

Choose your Associates Wisely (pt 2)

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Does it matter who you associate with?

When this question is asked, people will often say: It does not matter!

But is this true?

Take two coins a gold one and silver one. Put these tightly together and hold them like that for a period of time. Now take them apart and carefully look at the two faces.

What do you see?

You will see that the two metals will have migrated across to the other. This is like our personality. This too will rub off from one person to another if we have close associations. It has been said by a person who lost their daughter through drug related suicide: You know if your daughter is on drugs by looking at their friends. You have a good idea what she is doing by what they do!

Many people believe actions like this are stupid, but what does the word “stupid” mean?

Referring to the Bible and principally the Book of Proverbs, we would understand 'stupid' as:-

Not taking in knowledge and insensitive to moral truth.

Conversely, the Bible talks about “wisdom” thus:-

Prov. 2v2-11 So make your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of the God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is the shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul, discretion will watch over you; understanding will guard you.

Essentially we must search for God and the knowledge gained will give us wisdom and understanding to fear God (see Glossary for “God”, “Wisdom” and “Fear”)

How is this rubbed off onto us?

This knowledge and understanding?

The disciples Peter and John had not been at a Pharisees' theocratic school of learning (being today's seminaries)!

But they had a deep understanding. It was because they had been with The Greatest Teacher on this planet for 3.5 year ministry, they had benefited from being very close to this wise and knowledgeable teacher.

We see the good aspects of people rubbing off onto their associates.

What about the bad habits?

1Cor. 15v33 Be not deceived: Evil communications corrupt good manners.

Clearly we must be careful with who we mix with.

Prov. 22v24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and do not go with a furious man.

We are beginning to see that The Bible does not consider that it is wise to associate with bad people. The problem comes however when one can see some good points.

Not everybody is bad through and through, so what is wrong? This is the snare that Satan is able to use to try and drag us away from worshipping God, unless we are very strong in the faith/fidelity/assurance.

It is not wrong to meet with them occasionally to preach/teach to them through your Christian actions (which is precisely what Jesus did do during his ministry period). However regular association with the same people, who as seeming 'friends', are wearing down your resistance to earthly desires and improper actions must be considered as danger signs and heeded. You must remove yourself from such company.

Heb. 10v23 Let us hold fast to the profession of our faith without wavering (for he who promised is faithful).

Hence if we listen to God's word and instruction through the correct association with wise people. This will encourage the correct form of works.

The Jerusalem Bible says:-

Do not stay away from the meetings.

Be with like-minded people, encouraged to take up spiritual discussion, to be built up.

How do we know what type of meetings to go to?

Luke 6v45 A good man with good treasure in his heart will bring forth good fruit; and an evil man with evil treasure in his heart will have evil ways. For what the heart is full of will come out of his mouth.

Hence we must listen to what they say and then observe what they do. Jesus told us that you know whether it is a good or bad tree by its fruitage. Thus we must look at the works of both the leader and of the congregation. How is the congregation steered to fulfil Yahweh's Desire of them – how does it compare with what The Bible tells us?

This is so important!

Is their fruit spiritual and up-building?

Or is it complaining moaning leading to dissension.

But it is also not in a self-indulgent happy-clappy sing/song sermon because in itself that is **not** The Word of God accurately applied in our lives – please read all this website to know and thus understand precisely what Yahweh's Desire is of us.

Clearly ask yourself:

Is their heart condition right?

Clearly we must work to do something that makes others think that we are wise!

This is one of the spiritual fruits.

Often people say:

You get the friends that you deserve!

Choosing a marriage partner.

This is the most serious 'earthly' decision that you will have to make in your life. It means a life long commitment, hence you must be very careful.

1Cor. 7v39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, then she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord.

There are many examples where a marriage has been successful when one partner has been in the faith/fidelity/assurance and the other has later been brought into the True Christian faith. However there are many other examples where the marriage has been broken! It is much safer if both partners are in the faith before they become engaged and then later marry.

Again this may be put down to the independent spirit of the human.

Do they desire what they want, irrespective of other people's (or God's) wishes?

Or do they fervently pray before Almighty God, to be shown (and meet) the right person as a marriage mate and then to work at it?

1Cor. 5v6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven rises the whole lump of bread.

It is the responsibility of the elders to ensure that any 'bad apple in the barrel' must be removed so that the others are not contaminated.

1Cor. 5v9-11 I wrote to you in a letter not to associate with fornicators: Yet not completely the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; because you need to go out and preach to the world. But now I have written to you not to associate with any person who is called a brother, when they are also a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, not even to eat with them.

Always ask yourself:

Through my association with this person 'Can they help me to become closer to Yahweh God. And hence to magnify His name.'

Be careful this has two different, but correct answers depending on whether you are preaching, or socialising (or both at the same time)!

If the young person has extra curricula activities after normal school hours - are these wise pursuits?

Clearly only you can answer this. But base the answer upon these various questions:-

What effect is it going to have upon yourself?

Do you need to?

Is it affecting your time for other more worthwhile pursuits? Perhaps Bible study being the most important.

Questions for adults.

Do you have frivolous 'working parties'?

Do you feel you have to be one of the 'boys/girls'?

Do we feel that these are part of the job and so fall along, or do we stand up to it?

What is our strength?

Colos. 3v5-10 You must deaden, then, those passions in which belong to earth, fornication and impurity, lust and evil desire, and that love of money which is idolatry. These are what bring down God's vengeance on the unbelievers, and such was your own behaviour, too, while you lived among them. Now it is your turn to have done with it all, resentment, anger, spit, insults, foul-mouthed utterance; and do not tell lies at one another's expense. You must be quit of the old self, and the habits that went with it; you must be clothed in the new self, that is being refitted all the time for closer knowledge, so that the image of God who created it is its pattern. We do not want to go back to that old personality. You actually practised that, but now you must leave it all behind. We must put on new "clothes" (always = "personality") to be like Christ (= imitate Jesus), however you must take the old clothes off first, and so it is with our personality. In many cases this can be a vigorous and painful experience to remove these old qualities (which can be almost parasitic in nature, because they grow on you as a host).

How can we do this?

Prov. 14v15 The simple person believes every word, but the prudent man looks carefully where he goes beforehand. Clearly the inexperienced are easily swayed, but the shrewd person carefully considers things before accepting them. A 14th Century French philosopher wrote down: Read good books, because the writers are putting down their best thoughts!

It is up to us to pick up these 'best thoughts' and to do this we have to read the best book - The Bible!

It is often said:

You tell me what you read, and I will be able to tell you what you are like.

Soap operas are designed to make the person watching to identify directly with the characters. This is shown because when a person becomes 'ill' on the program, the television company will receive hundreds of letters from well wishers! Some people may say:

It will not effect me.

But in saying that, you have actually considered it and consequently justified the effect it has had on you!

You are giving it credence!

Eph. 5v3-4 When you become saints, never let fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness ever come near you.

Neither filthiness, nor foolish talk, nor jesting, which do not build up, but rather give thanks.

2Cor 11v13-15 Such men are false apostles, dishonest workmen, that pass for apostles of Christ. And no wonder;

Satan himself can pass for an angel of light, and his servants have no difficulty in passing for servants of holiness; but their end will be what their life has deserved.

They will do anything to break that link with God.

Apostate literature. Be careful with other faiths literature. It may lead you astray!

Prov. 4v23 Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are all the sources of life.

We are thus able to guard our heart if our body is full of Godly things.

We must therefore work hard at school and work, and fill our life with good books and literature with moral teaching based upon The Bible.

Phil. 4,8-9 I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, Wherefore, though I boldly speak in Christ to order you to do what is proper, yet for loves sake I would rather beseech you, being that as I am, Paul an old man, and now also a prisoner of Christ.

Once considered, then these things have to be practiced, and so becoming a prisoner of Christ. If we do this then we will not have time to practice evil things. We will then walk in the Name of our God.

Gen 39v9 Potipher's wife with Joseph.

Not only was this a sin against Potipher (her husband) but also a sin against God. Joseph had a good and healthy fear of Yahweh God.

Psalms 16v8 I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

This whole psalm proclaims Yahweh God as a pillar of strength for David. God is placed by David as the central pillar of his life. David will revolve his life around Yahweh. If we don't do this then we should study the Bible more to try and understand why we should.

Heb 11.27 By faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Moses could see God with his mind's eye. Moses did not fear any man. We too, should not fear anything. We become closest to God when we live in harmony with His wishes.

How do we do this?

1. The Bible.

2. God's True Christian organisation.

3. Holy Spirit, through prayer and True Christian fellowship

Phil. 4v6-7 That the communication of your faith may become effectual by acknowledging every good thing which is in you in Jesus Christ. For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Peace and mental powers will guard the heart which we have seen is subject to deception and from which issues the sources of life.

James 4v7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Hence we become closest to God when we submit ourselves to His Will/Desire. This will develop the correct attitude to Yahweh.

Psalms 122v1 I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the house of the Lord.

Are we glad?

Or do we say I've got a headache. I can't make it this week!

David had many problems during his rulership over Israel, probably far greater than we will ever have to face; but he always had time to worship in The House of the Lord. David had the right attitude (he put Yahweh first), an attitude that we too should develop.

Psalms 119all This long psalm is about David striving to follow God's statutes, and his enemies delighting in his persecution.

Psalms 119v63 I am a companion of all those who fear thee, and of those that keep your precepts.

Are we members of those groupings who {have awe}/fear Yahweh.

Do we reverently fear Yahweh?

We should seek those who do not want to associate with the evil within this world.

2Cor. 6v11-13 Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return - I speak as to children - widen your hearts also,

They lacked warmth towards Paul.

We must widen out our expressions of love to one another.

Do we know everyone in the Christian congregation?

It is sad if we just come and then do not mix.

If do not have good association with the Church of Christ then how can we spread out God's word?

We must ensure that we associate with the church for our edification now, knowing that we will have an eternal life of wonderful associates in God's paradise being The Millennium.