

Theme: Friends have a powerful influence upon us, so the wise person builds close relationships with people who will encourage them in prudent, healthy actions rather than emboldening them in foolish, harmful habits.

I. Intro - Pinocchio Tries To Become A Real Boy

- A. Classic Disney cartoon (different than the book!)
- B. Pinocchio has to prove he is “brave, truthful, and unselfish”
- C. He listens to bad characters, and things get worse!
- D. It almost ends in disaster! Friends have great influence!
- E. How do we choose friends/companions wisely?

II. The Influence of Friends

- A. Friends have great influence
 - He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20
 - 1. Who we walk with, our companions, in view
 - 2. Our companions can either be wise or foolish
 - 3. Who I choose to spend time with has a direct relationship to how things go in my life.
 - 4. This is primarily because we become like those we choose to invest time with
 - 5. This is not speaking of general friendship, but rather walking out life with people - those whom we count as our closest friends
- B. This influence can be for our good or harm
 - 1. If we walk with the wise we grow wiser

- 2. If we walk with fools we become foolish - and suffer the consequences!
- 3. One of the most important decisions in life is with whom I will choose to invest my time. This choice will have a huge influence on the direction and results of my life.
- 4. This is true when choosing friends, a spouse, business partners - any important relationship in life.

C. This is an important biblical principle

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. Psalm 1:1

Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” 1 Corinthians 15:33

- 1. The wise walk the path of blessing, which is not in the company of foolish, wicked people who mock God and His ways.
- 2. We are warned: bad company will corrupt character. (This was a quote by Greek poet Menander)
- 3. Like the old saying “One bad apple spoils the whole bunch” - this is actually true, as a rotten apple releases large amounts of ethylene which cause the other fruit to ripen too quickly and become rotten!
- 4. The good fruit does not cause the rotten fruit to become good - the corruption spreads and ruins the good fruit too.
- 5. Again - this is not speaking of hermetically sealing myself off from anyone not walking with Christ. But it is speaking about the character and worldview of the group I choose to surround myself with.

III. LifeHack: Choosing Friends Wisely

A. Choose wise and righteous friends

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20

1. We can not grow wise by walking with fools

2. In Proverbs, this includes morality and a desire to know and walk with God and in His paths

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. Prov. 1:7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Proverbs 9:10

a. The beginning of wisdom is fearing Yahweh

b. Fools are those who despise God, His wisdom, His ways

c. No matter how smart someone may be, or how successful in worldly terms, if they do not know, love, serve, and obey God, they are not wise but rather fools.

3. The path of the wise vs. the paths of the foolish

I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. ¹² When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble... ¹⁸ The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. ¹⁹ But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble. Proverbs 4:11–12, 18–19

a. The wise help us to walk in God's paths of righteousness, while fools tread paths of wickedness.

b. The way of the wise is the path of light, while the way of the fool is the path of evil and wickedness.

B. Choose friends who encourage and strengthen you in your walk with God

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

1. We need friends who will sharpen us to fulfill God's desires and call for us.

2. Conversely, we do not need those who dull our desire to know, love, and serve God.

3. We need those who encourage us to walk with God, not those who discourage us in our walk with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. 1 Thess 5:11

4. We need friends who will strengthen us against the deceitfulness of sin. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Hebrews 3:13

5. Biblical examples of a wise and foolish choice of companions

a. David and Jonathan

And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. 1 Sam 23:16

b. Solomon and his wives

As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. ⁵ He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. 1 Kings 11:4–5

- C. Choose friends who will give wise counsel - and rebuke if necessary - and listen!

Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel. Proverbs 27:9

1. Wise friends give earnest counsel, pointing us to God and the path of wisdom and godliness.
2. One who does not give good advice, even when it includes warning and correction, is not really a friend.
3. But we must be willing to listen and heed the godly advice, and even embrace the rebuke
Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Proverbs 9:8
 - a. Our world is full of mockers who will not listen to rebukes - even those that come from God's Word!
 - b. To be wise, we must be willing to learn and be corrected
 - c. Who better to lovingly correct than a close friend?

- D. Choose friends who will be faithful in good times & bad

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. Proverbs 17:17

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24

1. True friends stick by you thru thick and thin, good and bad times, times of peace and adversity.
2. You do not have to worry if a true friend will abandon you in your time of need; they will not flee when the battle gets hot.

3. This is rare today. People will turn and walk away when it is convenient, making excuses for why they are abandoning their marriage, their church, their friends - do not be like that!
4. Like a fine wine, friendships mature and become better with years, but this can only happen if we walk faithfully with one another.

IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do my closest friendships follow this biblical wisdom?

1. Do they fit the pattern discussed above?
 - a. Are they wise and righteous?
 - b. Do they encourage and strengthen my walk with God?
 - c. Do they offer me wise counsel - and a rebuke if necessary?
 - d. Are they faithful, in good times and bad?
2. Do I have a few close friends who fit this description?

- B. Cultivating fruitful friendships

1. Pray and ask God to provide fruitful friendships
2. Become an active member of a local church!
3. Get in a connect group! This is the context for such friendships to grow.
4. Begin to share life together - weekly worship, connect groups, meals together, just hang out together
5. This can't happen with everyone, but it should happen with a couple or few people

C. The Table of Of Our Wise Friend

1. Jesus is the True, Wise, Friend Who sticks closer than a brother
2. He is the One Who loves at all times, and was born for adversity!
3. The Gospel - He bore our penalty, that we might be blessed
4. Come to His Table and receive from our True Friend

Fruitful Friendships

Proverbs 13:20

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Communion

Romans 15:5-6

Teaching keywords: Fellowship; community; correction; wisdom and Knowledge

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5–6

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but a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20