

CHOOSE YOUR ASSOCIATES WISELY!

Note to the speaker:

Explain why it is wise to be selective regarding whom we associate with. Contrast the effects of good associates and of bad ones, and encourage all to associate with those who have God's approval

ASSOCIATES ARE POWERFUL INFLUENCES (8 min.)

Associates can influence us for good or bad (Read Proverbs 13:20)

Hebrew word for "stupid" implies being insensible to moral truth

"Wise persons" act with sensibleness and discretion, use sound judgment and avoid dangers

David appreciated the value of good associates (Ps 64:2; 142:7)

He desired Jehovah's friendship, realizing it was not possible if he associated with wicked men (Consider pertinent verses of Psalm 26 and stress their practical value)

David benefited from friendship of Jonathan, some 30 years his senior (1Sa 18:1-4; 23:16-18; w89 1/1 24-5)

Association with wrongdoers has led some to spiritual ruin (1Co 15:33)

Has resulted in immoral conduct and addiction to alcohol, drugs (w93 8/1 19; yp 65-7; g89 4/22 12-14)

Heeding the Bible's straightforward counsel and clear direction on the matter of association will safeguard us from being misled

APPRECIATE NEED TO HAVE SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS (15 min.)

Paul tells of rich rewards from gathering together (Heb 10:23-25)

Even Jehovah, complete in himself, saw value of companionship with others

Surrounded himself with myriads of spirit sons, who received blessings from his association (Job 38:4-7; Da 7:10)

Unfaithful angels who abandoned association with Jehovah lost valuable benefits and future prospects (2Pe 2:4)

True spiritual companionship a protection against depression, doubts, and falling prey to Satan

Satan seeks to devour all sheeplike ones (1Pe 5:8, 9)

Tries to get them isolated from the congregation and involved in worldly pursuits (wt 72-5)

Isolation can result in spiritual sickness, apostasy, and death (Pr 18:1; w54 9/15 568)

Thus, "do not stay away from the meetings" (Heb 10:25, *The Jerusalem Bible*)

Choose exemplary associates among God's people (2Ti 2:20, 21; w93 4/15 15)

Select those who will exert wholesome, upbuilding influence on us and our decisions

Work to develop desirable qualities in ourselves so we will be valued associates of others

Be especially guided by Bible principles in choosing marriage mate (w88 11/1 15-16)

Shun developing any romantic interest in one 'not in the Lord' (1Co 7:39)

Consider as a possible associate for life only one who has demonstrated faithfulness and spiritual qualifications

Serious decision, since marriage mates will have lifelong influence on each other

AVOID ASSOCIATION WITH WRONGDOERS (14 min.)

Bible's counsel clearly warns against the bad influence of wrongdoers (Ex 23:2; 1Co 5:6; 2Pe 2:2)

Youths and adults alike need to be selective in choosing companions

Avoid unnecessary association with worldlings (Joh 15:19; 17:14; 1Co 5:9-11)

These may be considered "good" persons, but they have not shown themselves to be "wise persons" who fear Jehovah

Youths wisely avoid association with unbelievers at school proms, in extracurricular activities, and on other occasions (sj 22-5)

Adults similarly follow Christian principles when invited to class reunions, office parties, or other social functions

We must also carefully select reading material, movies, television programs, and so forth (Eph 5:3, 4; Col 3:5-10; yp 283-8)

Identifying with soap opera characters who depict unclean conduct will corrupt good thinking (w82 12/1 3-7)

Apostate literature is aimed at 'corrupting away' our minds and calls for special wariness (2Co 11:3, 4)

Foolhardy to expose ourselves to association with such ones through their literature (2Co 11:13-15; Tit 3:9, 10)

Such literature is poisonous and designed to deceive (1Jo 2:19; 2Jo 8-11; w94 7/1 11-13; w86 3/15 12-14)

Fill lives with godly influences (Pr 4:23; Php 4:8, 9)

WALK WITH JEHOVAH AND ASSOCIATE WITH HIS PEOPLE (8 min.)

Faithful servants of Jehovah have continually sought his association (Pr 3:32; Mic 4:5)

Joseph kept Jehovah before him constantly, resulting in moral protection (Ge 39:9)

Moses was guided by “the One who is invisible” (Heb 11:27)
Placing Jehovah at his right hand kept David from tottering (Ps 16:8)
Walking with Jehovah brings many benefits (Php 4:6, 7; *w85* 9/1 5-7)
Must make appointment to ‘walk with God’ (Am 3:3)
Develop a close relationship with him (Jas 4:7, 8)
Wholesome human fellowship provided in Jehovah’s clean organization
Here we find others wholly devoted to God and producing fruitage of his spirit (Ps 122:1; 1Co 16:17, 18; *w92* 9/15 26; *w89* 6/15 20)
Do we regularly attend all meetings, assemblies, and conventions with God’s loyal ones? (Ps 119:63)
Can “widen out” in our association before and after meetings (2Co 6:11-13; *wt* 149-50)
Our faithful brothers also need to be built up (1Th 5:11)
Lovingly help them to maintain active association at meetings and in field service
Like David’s friendship with Jonathan, we can develop similar friendship within the Christian congregation (2Sa 1:26)
Those whose expressions truly incite us “to love and fine works” are loyal friends (Heb 10:24; Lu 6:45)
With everlasting life in view, choose your associates wisely!
(Adhere closely to the outlined material, and observe the indicated timing of each section. Not all cited texts need be read)