

“EVIL COMPANIONS CORRUPT GOOD MORALS”

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Aren't friends **great?!** Look around you today and what do you see? Friends—**lots** of friends! Yes, friends are wonderful. In fact, the Bible says, “A friend loves at all times” (Proverbs 17:17). God's Word also reminds us that “there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). If we have a friend who is closer to us than a relative like a brother or a sister, then that person must be **very special** indeed. And some of us have friends who are just like that, don't we? They are people in whom we trust, people on whom we can always depend, and people whom we genuinely love.

Good friends not only are a joy to be with, but they also help **us** be better people. For example, have you ever noticed how being around friends who do what is right, who are honest, and who respect others, causes **us** to want to do what is right, be honest, and respect others, too? The apostle Paul once wrote: “No one lives to himself, and no one dies to himself” (Romans 14:7). You may have heard the old saying, “No man is an island,” which makes the same point that Paul was making: people around us have an effect on **us**, and **we** have an effect on **them**.

But if friends who act **right** can encourage us to want to act right, what might friends who act **wrong** cause us to do? Have you ever done something wrong because you were with someone else who was doing something wrong? It is easier for **us** to do something wrong, it seems, if **others around us** are doing something wrong. Moses knew that—which is why he warned the Israelites: “Do not follow a crowd to do evil!” (Exodus 23:2). Moses wanted the Israelites to realize that being around people who “do evil” could influence them to do things that were wrong, too. In fact, the Bible gives us the perfect example of a man who did not choose his companions correctly—and who paid a terrible price for his poor choices.

His name was Solomon, and he was the wisest human ever to have lived on Earth. God repeatedly warned the Israelites about becoming friends with, or marrying, people around them who “did evil.” God told Solomon, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you—because they will surely turn away your hearts after their gods” (1 Kings 11:2). But Solomon did not listen to the Lord's warning. Instead, he made friends with evil people, and even married some of their women. Sadly, the Bible says that “Solomon's wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God” (1 Kings 11:4). Solomon's pagan wives convinced him to build temples filled with idols to false gods. Eventually, the Israelites began worshiping those gods, too. Because **one man** chose to associate with the wrong individuals, God's people abandoned Him—and ended up suffering horribly because of it. This is why, many years later, Paul told first-century Christians, “Do not be deceived; evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Corinthians 15:33). The New King James Version puts it like this: “Do not be deceived: bad company ruins good morals.” Yes, it certainly does!

What do you think would eventually happen to me if I started running around with people who smoked, drank alcohol, and used illegal drugs, and never went to church? What effect do you think it would have on me if the friends with whom I associate on a daily basis used curse words, disrespected their teachers at school, took God's name in vain, and made fun of those who are physically or mentally handicapped in some way? Solomon learned the answers to those kinds of questions the hard way. He ignored God's warnings to stay away from evil people, and instead chose to not only associate with them, but to marry some of them! As a result, he ended up setting the stage for his kingdom to be split in half upon his death.

God knows what is best for us—**because He created us!** If God tells us in His Word that “bad company ruins good morals,” we need to take His warning seriously and seek to spend time with friends who are “good company” rather than “bad company.” Let's face it: the company we keep **does** affect how we act. Let it never be said of us that “bad company” ruined **our** “good morals” like it did King Solomon's—because if that happens, we very likely will miss out on getting to go to heaven. And if **that** happens, then we will end up in **hell**—where there will be **nothing but evil people!** Who would want to live **there** forever?