

Text: Pr. 13.20

Today is a topical study in Proverbs about good and bad influences and associations.

I. The stark choice of influencers (Pr 13.20)

Pr 13.20 He who walks with wise men will be wise,
But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Key words: “walks” = **discipleship**;
“companion” = one who **“hangs out”**

‘Walk with’ implies discipleship: “being ‘under the instruction, encouragement and example.’”¹

Compare the “companion at the corner store”

- One who associates with gluttons (28.7)
- One who associates with prostitutes (29.3)
- One who associates with a hothead (22.24)

All negative

Fools shape a man, just as wise men do

John Knox translated this verselet from the Vulgate: “Fool he ends that fool befriends.”²

II. The proverbial data on influence makers**A. The Influence of evil men (Pr 1.8-19, 20-33)****1. Key verses:**

- a. The **voice of father and mother** (8)
- b. The **voice of sinners** (10)
- c. The **admonished direction** (15)*
- d. The **folly of one’s own way** (31-32)

¹ Bridges, quoted in Bruce K Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004), 571.

² John Knox, quoted in Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 17 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964), 99.

2. Where is wisdom? (20-23)

- a. In the **streets**
- b. Characteristics of her speech in this passage: **reproof & rebuke**

The first thing we must learn about our associations is that they are all complicated by our sin nature.

Also note: Wisdom walks the streets alone

3. Entanglements, the **consequences** of bad associations

- a. **Suretyship**: entangled in the **bad character** of another (6.1-5)
- b. **Strange woman**: entangled by the **deceit** of the short-term view (7.24-27)

Many applications, more than merely immoral relations: we have lusts for many unwise things.

- c. **Changeable**: entangled by **risky irresolution** (24.21-22)
- d. **Disgrace**: entangling your **family** with your associations (28.7)

4. Degradation, the **personal fruit** of bad associations

- a. You will learn the **ways** of an angry man (22.24-25)
- b. You will learn the **words** of evil men (24.1-2)

B. The influence of good men

1. "My son, if you will receive my words..." (2.1)
 - a. First wise association – a **wise father**
 - b. First consequence – **develop** your **own wisdom** (2.10-11)
 - c. Final consequence – you will **walk** with good men (2.20-21)

2. He who walks with **wise men** will be wise... (13.20)

3. The good friend

- a. Born for **adversity** (17.17)
- b. Closer than a **brother** (18.24)
- c. Speaks **truth** to me (27.6) making the heart **glad** (27.9)
- d. **Sharpens** my character (27.17)

III. The application of wisdom to influences in your life

A. **Correct** your relationships with bad influences

1. Voluntary associations are in mind here: you aren't *required* to have these relationships
2. When these relationships are a problem
 - a. You are entangled in their *chaos*
 - b. You are adopting their thinking / errors / judgements (corrupting influence)
 - c. You are drawn away from spiritual activities
 - 1) Faithful attendance of worship services
 - 2) Daily Bible reading and prayer

B. **Counteract** unavoidable contact with bad influences

1. Involuntary associations are in mind here: you are *required* to have these relationships (work, family)
2. The solution is two pronged:
 - a. Limit the companionship aspect of the relationship
 - b. Lead the evangelistic side of the relationship

C. **Cultivate** the best relationships with good influences

1. Be involved with the Christians in a good Bible-preaching church
2. Pursue Christian sources of thinking (with discernment)

D. **Consider** the need for **discernment** between good and weak influences

1. Remember the teachings of Proverbs on influence
 - a. The consequences are not immediate for both bad or good influences
 - b. Some influences will seem good but in the long term be bad (weak Christians, worldly Christians, aberrant Christians)
2. Remember the influence your influences have on the ones you influence (e.g., your children are influenced through you)

Conclusion:

- In the American Civil War, a young woman in Tennessee had a sweetheart in the Confederate Army. He was captured and held in a prison camp.
- In the meantime, this young woman heard the gospel and was saved.
- Her sweetheart returned home after the war and the young couple married. He began to study the Bible with her and he, too, was saved. He began to preach and teach and lead others to Christ.
- They moved to Alabama, he got more training and became a pastor. He lead another man to the Lord who also became a preacher – this second man started more than 100 churches and baptized more than 6,000 people.
- One of the second man's converts also became a preacher who baptized 12,000 people, including his own son who also went into the ministry. At the point I read the story, that son had led over 3,000 folks to the Lord through his ministry.

That 'chain of influence' extended over 150 years and involved at least 21,000 souls.