

Are My Friends A Blessing?

A strong warning is given in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'" Those with whom we surround ourselves will impact the kind of people we are. Some friends are a blessing, others can be a curse. Who should I choose as a friend? What does the Bible say?

Psalms 1:1 says a blessed man will make some choices:

"Walks not in the counsel of the ungodly," When our advisors are those who do not respect God, we set a course for disaster.

"Nor stands in the path of sinners," People who transgress the commands of God, will encourage you to be like them.

"Nor sits in the seat of the scornful." Those who are cruel and oppressive to others, will influence us to take on those same ways.

There is a very deceptive nature of peer pressure. We don't always see the influence that others have on us. Notice in the passage above that first we **walk**, then **stand**, then **sit** down with those who are evil. We can become comfortable with things that should shock us.

Choose your companions carefully. Real friends help you to please God. We would love to be your true friend and teach you God's way.

- by Paul Adams

Winning Last Place

We live in a society that is sports crazy. We love football and fishing, racing and wrestling, soccer and softball -- not to mention baseball, basketball and golf. Nearly all of us have had the experience of cheering for our team or favorite player to win, whether the contest was professional, college, high school or just the youth league team that our child or grandchild played on. And many of us have participated in sports ourselves. We've personally experienced "the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat."

From a spiritual perspective, sports are not necessarily a bad thing. According to the Bible, sports teach us important lessons about disciplining ourselves when striving for a goal (1 Corinthians 9:24-27), playing by the rules (2 Timothy 2:5), and running with endurance (Hebrews 12:1). Obviously, we can allow sports to become a bad thing if we place too much importance on them or allow them to crowd out spiritual concerns. But sports can also impact us negatively in other ways. They can train us to be too competitive, self-seeking, and ambitious -- too concerned with winning at all costs.

In most sports competitions, everyone wants first place. But there are times in the life of every Christian when he should seek last place. In Mark 9:35, Jesus told the twelve apostles, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees because "They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues" (Matthew 23:6). He told His disciples, "But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place . . ." (Luke 14:10).

The Bible reveals that we should be striving to win last place in our relationships with others! "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself." (Philippians 2:3). ". . . Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."" (1 Peter 5:5). ". . . Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion." (Romans 12:16).

Here are some practical suggestions for winning last place. The next time that you disagree with a brother in an area of judgment or opinion, insist that your brother get his way. The next time that your wife or husband neglects to do a chore that merely benefits you, do it yourself. The next time they are looking for a volunteer at work to do some menial task, volunteer! Win last place!

What Do Ye More Than Others?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus asked a penetrating question: “*If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, **what do ye more than others?** do not even the publicans so?*” (Matthew 5:46-47). The immediate context discusses our treatment of others. It specifically instructs us to do good, even to those who have shown themselves to be our enemies. This is a difficult challenge for us all.

The principle of **‘what do ye more than others’** has wide application to all of our service for the Lord. Consider:

1) Bible study: If the only time you open your Bible is an occasional flipping of the pages during the Sunday morning worship service, then we would suggest that you aren’t doing anything more than most other people do in our Biblically illiterate society. A regular habit of genuine Bible reading and study is rare in our day and time. Are you such a student, or are you only doing what most other folks do?

2) Attendance: All the statistics indicate that church attendance is way down in our culture. Few people attend services on a regular weekly basis. Other activities (mostly recreational) keep people away. What about you? Are you different from the majority? Do you conscientiously adjust your schedule so that you can be present all the time?

3) Giving: It is common for folks to contribute a few dollars on any given Sunday. Typically this is money that is ‘left over’ after personal wants and wishes have been fulfilled – it’s not a high priority budget matter – it’s sort of an after thought. The Scriptures teach that our giving ought to be carefully planned and sacrificially offered (1 Cor. 16:1,2; 2 Cor. 9:6,7), Are you doing more than others in regards to your giving?

4) Evangelism: We’ve all heard that no one should discuss politics or religion. But in reality almost everyone these days will discuss politics – while religion remains seriously ‘off limits’. Do you agree with this common approach? Do you keep your faith to yourself? Or, are you willing to let others know where you stand and what you believe?

5) Purity of life: Jesus said, “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (Matthew 5:8). But the world promotes an entirely different lifestyle. Filthy movies and dirty TV shows, immoral content and pornography on the Internet, sexual sins, drinking alcohol, dancing, gambling – all these are typical among those in the world, and unfortunately among many who call themselves Christians. Are you just following the crowd, doing no more and no different from others? Or, are you striving to live the pure moral life that the Lord desires?

“What do ye more than others?” That’s a worthy question for us all to consider. What about your life, your example, your devotion to the Lord? Think!