

## Choose Friends Wisely

### Introduction

Welcome to My Thoughts and this segment, “**Choose Friends Wisely.**” Open your Bible to 1 Corinthians, Chapter 5, and we will start reading verses nine through 13.

The company you keep has such an influence on your personal and spiritual life. Fellowshiping with godly people will help speed you on to victory while fellowshiping with those who are ungodly will drag you down to defeat.

That’s why the Bible has some things to say about the company you keep. The Bible tells us to separate ourselves from the world. Because evil companions will corrupt you (**1 Corinthians 15:33**).

### Passage Text – 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

<sup>9</sup> I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

<sup>10</sup> Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

<sup>11</sup> But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, not even to eat with such a person.

<sup>12</sup> For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?

<sup>13</sup> But those who are outside God judges. Therefore, put away from yourselves the evil person.

Now, I’m not talking about ministry. Jesus Himself ministered to sinners. You must mix with them to preach to them and pray for them. What I’m talking about here are the people you choose for friends.

### Don’t Ignore the Worldly, Bring Them Jesus

The words “**I wrote to you in my epistle**” refer to Paul’s earlier letter to the Corinthian church, often called the “**lost letter**” because it has not been preserved. In that letter, he had told them not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. Either the Corinthians had misunderstood what Paul meant, or they had avoided his command by pointing out the impossibility of not associating with sinners in a sinful world.

So, Paul made it clear he wasn't talking about unbelievers. By nature, unbelievers are involved in sexual sin, greed, swindling, and idol worship. Believers cannot disassociate themselves completely from unbelievers as they would have to leave this world to avoid those people. In addition, with no contact with unbelievers, believers would not be able to carry out Jesus' command to tell them about salvation.

### **The Company You Keep**

Paul meant that believers were not to associate with anyone who claims to be a Christian and yet has a sinful lifestyle. Paul listed a few sins in verse 11 such as sexual sin, greed, idol worship, abuse, drunkenness, or swindling, which is stealing by violence or extortion.

Believers must separate themselves from those who claim to be Christians, but in their daily lives are indulging in sins explicitly forbidden in the Bible. By rationalizing their sin, these "**believers**" harm others and mislead new believers in their walk with Jesus.

A church that includes such people is hardly fit to be the light of the world because it distorts the picture of Jesus that it presents to the world. The church has a responsibility to rebuke, correct, and restore those in the fellowship who claim to be believers but live like unbelievers.

### **Don't Judge, Correct and Restore with Love**

The difference between believers and nonbelievers lies in their relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, a difference exists in how believers are to relate to those inside and outside the church. The outsiders or nonbelievers are to be met where they are, even in their sinful lifestyles and offered the gospel message. Yet the believers are not responsible for judging them because God will judge those on the outside.

In the church, believers have the job of judging those who are sinning in these ways. The Bible consistently says not to criticize people by gossiping or making rash judgments. At the same time, believers are to judge and deal with sinners as described in verse 11.

Paul's instructions for this sinful person should not be used to handle trivial matters or to take revenge. Nor should it be applied to individual problems between believers. These verses are instructions for dealing with open sin in the church, with a person who claims to be a Christian and yet who sins without remorse. The church is to confront and discipline such a person in love.

### **Conclusion**

If you want to walk in the things of the Lord, don't choose friends who walk in the things of Satan, people who talk and act ungodly, and who don't give God any place in their lives. They'll pull you down. As you rub shoulders with them, you'll expose yourself to temptation. You'll get so familiar with sin it will start to appear less repulsive to you. Sooner or later, you'll fall into it.

So, choose your friends wisely. Fellowship with those who call on the Name of the Lord out of a pure heart (**2 Timothy 2:22**). Correct believers who have gone astray in love and not condemnation. Expose them to the love and peace of Jesus. Let your faith rub off on them, Amen!

**I am Dale Van De Bogart and I fully agree on God's Word!**

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