

“Tangible Trust” Week 3: Practices that Build Trust

Picking Your Influences, Part A

What does it mean to Pick Your Influences?

A quick google search of the phrase “choose your friends wisely” lands over 17 million results - blogs, how to videos, research articles, and more - all exploring the idea that it is important to choose your friends well. It’s clear we know that *who* we spend our time on matters, and oftentimes we even know *what* we spend our time on matters, but busy lives can make it hard to see how we are actually spending our time and energy. In order to see what we’re doing, we have to step out of the hustle and bustle and if we’re honest, it doesn’t really feel like we have time for that.

But there is a cost to not stopping. Our lives are filled with voices, and these voices are often in tension with one another. So when we just keep pushing forward without sorting through who we want to listen to, we’ll often just accept and absorb the opinions around us, thus carrying those tensions within us. This leaves us feeling disoriented, conflicted, discouraged, and distracted - or in other words, anxious. Fortunately, God made a way out of this mess. His Word is given to us as a way to filter these voices and our relationship with Him is meant in part to bring us clarity and comfort in this messy life. That being said, forcing yourself to constantly choose the right filter at the right moment can feel like an uphill battle. So instead, we can better set ourselves up for success by occasionally stopping to evaluate who and what has space to speak into our lives. Then we can make adjustments to align those voices with our values, so that our daily lives are filled with things that encourage us and shape us into who we want to be and what God is calling us to. Or in simple terms: we pick our influences wisely.

How to Pick Your Influences: Paying Attention

Before we can make a decision, we need to know what our options are. This week, we will spend some time observing who and what influences our lives. Then next week we’ll use these observations to make adjustments.

Part One: Observing

Before you begin, spend some time in prayer. Ask God to help you see things the way He sees them, and to help you have grace for yourself in this process. Then when you’re ready, grab a notebook and take out your calendar, phone, and whatever devices you use for entertainment:

- First, go through your calendar or think back on all the activities you had scheduled in the last month or two, write a list of the types of things you’re doing and how often you did them.
 - Example: *family gatherings x 2, church x 4, hang with friends x 1, yardwork x 4, concert x 1*
- Then, look at your social media profiles and list out the types of accounts you follow or what shows up on your “for you” page. If you don’t have social media, you can look at your emails or things you read.
 - Example: *friends, cooking, news, comedy, christian, mental health, news, shopping, science, tech*
- Pick three days in the next week or two that you feel like best represent your “normal life.” During those days, keep a log of the kinds of things people talk to you about.
 - Example: *Sports, family drama, recipes, funny stories, work frustrations, God, pets, etc*

Part Two: Reflecting

Once you’ve completed your observations, set aside some time to be still and reflect. Before you begin, spend some time in prayer. Ask God for clarity on your own heart and the healthy desires you have for your life. Be open to both challenge and encouragement. When you’re ready, grab a notebook and respond to these prompts. It is important that you write out your answers.

- I want to be known as somebody who...
- What I need most from God in this season of my life is...
- It’s easier for me to love people well when...