

Beware Of Your Friends

By Robert W. Goodman

Friends are one of the great treasures in life. Being social creatures, we are not made to be happy alone. Friends can cheer, comfort, help and share the good and bad times together. Life without friends would be unthinkable. But, do we realize friends can be our greatest enemies? We are warned, "Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man," (Proverbs 22:24 ESV). We are to beware of evil associates – "*Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals'*" (I Corinthians 15:33). Do we realize this could possibly include our friends?

David's son, Amnon, had a lustful desire for his half-sister, but he restrained himself toward her. The story does not end there. The Bible tell us, Amnon "forced" his sister because of the suggestion of his best friend, Jonadab (II Samuel 13:3). If Amnon had been more careful in the choosing of his friend, much trouble, sin and heartache could have been avoided.

Jesus was betrayed, not by the Sadducees, Pharisees or scribes, but by His "*familiar friend*" (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18; Matthew 26:50). He warned His disciples they would be betrayed by friends and family (Luke 21:16).

I do not think outspoken atheists will keep many from Bible study and worship, but I know "friends" can and do. There are a lot of liquor advertisements today and many scenes in movies and on television showing drinking under favorable conditions. From what I have heard, the greatest danger for people, especially the young, who drink comes from the well-meaning drinking friend who thinks he is doing us a favor by insisting we drink with him.

No doubt you are aware that most of the homicides in Houston are not committed by strangers, but by friends and acquaintances. People are not ordinarily led into sexual immorality by those who are unknown, certainly not by their enemies. Our language is not corrupted by hateful people for whom we have no use.

This article is not designed to fill you with suspicion about all your friends. Well-chosen friends help bring out the best in us and assist us on the road to heaven. "*Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another*" (Pro. 27:17).

Choose your friends wisely for your friends can be great benefactors or your greatest enemies!

Friends are people we enjoy spending time with. A friend is someone you choose to be around, because you share interests with them and benefit from their companionship.

We may categorize different levels of friendship: *Casual Friends* (school or work), *Family Friends* (siblings or cousins), *Close Friends* (we talk with nearly every day).

However, the truth brother Goodman reveals in his article apply to each and every one of these.

Tonight we will look at some specific characteristics that we should require of our friends, but first a most critical and telling question must be answered:

Would you end a friendship with a person who is detrimental to your faith?

(Matthew 10:34-36; James 4:4; II Corinthians 6:14-17)

Once we have established that friends have a powerful impact on our lives and that Christians are responsible to surround themselves with good influences, we are ready to ask this question:

What are the Top 3 Characteristics of a Good Friend?

1) Must Respect GOD.

(Ephesians 5:7-13)

2) Must Respect YOU.

(Philippians 2:3-4)

3) Must Respect SELF.

(II Timothy 3:1-5)

As brother Goodman pointed out, these characteristics should manifest in 3 Important Ways:

A Friend Loves and Pursues PEACE.

(Ephesians 4:29; I Peter 3:9-10)

A Friend Helps You Flee LUST.

(II Samuel 13:1-5; Galatians 6:1-2)

A Friend is Someone You Can TRUST.

(Proverbs 16:28; 17:9)

Being a faithful Christian is about setting up an environment for success. And the most influential part of your environment are the people you surround yourself with. Choose wisely.

Have you found a friend in Jesus? He's everything to me. He's the fairest of 10,000 to my soul.

John 15:13-15 – He is the most important, most loving, and most beneficial friend you can have.

Seek a friendship with Jesus. Acknowledge His sacrifice, His message of life, and obey Him.

Then seek to surround yourself with people, spend time with people, who bring you closer to Him!