

MAINTAINING RIGHT ASSOCIATIONS (Choosing our friends wisely)



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.” (1 Corinthians 15:33)

- Our character is greatly shaped by the company that we keep



- The company that we keep will greatly affect our altitude in life and the degree to which we succeed in what God has called us to do in life

- Promotion in God's Kingdom always comes from above when our character is in place. We see a great example of this in the Old Testament when we look at the life of Joseph (Genesis Chapters 37 & 39-41)



- After Joseph had two dreams of greatness it took a further 13 years of trials, injustices and imprisonment before God raised him up from the prison to the palace to become a great leader. It was during the 13 wilderness years that Joseph's character was tried and proven

- We are now living in times when the world is becoming more ungodly and lawless



- For this reason we continually need God's wisdom to choose right friends



- God knows the hearts of all people and can best guide us in our choice of friends

In the book of James we read,

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

(James 1:5)



- The simple fact is that we have a very real adversary, the Devil, who is out to destroy our lives



The Apostle Peter wrote,

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” **(1 Peter 5:8-9)**

- The enemy will continually try and bring wrong friends into our life to distract us in our walk with the Lord and if possible to wreak havoc in our lives'



In the book of Proverbs we read,

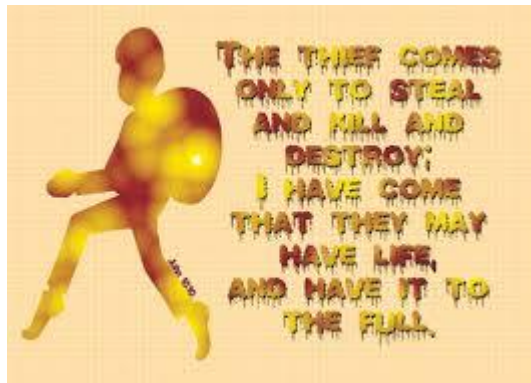
“The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.” (Proverbs 12:26)

- Even in our witnessing to others we need to be careful about who we witness to and how long we spend with people, especially if they are resistant to the things of God
- Generally witnessing to others of the opposite sex is not advisable. Many people have unwittingly been drawn into wrong relationships witnessing to people of the opposite sex
- We must never forget that we have an adversary who is out to complicate and destroy our lives



Jesus Himself said,

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)



In the book of Jude we read,

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

And on some have compassion, [a]making a distinction; but others save [b]with fear, pulling *them* out of the [c]fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” (Jude 20-23)



- **It is so important that we ALWAYS protect our relationship with the Lord**

- **The bible makes it clear that we become like the company that we keep**
- We will never soar like an eagle if we are constantly wallowing about with the turkeys (people who are always negative and continually complaining about their lot in life)



In the book of Proverbs we read,

**“He who walks with wise men will be wise,
but the companion of fools will be destroyed.”**

(Proverbs 13:20)

- The bible clearly emphasises the importance of not associating with people who will undermine our faith if we were to spend time with them. God loves us and does not want us coming to grief

In the book of Psalms we read,

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2)



- So for this reason we must choose carefully who we allow into our INNER circle of friends

- The Bible gives us some great wisdom to help us to make right choices in relation to who we let into our inner circle of friends



- I will now look at some of the wisdom in the bible that can help us to choose our friends wisely and to make right connections in life

1) Not being unequally yoked together with unbelievers

- There is a big difference between the ways of the world and the ways of God
- For this reason we must never as Christians enter into significant partnerships with people who are non-believers
- This is particularly the case when it comes to the choice of a marriage partner



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God...”

(2 Corinthians 6:14-16)



- Many Christians have panicked about being left on the shelf and married unbelievers and then spent years trying to coerce them to become a Christian
- It is a miracle for a person to become a Christian and to surrender their life to Jesus Christ
- It is the mutual love of both partners for Jesus that makes a Christian marriage special
- For those who marry unbelievers invariably there will always be challenges that arise such as the unbelieving spouse not wanting to go to church on Sundays



**In the book of Amos we read,
“Can two walk together, unless they are
agreed?” (Amos 3:3)**



- For this reason it is crucial for all believers that they partner with people who also have a love for Jesus, especially given the lawless world that we now live in



- Having right godly connections in life is crucial if we are to realise our full potential in Christ

2) Not associating with professing believers who are living ungodly and immoral lifestyles

- As Christians it is crucial that we finish our Christian walk strongly
- The whole Christian walk is one of growing progressively more like Christ over time
- This is why the bible emphasises the importance of not spending time with carnal believers who have the potential to undermine our Christian character and to cause us to stumble in our walk with the Lord because of their ungodly lifestyles



- It takes years to develop Christian character but very little time to lose our saltiness and Christ-like character if we associate on a regular basis with worldly and ungodly friends
- For this reason we need to continually choose friends of Godly character who will help us to walk out the Christian walk
- There are enough challenges and temptations in the world each day without making life more difficult for ourselves by choosing wrong friends



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.” **(1 Corinthians 5:9-11)**



3) Being careful not to spend too much time with angry people, lest we learn their ways

- Many people struggle with anger issues because of unresolved hurts. There is a saying that hurt people hurt people



In the book of James we read,

“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” (James 1:19-20)

- Particularly for Christians who have struggled with anger issues in their past, it is good for them not to allow into their inner circle of friends people who have anger issues

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.” (Proverbs 22:24-25)



- Continually choosing right friends who have Christlike character greatly helps us to grow in the fruit of the Spirit



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

4) Be careful about spending too much time with legalistic and judgemental people

- We all need God's grace on a daily basis. We must never forget where we have come from
- God is rich in mercy. We must refuse to become like the Pharisees
- The Holy Spirit helps us to know what really matters to God
- God is always more interested in our hearts being right with Him AND others, than our external appearances



Jesus Himself said, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” **(Matthew 7:1-5)**



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.” (Titus 3:9)



The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.” **(Colossians 2:20-23)**



- What really matters to God is that we have a genuine love for Him and for others

The Apostle Peter wrote, “But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”

Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.” **(1 Peter 4:7-9)**



- Spending considerable time with legalistic and judgemental people will have a negative affect on our ability to love others unconditionally

5) We need to avoid those people who are divisive and who speak badly about others

- The bible makes it clear that we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling
- We have enough in our own lives to work on
- The bible makes it clear that God is strongly opposed to people sowing discord among brethren



In the book of Proverbs we read,
“These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven
are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A
lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,
A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that
are swift in running to evil, A false witness
who speaks lies, And one who sows discord
among brethren.” **(Proverbs 6:16-19)**



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.” (Titus 3:10)



In the book of Proverbs we read,

“The words of a [a]talebearer *are* like [b]tasty trifles, And they go down into the [c]inmost body.” **(Proverbs 18:8)**

“He who goes about *as* a talebearer reveals secrets; Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips.” **(Proverbs 20:19)**

- **We must always distance ourselves from those who are gossiping about others,**

AND



6) We must not have significant relationships with people who are compromising and deceitful in the way that they relate to others

- The bible warns that deception will be prevalent in the days just prior to the second coming of Christ
- We must therefore not develop significant relationships with those who lack integrity in their dealings with others



The Apostle Paul wrote, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,” (1 Timothy 4:1)

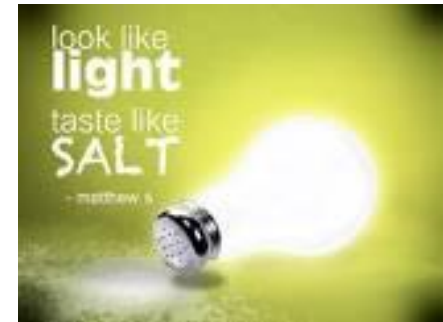
- People open themselves up to deception when they deliberately go against the word of God in their decisions and actions
- For this reason we must avoid those people who will continually try to get us to compromise in our walk with the Lord and in the way that we live our life



- **As Christians we are meant to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world**

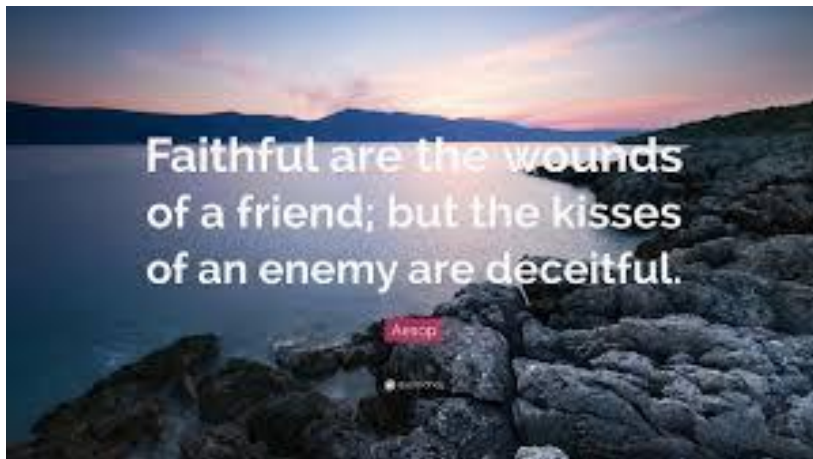
Jesus Himself said,

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” **(Matthew 5:13)**



“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” **(Matthew 5:16)**

- For this reason we must not allow into our circle of friends people who are compromising and deceitful in the way that they relate to others, lest we learn their ways



POSITIVELY

1) We need to associate with people who are passionate about their walk with the Lord

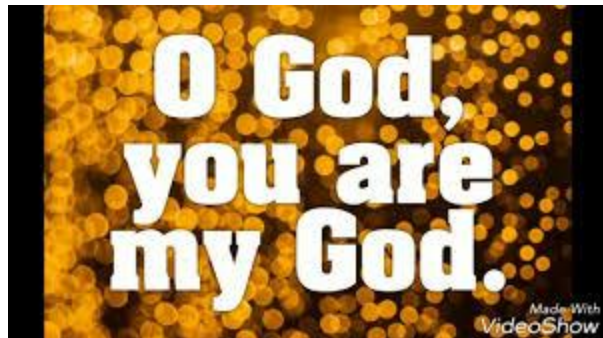


- Their passion for the things of God will help us to keep our faith alive
- King David's mighty men were inspired by David's passion and love for God. They all ended up doing great and mighty exploits
- King David had a great desire to know God



King David wrote in Psalm 63,

“O GOD, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for you; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You.” (Psalm 63:1-3)



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2) We need to have regular fellowship with other mature Christians who will help us to grown in Christlike character and in our love for others

In the book of Hebrews we read, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)



3) We need to spend time with Christians of Godly vision who will help to stretch us to become all that God has planned for our life

- We all need good role models in our life who will help to encourage us to fulfil our God given destiny in life



- Christians who have a clear God given vision and focus for their lives

- **The Apostle Paul was a great mentor and encourager for the young pastor Timothy**
- This is evident in Paul's epistle to the young pastor Timothy where he encouraging the young pastor to expand his ministry



The Apostle Paul wrote,

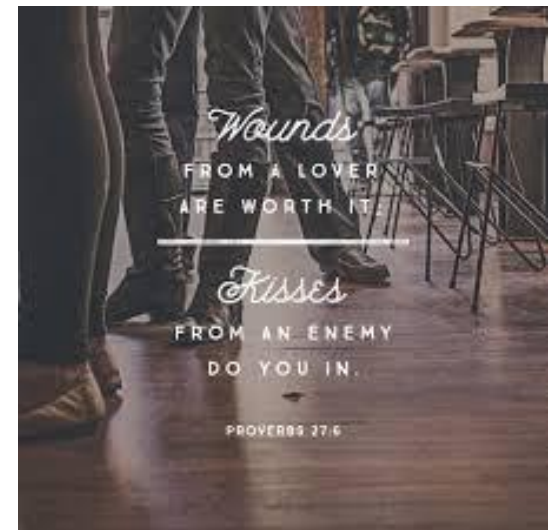
“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2) AND

4) We need to have friends who are prepared at times to speak the truth to us in love, rather than just only having friends who always agree with us

- Often people can flatter us to gain what they want, but good friends will always have our best interests at heart
- True friends are also prepared to give us tough love, if it will help us to avoid much pain and suffering



In the book of Proverbs we read,
“Open rebuke is better
Than love carefully concealed
Faithful are the wounds of a friend,
But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”
(Proverbs 27:5-6)



So in conclusion

- We only have one life here on earth to make an eternal difference in the lives of others
- One life to store up treasures in heaven



Jesus Himself said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” **(Matthew 6:19-21)**

- For this reason we need to continually choose friends who will help to encourage us to become all that God has planned for our life

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,” (Ephesians 3:20)

- **How important it is that we choose our friends wisely**



Again Proverbs 12:26 gives us great advice about how we should choose our friends,

“The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.”



- I will finish with one concluding thought. Whenever you feel uneasy in the spirit about associating with a person or group of people, **DON'T**. There will always be problems and complications down the track