

The Power of Peers

A Study of Proverbs: Proverbs 1:8-33

“Do not protect yourself by a fence, but rather by your friends.” – Czech Proverb

Friendships are more valuable than any jewels or material wealth.

Why can friends be so valuable?

What are some of the qualities of a good friend?

Friends can be a very good thing in a person's life. They can help us see a little more clearly, carry us when we are struggling, and encourage us when we need it most.

Have you had a time when a friend came through and helped out? What was it like?

Although, friends can be very good, friends can also be very bad. Some friends tend to find trouble and share it with others. They have this ability to get you caught doing something that you shouldn't have been doing.

Describe a time when a group of friends got you into trouble.

I guess it is true. Be careful who your friends are.

Solomon knows this and right after explaining what real wisdom is, he talks about picking the right friends. In fact, the very first word in verse eight is “HEAR!”

If **they** say, "Come with **us**, let **us** lie in wait for blood, let **us** ambush the innocent without cause; let **us** swallow them alive like Sheol, even whole, as those who go down to the pit; we will find all kinds of precious wealth, **we** will fill our houses with spoil; throw in your lot with **us**, **we** shall all have one purse,"

Proverbs 1:11-14

Maybe you have had the experience of talking with a child and asking, "Did you hear me?" The child's response is, "Of, course." You say, "What did I say?" and there is a blank response.

"Hear!" It has the meaning to listen to or internalize and obey. Solomon wants to make sure that what is about to be said is not just passed over, but that it is internalized.

The wisdom begins with a talk about friends. There are two different sets of friends that this father talks about. They have some things in common.

There is a call for you to join them.

There is action.

There is investment

There are results for both.

Why are peer groups so tempting?

Why is it often easier to sin in a group?

This father is giving advice to his son and challenging him to think through who he chooses as his friends. Here is how it plays out.

Read verses 10-19.

The sinners tend to come in groups. – The father begins to share about the set of friends that every parent wants to keep their kids away from, but take a moment and reread the passage only this time notice the group mentality.

They . . . Us . . . We . . . Nine times in verses 11 through 14 there is the reference to a group. It is a gang trying to add to its ranks. It is the classic line, "Everyone is doing it."

The sinners promise that everyone will have a fair share. – Socialism at its worst. Now some of you may know history, but did you realize

The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:4-5

that socialism dates as far back as the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3 records the serpent's promise that if Woman eats of the tree she will be like God. In other words, the playing field will be leveled. Everyone will have the same.

And the rest is history – unfortunately.

This father is warning his son that they will try to convince him that having one purse is better for everyone. Verse 14 should be compared with verse 19. In the end, no amount of possessions can help when your own life is forfeit.

The sinners promise they will be the strongest. – This group of people seems to think that they hold the power of death in their hands. They think that they can strike fear in others. Notice verse 12. This band of brothers believes that they are able to take charge, but verse 12 goes with verse 18. They destroy their own lives.

The sinners promise quick and easy wealth. – We have all heard the get-rich-quick plans. The only people that get-rich-quick are those who sell the info. There is this promise that there are great riches and wealth, but everything will be lost.

Have you ever had a time when you were promised a fair share, to be with the strongest, or get easy wealth? What happened?

"It's too good to be true!" usually means that it is too good to be true. This is not to say that everything is suspect, but wisdom, which is what this study is about, tells us that we must be careful.

Remember, the father is warning his son not to be enticed. This is a strong word meaning to deceive, persuade, or dup. It is the type of word that would describe a swindler or even someone trying to seduce another.

Have you ever been swindled? How did you feel afterwards?

"Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: "How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing fools hate knowledge? "Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you."

Proverbs 1:20-23

There is hope. There is the other side. Read 1:20-33.

The first action wisdom takes is shouting in the streets. Take a moment and think about how this is different from the group of sinners.

It seems that when reading about the sinners, they are sneaking around and hiding. They are trying to do things undercover.

Wisdom has no problem with shouting in the streets because wisdom has nothing to hide. However there are similarities between the two.

Wisdom is calling out while sinners are enticing.

Wisdom is in the streets while sinners are in hiding.

Wisdom offers investment while sinners offer money.

Wisdom gives counsel while sinners use force.

As father continues to warn his son, he shares that wisdom is calling out in the streets for someone to sit and listen, but no one does.

Why is it that no one seems to pay attention to wisdom?

It may be because of time and not having enough to sit and listen, it may be our schedules are too full so we want the Reader's Digest version, but in the end it comes down to what I want, that is, self-centeredness.

I want something that will be quick, easy, and cost me nothing. I want something that will answer questions and solve problems with little thought or energy from me.

I am not willing to put in the time or energy it takes. I am reminded of an older karate movie. The master was having the student wax cars. He waxed cars for hours on end. When he finished the master had him paint the house. This went on for some time. Finally, the student became frustrated because he was wanting to learn karate, not waste time and energy doing jobs.

"But he who listens to
me shall live securely
And will be at ease from
the dread of evil."

Proverbs 1:33

If you know the movie, you will remember that the master showed the student how waxing cars and painting houses disciplined him for karate.

Wisdom is calling out. There is no excuse to not hear the call. It will take time. It will take work. It will not be a quick and easy fix, but notice what the end result will be.

Notice verse 33.

Most people would want to live securely and know that what they have done will not come back to destroy them.

So, who will you pick to be friends with?

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

