likes this kid. So everyone should be able to choose and help your kids choose their friends based on character. How are they when nobody else is looking? Are they speaking life into their friends? Are they correcting and rebuking? Are they encouraging and supporting?

And I think that friendship matters for us as well. How are your friends talking to you in your marriage when you're sitting there and you're saying to your friends, you know what, my marriage is in just a difficult season right now. It just feels like we're distant and we're apart. Are your friends sitting there going, well, why don't you get a divorce? Like you could be so much more happy. Are your friends sitting there and telling you, well, don't, yeah, your job, your job stinks. It's terrible. You're, you're just, you're everyone else. You're the victim. Are your friends, are your friends supporting you by saying you're the greatest victim there is? And everyone's out to get you.

And I think that's something we need to speak into life with one another. Don't allow your friends to shape you in a way that is not pointing yourself to God. And that's what today's about. Today, we're going to discover that we are not alone. And that's why I love this series because you are not alone. And our companions, they shape our character and your community will either give you life or they're going to add weight to what you were never meant to carry. They're going to add burden to your life. They're going to add expectations that you never said you wanted. They're going to add, they're going to add things that you, you weren't even built for or prepared for.

Pastor Andy Stanley says it this way. He says that your friends will give your life direction and will give you quality of life, or they'll lead you away and they'll diminish your life. And so when you think about your friends, your community around you, like, are they adding to your quality of life? Are they giving you great direction? Are they walking with you? Or are they adding burden and just telling you what you want to hear in the way of the world?

And so today we're going to discover a guy who had really bad friends and his friends changed the lives of the Israelites for generations to come for 400 years, because he didn't have good friends. And so let's, let's dive in and let's discover, and I'm going to wear this weight vest, sorry, because Rehoboam carried some weight. Not that he was fat, not that he was fat, but he carried weight of his life and his decisions. And that weight was heavy. And it begins with human pride, which met divine judgment.

And so we're going to learn about this, this King of Israel in first Kings 12, three through five. Again, at all campuses, when you see yellow, read that and say it loud and say it with courage and say it with conviction. Then Jeroboam and the of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam saying, your father made our yoke heavy and now therefore lighten the load and his heavy yoke, which he put on us, we will serve you. So he said to him, depart for three days and then come back to me. And the people departed.

And so, so here's what happened as this happened, right? So, so he says, your father made our yoke heavy now, therefore lighten the burdensome service of your father and his yoke, which was heavy was put on us and we will serve you forever. And he said, depart for three days. Now that's an important spot. Let's think about this for a minute. A couple of things are going on here. First of all, Rehoboam is the son. And in the scriptures, he is the only son that we know his name of the great King Solomon.

We don't know any of other Solomon's kids of his son's names. And did he have other sons? Well, our reason with our faith, our reason would tell us, yes. How do we know that? Well, remember Solomon, a thousand wives and concubines, right? Right. That's a whole nother message series about the mental life of that. But anyways, so, so he had other sons, but Rehoboam's the only one we know. And he becomes King after his dad, this great Solomon, right? It has passed. And he carries the weight of his father's kingship.

And what do we know about his dad as a King? He was not a great King. He did everything that God warned the people against and said, if you have a King, here's what the King will do. And your King should not do this. Please don't have a King because I'm your only King. But the people said, we want to be like the world. And he said, here's what will happen. If you do that, they will tax you heavily. That you will, you will be put into a service and servitude to build the things the King wants to build. That

Kings, you should not, when you conquer people, you should not take the women and the wives as your own and put them into your culture and your community.

And that you shouldn't build up your own armies with horses and chariots and all the things, because I am the Lord of hosts who will give you deliverance. And Solomon did every single one of those. The people were heavily taxed to build his temples. They had to do the work to build his temples. They had to serve in these armies and great armies. And we know about his wives and concubines.

And if people are coming to Rehoboam and they're saying, will you finally be the King that releases the burden of this from our lives? Will you be a King that is for your people? Both. And what they learned quickly is inherited dysfunction is still dysfunction. That what was passed down from Solomon is going to be passed down to Rehoboam. And I love that last in spot. And I want you to think that for that minute, because we're going to come back to this. So hold this in your head at the very end of that scripture.

How did Rehoboam say to the people when they said, please release us from the burdens, release us from everything that we've been going through. Don't be like your dad. He said, depart from me. And anyone remember how many days? Three days. So hold that in your head three days. That's going to be really important. In three days, you're going to come back and you're going to hear my answer.

Oh, you people, you're going to come back and you're going to hear my answer. But what's happening here right now is because they had lost their way through the years of Solomon's reign, pride has come. Even the people who are coming, they're not coming. They're not coming because they're saying to Rehoboam, you are the King and we want to coronate you. Notice this, they actually travel to a different land. They don't go to Jerusalem. They make the King travel up to them.

And so it's not a coronation. It's a way to coronation. It's a negotiation. Hey, as our King, here's what we want to make sure you do. And we're going to see that that negotiation goes poorly. But then also, also you have the pride of Rehoboam that he's sitting there going, I don't need to listen to the people. I am the King. So I get to do what I want to do.

I want you to think about your friends. Are your friends telling you, do what you want to do, boo? I had a lady the other night called me boo for the first time. I don't know if it was any, it was weird. It was like, then she called, like, I realized she just called everyone. She was serving boo. And I was like. Anyways, sorry.

So what happens is like, how are your friends looking at you? And what are they telling you? Is it about you? And is it about your expectations or their implied expectations that they think was what you need? Because what we end up happening is realizing that pride always says to you and me, I can handle more. I've got this. When reality says you're already overloaded and you need friends who know where you're at.

You see pride and separation from the will of God will always add weight to your life and it will pull you down even more. And what will happen is you might be able to say, I can carry the weight, but you will walk differently. Right? If there were a treadmill up here, I would run, but there's not. Thank God. But I wouldn't run the same. My gate would be smaller. It would be harder, even though I think I can do more.

And that leads Rehoboam into his first failure as he's debating and delegating and listening and discerning and deciding. And what we see is that he becomes a failed servant leader over those three days. In chapter 12, verses six through seven. Again, read the yellow. And the King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had stood before his father Solomon while he still lived. And he said to them, how do you these people? And they spoke to him saying, if you will be a servant to these people today and will serve them and answer them and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.

Oh, that sounds like pretty good advice. Like if you do this, if you speak good words to them, if you tell them, yes, I recognize that my dad was wrong. I recognize that this isn't the way and I will serve you and I will serve you by lightening your burden, lightening your load. They will be loyal to you forever. Great King, who would not want that?

And they gave him three things. They said, serve the people, speak kindly and lead with humility. But remember, they were under the guidance and they were under the rule of a King who had lost his way with the Lord. And so they missed one crucial spot. There's nothing there about serving God. There's no spiritual direction. There's no, hey, serve the Lord first and follow the ways and the law of God and lead us in those ways and then serve his people, speak kindly to his people and lead with humility. So they missed a crucial spot there. And it's because they had been under decades and generations of failed leadership to God.

And I got to say to you right now, are your friends good and godly people? It's important for us to have people that put the word of God before us in all the counsel that we ask of them. And that's where our leadership comes.

I love the words and I share this with young pastors. I'm now at the age, 21 years in ministry, almost 22 coming up, 20 years in ministry now where pastors who've been serving five years or new or something like that, when I'm talking to them, you know, and they say, how long have you been in ministry? And I say, almost 22 years. They go, wow, that's a long time. And then they go, what's the advice you would give me?

And I've started sharing the same advice because I think it's so good. And it was the advice I wish I had heard. And it came from my predecessor, Mark Zender, who it came from his father. And that is such good and godly advice. And that's, he said, when I was asked, what advice would you have when you're leading a church, leading God's people? And his advice was love the people and preach the gospel. And your ministry will go well.

And we want elders. We want people around us that will speak into us life and truth. So, so Rehoboam has some, but then in verse 8 through 11, we see this, but he, but he, oh, Rehoboam, the advice which the elders had given him, and he consulted the young men who had grown up with him and who had stood before him, not the people, not the king. And he said to them,

So then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him and said, thus, you should speak to this people who have spoken to you saying, your father has made your yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us. So those who said this to you, you should say to them this, my little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist.

And by the way, let me just give you a little Hebrew understanding of this. This is a crude euphemism. If you need that further explained, you can ask any one of your campus directors privately. So tell them your little finger is thicker than your father's waist. And now where your father put a heavy yoke on you, I'm going to add to that yoke. My father chastised you with whips. Whips. I will chastise you with scourges.

At the end of the three days, they say, when they come back to you and say, will you give us grace and mercy? You say, no, you will feel the weight of my power and my authority. You thought my dad was bad. You ain't seen nothing yet. I will be dominant. I will increase this kingdom upon your backs and your burdens. And I will rule through fear.

I don't know about you, but I can tell you, I'm pretty sure the writers of the office knew the story of Rehoboam because Rehoboam was the first Michael Scott, right? Would I rather be feared or loved? Asked both. I want people to be afraid of how much they love me, was the great Michael Scott saying, right?

And here's what he says. The friends are saying, Rehoboam, you have all the power to be the greatest king, and we want to ride your coattails. And by the way, all that you're going to inflict and punish, we're not going to suffer that wrath. We're not going to be the people they talk about. We're not going to be the ones that they say, should there be a coup? They don't feel it. You do.

When your friends are giving you advice that's really about you, they don't feel the weight of that judgment. Yeah, your husband's terrible. Get a divorce. They're not paying any legal fees. They're not working through the counseling. They're not having the hard conversations with your children. They're just calling and saying, why don't you come and get more wine with me? Let's forget your troubles.

You see, this is where a reminder for us as leaders and a reminder for us as friends who are leading people, which all of us are. Simon Sinek says it this way, leadership's not about really being in charge. It's about taking care of those in your charge. And a good friend will want to help take care of you.

Because what ended up happening to me is what ended up happening with Rehoboam is as he listened to the words of his young friends who were about serving him and about serving themselves, is he ended up having a divided house. And that divided house cost generations of pain and hurt and heartache.

With that dozen rash words, Rehoboam, this bungling dictator, opened the door for 400 years of strife, weakness, and eventually the destruction of the entire nation. Where when we see that there were two tribes that became out of Rehoboam, that two of them went with Rehoboam and 10 of them went with Jeroboam. And that divided nation was separated geographically, politically, and spiritually.

You see, the division that came just created more weight. And when we have friends that just want to divide us from our friends or divide us from our church or divide us from other people, what happens is we're just wearing this weighted vest and we're just getting pulled in all sorts of directions with heavy weight. And it hurts and it's hard and it's painful. And it's painful and we say, I don't want to do this anymore.

And that's where we need to look and say, do we have a community around us that is connecting us to Jesus? Because where Rehoboam opened the door for division and strife and an eternal separation from the kingdom of God, Jesus came with seven last sayings as the ultimate servant leader to open a door for you and for me for peace and for victory and the ultimate culmination of a restoration to the eternal kingdom on earth.

And as we see his seven last sayings, we are reminded that those are the last sayings before he said, come back again in three days. For in Luke 23 and say this loud and say the yellow loud and say it where we can all hear it from wherever you're at.

"Father, them for they know not what they do." "Truly I say to you, you will be with me in paradise."
"Woman, your son," "your mother community," "my God, my God, why have you?" "I, it is father into your, I commend my spirit."

And what we have is Jesus at the very end, getting his advice from the father and saying, I'm giving and everything trusting into you father, that in three days, your people will come back again and they will not receive what they received from Rehoboam.

You will not receive what they received from Rehoboam. That is the full wrath of God that says, how dare you kill the son of God? Instead, what you and I receive is we receive the grace of God that he comes to you and me today at the end of that three days and says, you don't get wrath. You get grace, sin, death, and the devil is conquered and victory is yours. You no longer carry a burden of your sin because I have taken it upon me. My yoke is easy and my burden is light. Give to me all of your life.

This is the good news of the three days at the end of Jesus that our friends point us to. Amen.

And so Jesus brings that reunion between you and I with God and brings that reunion with our people so that we're surrounded by those who love him, that he was surrounded by those who would be praying for those beyond him and that he was carrying the sins of all those who love him, you and me.

And so today Jesus invites us to learn a different way, to be lighter in our yoke, to share our burdens with one another, and to build a community that gives us life, to have friends, not that are AI driven and not that are self-eye driven, but that are Him driven and you driven.

I want to invite a few of you forward, please, because here's what happens when we do that. Carrie, will you come up here? Luca, will you come up here? Al, will you come up here? Josh, will you come up here? Stand with me up here?

Because see, here's what happens when we have friends that we can walk in life with that point to Jesus Christ, we can unload the weight that is upon us. And they walk with us every step of the way. They walk in the valleys and they walk on the mountaintops.

And there's still stuff we carry, but we don't carry it alone. We carry it together. They encourage us in the valleys and they mourn with us, as the word says. And on the mountaintops, they celebrate with us as we grander at the beauty of where God has led us to see his glory.

And we know that we didn't get there on our own, but we got there with together, with claps and cheers. And you can do this. I believe in you. God's got you. And this is what a difference of a community makes that focuses first on God and then loves you.

And so today, let us see a community in our midst built on Jesus. Will you all stand and will you all pray with us right now? Let's pray.

Father God, thank you so much for the community that you surround us with. Thank you for your son showing us the grace that came at the end of three days and that our yoke is easy and our burden is light because it is given to you and that we don't walk alone.

We walk with the community you've surrounded us with, with friends who love you and love us. And so may our community continue to be built on the grace and the good news of Jesus. And may we stand firm with one another because we are for each other and you are for us in the name of Jesus and all God's people everywhere said, amen and amen.

Thanks guys. Appreciate all of you.