

Josh Howerton: The Wrong Inner Circle Can Stop Your Walk With Jesus

We can attend church, read the Bible and pray regularly – yet still find ourselves moving without making any real spiritual progress.

Pastor Josh Howerton says the problem may not be a lack of effort. It may be the people we allow to hold the greatest influence in our lives.

Teaching from 2 Timothy 4, Howerton points to the apostle Paul's final recorded words. Paul has survived persecution, imprisonment and tremendous suffering, yet from a prison cell, he asks Timothy to come to him.

"When he is in a pit and he's alone, the apostle Paul reaches out to a disciple friend named Timothy and says, 'I need you. Do your best to come to me soon,'" Howerton says.

If Paul needs faithful friends, the rest of us certainly do.

"A disciple assembles a band of brothers or sisters," Howerton says. "This one decision will be the most important decision you make to determine your discipleship."



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The Devil Wants Us Fighting Alone

Howerton warns that isolation gives sin, shame and spiritual strongholds room to tighten their grip on our lives.

"The three most dangerous words in the English language are,

'I got this,'" he says. "Heads up. You don't got this."

We are not supposed to hide our battles and attempt to defeat the enemy through willpower. We need trusted believers who will help us drag those struggles into the light.

"Don't fight the devil in the dark because the darkness is his domain," Howerton says. "When you stay alone in the thing that is attacking you, bro, that's like an away game."

Drawing from Luke 5, Howerton calls these trusted believers "mat carriers" – friends like the four men who carry a paralyzed man to Jesus.

"You need four people who they can pick you up, put you on a mat, and carry you to Jesus when you're going the other way," he says.

Those friends cannot merely offer companionship. They must be committed Christians who are moving toward Jesus and willing to confront us when we begin to wander.

"You're praying. You're attending church. You're reading your Bible," Howerton says. "You're doing all the things. And there's this weird thing happening where you're noticing, man, I'm moving around a lot, but I'm not moving forward."

That makes choosing our inner circle a matter of spiritual survival.

"It's not the weak one," Howerton says of a lion stalking its prey. "It's the isolated one that gets devoured."

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