

THE POWER OF ASSOCIATION

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There is a saying in the world that, “Birds of the same feather flock together”. This connotes the power of association. By association, I mean the people you keep close company with. It is all about the people you move with, people you hang out with, and people you call your friends.

Association is powerful in the sense that it influences all concerned in the relationship. Friendship is influence. A relationship (association) can have a positive or negative influence on one, depending on who is involved and the one that has a more imposing personality. Association brings great opportunities to one’s doorsteps. The Bible teaches that we be careful in deciding who we associate with because of the influential power of such relationship on those concerned.

1 Cor 15:33

33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

NIV

A good person can be influenced to become bad. This explains why children from godly parents, later in life become wayward and wicked in character despite all the foundational biblical teachings given to them by their parents. Because of the power of association (influence that comes from association), the word of God places some restrictions on God’s people on the kind of people they should associate with.

FIVE GREAT WARNINGS

1. Wrong association brings disgrace.

Prov 28:7

7 He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father.

NIV

Gluttons are heavy eaters and drinkers. They are lazy and money wasters. Their stomach is their god. They can’t fast because they cannot afford to stay without food. They are selfish and self-centered in lifestyle. Gluttony is sin before God. And God does not want his people to keep company with such people, not to talk of practicing their lifestyle. If you keep company with them, you will be influenced to live like them.

2. Don’t keep company with a man given to anger.

Prov 22:24-25

24 Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, 25 or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared.

NIV

We all learn by observation. Everything seen and heard goes into the mind of man. Before you know what is happening, what you keep seeing and hearing starts affecting you. Consciously or unconsciously, you find yourself acting the same way. What you saw as wrong, you now start seeing as right. Your sense of judgment changes based on the much you have seen and heard.

What you tolerate you can't fight, and what you can't fight will stay in your life. Heed God's warning. Keep away from hot-tempered people, so you don't become like them and ruin your life and relationships.

Take time to study on the evil of hot-temper – the damages that it does in people's life then you will know why God gave this warning. Marriages have been destroyed through anger. Relationships have been broken, families have been torn apart, businesses have been wrecked, and jobs lost, customers and clients driven away because of hot-temper. Many decisions and steps have been taken that resulted in grave consequences because of bad temper. It is like madness, and God hates it. Run from it. If hot-temper is your problem, get rid of it now. Go to Jesus Christ for help. Let your pastor help you in counseling.

3. Don't associate with an immoral man.

1 Cor 5:11

11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

NIV

IMMORAL: An immoral person is someone who has no morals. He or she is wicked and evil in conduct. He or she is wayward, ruled by lust, and sexually promiscuous.

GREEDY: Someone who is filled with greed. A greedy person is someone who is intensely desirous not because he needs it, because he wants it. Greed is strong desire for more food, wealth, etc, especially for more than is right or reasonable. A greedy person is covetous, acquisitive and insatiable in nature.

IDOLATER: An idolater is a worshipper of idols. Idols are not only carved images that men bow to in worship, but anything that takes the place of God in your life. Anything or anyone you so respect and love to the extent that you live contrary to the will and laws of God for the sake of that person or thing is an idol in your life.

SLANDERER: Is someone who is in the habit of making false statements that damages a person's reputation. A false witness is a slanderer. Saying things that are not correct about others is slandering. Running other people down with your mouth is slandering.

DRUNKARD: A drunkard is one who is in the habit of getting drunk with alcohol.

SWINDLER: A swindler is one who swindles others. To swindle is to cheat; get (money, etc out of somebody) by cheating. Dupers are swindlers.

These six categories of people, the word of God warns us not to associate with, especially those who call themselves, brothers but are practicing such evil. It is the normal thing for the people of this world to live such life, but is abnormal for a child of God. So, Paul advises God's people to stay away from people with such characters. Associating with them will expose God's people to the danger of being influenced to live such rotten and wicked life. Most of the evil habits and character you have in your life, you learnt by observation and association. All the people you had related with from your parents to brothers; friends, school mates, colleagues at work etc, had in one way or the other influenced you positively or negatively. When you come to terms with this truth, then you will heed God's warnings.

4. Do not associate with the disobedient.

2 Thess 3:14

14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.

NIV

James 4:4

4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

NIV

Don't pitch your tent with the enemies of God. Walk with the obedient and it will be well with you.

5. A companion of fools suffers harm.

Prov 13:20

20 He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.

NIV

Associate with the wise (the successful, intelligent, those who have direction) and you will soon be like them. If you associate with loafers, you will become a loafer. If you keep close company with those who are going nowhere and looking forward to nothing, very soon, you too will lose your vision and become like them. If you associate with those who are confused about what they want to become in life, it will not be long, you will become confused.

There is power in association. Because of this God always encourages his people not to associate (keep close company) with those who have not surrendered to his Lordship.

Lev 20:24

24 But I said to you, "You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations.

NIV

Lev 20:26

26 You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.

NIV

2 Cor 6:14-18

14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

NIV

There is power in association. A lot are struggling in their Christian life because they have surrounded themselves with unbelievers with horrible lifestyles. They are being pulled from two sides; as a result, their Christian life is fruitless and full of struggles. Today, they are in the church, tomorrow they are in the nightclub. Today, they are repenting of fornication, tomorrow they are back again to the same sin. Open your eyes child of God, and learn like King David to separate yourself from ungodly people who will not help you live a holy and blameless life before God.

Ps 101:1-8

I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will sing praise. 2 I will be careful to lead a blameless life--when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart. 3 I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. 4 Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil. 5 Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure. 6 My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me. 7 No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence. 8 Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land; I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the LORD.

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WISDOM FOR ASSOCIATION

- 1.** Some people are bad news. Avoid them.
- 2.** Associate with the right people - heavenly minded people.

3. Take time to know your friends to determine the extent of your relationship.
4. Always pray that God will unmask every person that seeks a relationship with you.
5. To be intimate with someone you do not know is to dine with the devil. And anything can happen. Prayerfully seek to understand the person before you get intimate.
6. Your friend can enhance your public image or mar it. Seek company with those who enhance it.
7. You will always move toward anyone who increases you. You are created with a desire to increase, a decrease is unnatural.
8. Never allow what people say about you to change your opinion of yourself. What you think of yourself is more important than what people think about you. People's opinion should not determine your opinion of yourself.
9. The problems you solve for others will create doors of favors for you. Be a problem-solver.
10. An act of kindness from you will attract acts of kindness towards you.
11. Do unto others what you will have them to do unto you. Like begets like.
12. Your rewards in life are determined by the problems you solve for others.
13. Whom and what you are willing to walk away from determines who and what God will bring to you.
14. Those who cannot increase you will inevitably decrease you.
15. Give another what he cannot find anywhere else and he will keep returning.
16. Those who transfer knowledge are also capable of transferring error.
17. You will be pursued for the problems you solve.
18. Anyone who is not a plus to your life is a minus, so minus that person from your life.
19. You will only be remembered for two things. The problems you solve or the ones you create.
20. When God wants to bless you, he puts a person in your life. When Satan wants to destroy you, he puts a person in your life. Watch out for the messengers.
21. Go where you are celebrated instead of where you are tolerated.
22. Every relationship in your life is a current moving toward your dreams or away from them.
23. You need to walk with winners to understand winning and be a winner.
24. God causes men to give and help him that has given and helped others.
25. Problems-solvers usually get favored. Don't be a problem but a problem-solver.
26. God does not relate with a man except on the basis of a covenant.
27. God does not engage a man except on the basis of a covenant.
28. If a man has a nagging problem and enters into a covenant with God, sacrificing something precious to him, God always answers.
29. How faithful you are to your covenant relationship with God will determine how much of the promised covenant blessings you will receive.

30. Your covenant relationship with God is personal. It has nothing to do with family, relations, friends and colleagues. It is just you. "*Whosoever believes*" (*Jn. 3:16*).
31. Your covenant relationship with God is like a marriage union. And you can't be married to Jesus and at the same time, be married to the devil.
32. Your covenant relationship with God is a family relationship wherein God becomes your father, and you his child, and as a result you have many brothers and sisters. So this relationship produces multiple relationships with other people in the family of God. Enjoy it!
33. When God wants to bless you, He removes someone from your life. Let the "Lot" go.
34. Patience is the weapon that forces deception to reveal itself.
35. Your reaction to a man of God, determines God's reaction to you.
36. Those who sin with you will eventually sin against you.
37. Your significance is not in your similarity to another, but in your point of difference from another.
38. Do not associate with those who will swallow you up.
39. Your dreams in life determine the company you keep.
40. The people you permit around you can make you or mar you.
41. When others hurt, try to feel it. You are a solution to somebody with a problem. Find them and listen to their cry.
42. You will begin to succeed in life when the hurt and problems of others begin to matter to you.
43. Successful people are accessible.
44. Successful people are reachers. They dread rejection, but they believe their goal is worth it.
45. Your dream is connected to people.
46. You will not succeed in life unless you are connected to people. A tree cannot make a forest. And no one man is an island.
47. Success involves people. People who enable you to succeed may not always come to you, in fact, they rarely do, you must go to them.
48. Go where you are needed.
49. There are two kinds of people in your life.
 - a. Those who already know you have something they need, and
 - b. Those who do not yet know you have something they need.
50. There is a right time and a wrong time to approach people.
51. Those who unlock your compassion are those to whom you have been sent.
52. People you meet today are trying to change their life in some way. They want financial freedom. They want their health to improve. They hate loneliness. You may not be sent to everyone, but you are definitely sent to someone. Find that someone.
53. Each relationship nurtures strength or a weakness within you.
54. You have something others need, and someone has what you need. You need relationships.
55. There are four kinds of people in your life; those who add, subtract, divide or multiply. Every relationship will affect you for good or for bad.

56. Goals and dreams last longer than rejection. Be willing to endure anything from people in the pursuit of your life goals. But don't give in to rejection.
57. Treat people right, for you may be in a spot where you may need them.
58. Nobody is ever as they first appear.
59. Reward those who help you succeed.
60. Friends are influence.
61. Your family is your first most important school of relationship.
62. You will only be remembered for the inputs you have made into peoples life.
63. A sweet and faithful relationship opens doors of favour both from God and man.
64. Move away from people who are critical in speech.
65. Don't be a companion or one who runs others down. Keep off, lest you learn his ways.
66. You owe nothing to a critic. "Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy word."(prov.23:9)
67. You have no business with a loafer except to show him his folly.
68. What is lacking in you is in another.
69. Every relationship leads to a destination. Know your destination to know those to relate with.
70. Watch the time. Value time. Redeem the time. Redeem yourself from time-wasters
71. Learn to associate with those who inspire and challenge you.
72. Don't hate enemies, for you need them for balance and bring out the best in you.
73. Always take a good look at yourself to assess the level of influence your friends and associates are having on you, by so doing, you will be able to identify profitable and positive relationships in order to maintain it, and cut negative relationships.
74. Companions are destiny molders.