

Case Study #1

My Friend is Heading Down The Wrong Path — What Should I Do?

Jamie was my best friend in the world. After meeting at church in the third grade, we became inseparable. We saw each other at youth group twice a week and we talked on the phone constantly. We hung out together almost every weekend. Summers were the best—we spent almost every day together.

Then the summer after eight grade I gave Jamie the bad news: “My dad got a job transfer. We’re moving to New York in August.”

From the moment my family pulled out of our driveway behind the moving van, Jamie and I texted each other non-stop. Then we switched to Facebook.

It was on MySpace that I first noticed changes in Jamie. She started telling stories about sneaking out to parties with their friends. I didn’t know a lot of the people she was hanging out with, but I recognized the names of a couple of guys with bad reputations.

I wrote on her Facebook page: “I can’t believe you’re hanging out with Chad and Derek? They’re the biggest partiers at school.”

She wrote back: “You just never got to know them. They’re really fun!”

Once she called me on the way home from a concert. “Hey! I’m in Chad’s truck. It’s really cool. I wish you were here.”

“I don’t wish I was there,” I said. “Especially if Chad’s driving—you know how much he drinks.”

“I can’t believe you’re lecturing me!” she snapped. “You’re acting just like my mom. If you’re going to lecture me don’t even call.” Click.

After that we didn’t talk nearly as much. Jamie stopped responding to my comments on her MySpace page, and she wouldn’t answer when I called her cell phone. So I backed off.

I didn’t like the way her life was going, but I didn’t know what else to do.

1. What is the Problem?
2. What are the possible solutions?
3. What does Scripture teach?

Then one day in March I got a call from Jamie’s older brother, Ben. “Hey, just to let you know, Jamie was in a car accident and she’s in the hospital. Keep her in your prayers, OK?”

Ben’s voice sounded casual, like the accident was no big deal. I told him I’d be praying and asked him to keep me posted.

Later that week I got an e-mail from Ben: *Jamie died today.*

I stopped breathing and stared at the screen. “Wh-what?!” I yelled at the computer. “This can’t be happening! There must be a mistake.”

But there was no mistake, I called Ben and learned the details. Jamie and Chad were headed home late at night from a rock concert. Chad, as usual, had been drinking, but this time he lost control of his truck and veered off the highway. He was fine—just a few broken ribs—but Jamie had severe brain trauma and didn’t make it through the surgery.

I didn’t cry. I didn’t even talk about the accident for six months. Then one day my Aunt Heidi asked me about it, and it was like a dam burst.

I bawled my eyes out while sitting at her kitchen table. I cried a lot after that and I was able to talk about it. At first I blamed myself and a lot of other people for Jamie’s death. But after a while, through talking with my mom and my counselor, I started to see that it really wasn’t anyone’s fault. Sure, maybe I could have tried harder. Maybe Jamie’s mom could have been stricter. Maybe, maybe, maybe.But only God can change a person’s heart, and he doesn’t force anyone to change. Jamie had her own choices to make.

Even though I don’t blame myself anymore, I think I’ll always have some regrets. That’s probably why I’m more outspoken these days. When I see my friends making dumb choices, I say something. I don’t care if it’s supposedly none of my business. Recently, I saw a girl I know pull a joint out of her pocket. I confronted her about it and told her that stuff is no good for her. Maybe she’ll listen to me, maybe not. But I know I have to try.

At my youth group’s winter retreat last year, the speaker taught on a verse in Hebrews that says, “Let us encourage one another.” He said in today’s English that verse would say, “Get in your friends’ faces.” The stuff he said really hit me hard, and when we broke into small groups afterward, I told my story. I still get really sad when I think about Jamie, but I want everyone to know the lesson I learned about speaking up. Because I know how high the stakes can be.

Now What?

- What would you have done if you’d been in Alex’s situation?
- Why is it hard to speak up when a friend is making bad decisions? Why is it important to still do so?
- What’s the best way to speak up and offer warnings and advice to a friend who won’t listen? How can you get your point across and still avoid sounding self-righteous or judgmental?
- Remember this: While it’s important to speak up, it’s also important to know that our friends are ultimately responsible for the decisions they make.

Prov 28:4You Can’t Stay Neutral

Prov 7:15Silence Means Approval

Prov 27:5,6Give Your Friends A Choice