

## Friends – 1 Cor. 15:33

Sometimes we meet people that quickly forget us and sometimes we meet people that we quickly forget; but there are other times we meet people we never forget – they are friends. A friend is a special thing. A true friend is a person that you can depend on at all times and in all circumstances. A person like that in our lives is a true blessing from God. And yet, as important as friends are, we must be careful to have the right kind of friends because if we choose the wrong type of friends, that friend can be more hurtful than helpful. Friends have a way of influencing us. They tend to shape the direction of our lives. It's been said that life is partly what you make it and partly what is made by who you choose as friends. Our friends make a difference in the kind of people we are and the kind of people we become.

Paul understood the importance of friends. **(1 Cor. 15:33) *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*** He is talking about the importance of friends and in that context there are three things that I want us to notice together.

**FIRST- THE DESIRE FOR CLOSE FRIENDS.** Paul says ***evil communications corrupt good manners.*** That wording may be a bit misleading to us today because we think of “communication” as a conversation where we discuss something with someone else. But the Greek word “*homilia*” is broader in scope and embraces the idea of “companionship.” Some versions read “evil companionship.” *Homilia* means a close association and here is describing a close association between friends. Everybody wants to have a friend; somebody that they can talk and/or share with. *One of the wealthiest men that ever lived was Howard Hughes and at the height of his career he said, “I’d give it all up for one true friend.”*

Friends don't come automatically. Solomon emphasized that point in one of his proverbs. **(Prov 18:24) *A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*** Solomon tells us several things in this passage about friends.

**He begins by talking about the building of friendships. *A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly.*** In order to have a friend, you must be a friend. In order to have someone in your life that you can trust to be there thru thick/thin, you must first be that kind of person. The poet put it like this: *I went out to find a friend but could not find one there. Then I went out to be a friend and there were friends everywhere.* Maybe we need to evaluate our lives and consider the thought, “Would I want someone like me as a friend?”

**Secondly, Solomon talks about the blessing of friendships. *There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*** Solomon is talking about a friendship that is developed with a person that is closer and stronger than the relationship that you have with blood kin. This portrays the faithfulness/loyalty of a friend. This same idea is seen in **(Pro 17:17) *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*** A friend is someone that you can count on at all times and in any circumstance and what a blessing it is to have that kind of person in your life. It's been said that *money will make you wealthy but a real friend will make you rich.*

**SECOND – THE DANGER OF CORRUPTIBLE FRIENDS. (1 Cor. 15:33) *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*** Paul is not talking about that close friend that sticketh closer than a brother but rather that bad friend that hurts more than the helps. He's speaking of the kind of friend that will corrupt you. Unfortunately that's the kind of friends that a lot of people have. Frequently as you visit with people that are in trouble they will say, “*I just got in with the wrong crowd!*” And sad to say, that's the story that is repeated far too often. This is what Paul is addressing

here, running with the wrong crowd. ***Evil companionships corrupt good manners*** (morals). That word “corrupt” is a word that means to shrivel/ dry-up. Image that you have a beautiful rosebush in your yard that is just covered with roses and one day a lawn man spraying some weeds got too close to that rosebush and some of the weed-killer got on it and in a few days the pedals begin to fall and the bush slowly shrivel away and dies. Evil companionships have a way of killing what is the best within us.

Again Proverbs has so much to say about friendships. (***Prov. 22:24***) ***Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: (25) Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.*** When you choose a friend, you should look at the qualities in their lives and what you see may very well be the reflection of your own life in the future. Solomon says that you will learn the ways of a bad friend and his ways will be a snare to your soul. (***Prov. 13:20***) ***He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*** There are friends that are more harmful than helpful.

The wrong kind of friend can cause a spiritual departure in your life. Paul says ***be not deceived*** and that word “deceived” means “to lead astray.” So the warning is that the wrong kind of friend will lead you down the wrong path and pull you away from God and your faith. There are people who were once so active and involved in living the Christian life and over a period of time their interest and enthusiasm begins to diminish a little bit. Then they become a little more lax in their attendance to worship and then eventually they disappear completely. Then you look at the crowd that they are running with and you understand why. They were being influenced by the wrong kind of friends. They will lead you off the right path.

Not only will they cause a spiritual departure, they will cause a moral decline. ***Evil companionships corrupt good manners.*** The term “manners” is different than what we think about. We associate manners with being polite – say “yes/no sir, opening the door for someone, etc. But that’s not what the word in this verse means. The word here refers to a person’s character/morals; his manner of behavior. ***Evil companionships corrupt good morals.*** It will take a toll in your character. The wrong kind of friend not only pulls you away, but he also pulls you down. This is why we see people doing things that they would never envision themselves doing. They never imagined themselves getting involved this kind of behavior, but they did and it started because they made the wrong kind of friends.

If you just make friends indiscriminately you are headed for trouble. There ought to be some standards by which you select your friends. We have standards in what we will accept and not accept in almost every area of life and likewise in the friends that we choose. There needs to be some boundaries to which we will not cross just to have a person as a friend. The person who forms friendship indiscriminately w/o any standards is going to come to ruin. So choose your friends carefully.

Let me give you an example found in 2 Sam 13. Here we find King David having a daughter named Tamar. She had a half-brother named Amnon and Amnon looked at Tamar with lust and wanted to take advantage of her; but the scripture says he vexed himself because he didn’t know how to go about it. The problem was that he wanted to satisfy his own passions at the expense of his sister. Amnon had a friend. He was his cousin and the passage says he was (***2 Sam 13:3***) ***But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man.*** A “subtil man” was a cunning man.

Well Amnon explained his situation to ole Jonadab and in a cunning way he immediately came up with a solution. You go home and get in bed and pretend to be sick. The when your Dad comes to

see you tell him that you aren't feeling very well and wish he'd get Tamar to come over fix you something to eat.

That's what Amnon did. He got into bed and told King David that he was sick and needed Tamar to come and nurse him and sure enough Tamar soon came and fixed Amnon that meal. Amnon sent all the others out which left Tamar alone with him. He asked her to come and feed me and when she got close he grabbed her and forced her – he raped her. Now Amnon would not have thought of that scheme on his own; but it was the influence of the wrong kind of friend. George Washington once said, “Associate yourself with men of good qualities if you esteem your own reputation. For it is better to be alone than in bad company.” It is better not to have any friends at all than it is to have the wrong kind of friends.

**NO. 3 THE DEMAND FOR CHRISTIAN FRIEND.** If you want to avoid the wrong kind of friends, then you need to choose the right kind of friends. If you want to be a strong Christian, then you need to choose strong Christian friends. This is important because: **no. 1 they share the same values.** God has set some boundaries/limits and has defined some things as right and some things as wrong. Not everybody accepts these limits about right/wrong and when you associate with the wrong kind of friend then they are going to encourage you to step over the boundary. But when you have the right kind of friend with similar values as you they will never encourage you to do the wrong thing. Now let me qualify this. I'm speaking of a “real Christian friend.” We all understand that not everybody who claims to be a Christian acts like a Christian. But when you get a real Christian friend they will share the same spiritual values as you and will encourage you to do right.

**No. 2. You share the same vision.** They have the same spiritual purpose/goal/ambition in life; which is to please God and go to heaven. When you are around a good friend with similar values and vision, you will bring out the very best with one another. **(Pro 27:17) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.** Metal against metal adds a little sharper edge; it will bring out the best. So it is with a good Christian friend. He will sharpen your character and bring out the best in you. Don't have a friend who brings out the worst in you and dulls your character but instead have a friend who has the same vision that you have.

*Years ago there was a preacher in London named Charles Spurgeon, and one day a young lady came to his office. She was dating a young man who wasn't a Christian nor did he share her same values. She was bothered some because Spurgeon had preached a sermon about the importance of marrying a Christian and having Christian friends. She said, “He may not be a Christian but I am and I think I can help him.” Spurgeon asked the young lady to come over and hop up on the edge of his desk, which she did. While sitting in his chair, he took her by the hand and said, “OK, pull me up.” She tugged/strained/pulled but could not pull him up from the chair. The Spurgeon jerked a little bit and easily pulled her off that desk. The he said, “It's a whole lot easier for me to pull you down than for you to pull me up; and that's the way it is with friends. It's a whole lot easier for bad friends to pull you down than it is for you to pull him up.” So choose the kind of friend that will be a blessing to you. Of all the friends that you can have, there are none equal to the Lord Jesus Christ. **(John 15:14) Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. (15) Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.***

Jesus can bless you life like no other. Is He your friend today?

Have you obeyed the commandments of Jesus?