

THE



“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

October 2024

No. 466

FRIENDSHIP

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Pro. 27:17)

Friends influence each other in everything. Friends can influence what you eat, how you sleep, but most importantly they can influence your walk with God. When the Proverb says that *“a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend,”* it should be noted that this sharpening can be a good type of sharpening, or a bad one. We can be negatively “sharpened” by the influences of our friends. We have several examples of friendships, both good and bad, in the Bible. Through this

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article, we will take a look at some of each, beginning with the good.

When David was running from Saul, he was becoming very discouraged. Saul's son, Jonathan, was one of David's closest friends and encouraged him not only to not give up but helped build him up spiritually.

And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood. And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house. (1 Sam. 23:15-18)

Jonathan went to David and “*strengthened his hand in God.*” David was sharpened by his friendship with Jonathan in many examples, and we can tell from all the context of their interactions that their friendship was good for each of them. 1 Samuel 18-20 shows their relationship and Jonathan trying to protect David as Saul was trying to kill him.

Another example comes from the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These three friends had to ignore a decree given by Nebuchadnezzar to worship his gods so that they could honor the God that they serve. They helped strengthen each other to have the resolve to do this.

Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning

fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. (Dan. 3:14-18)

These are just two examples of positive friendships that show people strengthening each other in a good way.

What about negative friendships: friendships where someone is influencing you in a way that takes you away from God. One example is that of Amnon and Jonadab. Amnon was obsessed with Tamar and went to his friend Jonadab for advice. Jonadab helped Amnon think of a way to deceive David and Tamar to get her in a position where Amnon could take advantage of her. Amnon listened to Jonadab's advice, which shows that a bad friendship can lead to bad things.

And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her. But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man. And he said unto him, Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day? wilt thou not tell me?

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

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And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister. And Jonadab said unto him, Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him, I pray thee, let my sister Tamar come, and give me meat, and dress the meat in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it at her hand. (2 Sam. 13:1-5)

Another example of a bad friendship brings us back to David. One of his most trusted friends was his army general, Joab. When David saw Bathsheba and committed the act of adultery, Joab was the one who helped take care of Bathsheba's husband Uriah to get him out of the way -- a friend letting another friend live in a way that is not pleasing to God.

And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die. And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were. And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also. Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war; And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king, And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? . . . then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. (2 Sam. 11:14-21)

Bad friendships can sharpen you in ways that hurt you spiritually. That's why it is so important to surround yourself with Godly people who are striving for the same goal.

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love;

in honour preferring one another; (Rom. 12:10)

Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: (Pro. 22:24)

If we have good friends, we have people who can help us when we fall or stumble in some way.

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. (Ecc. 4:9-10)

It is important that we surround ourselves with people that can lift us up, not people who bring us down. I am reminded of a story from an older television show. There is a guy walking down a street when he falls in a hole. The walls are so steep, he can't get out. A doctor passes by and the guy shouts up, "Hey you, can you help me out?" The doctor writes a prescription, throws it down in the hole and moves on. Then a pastor comes along, and the guy shouts up "Pastor, I'm down in this hole, can you help me out?" The pastor writes out a prayer, throws it down in the hole and moves on. Then a friend walks by. "Hey Joe, it's me, can you help me out?" And the friend jumps in the hole. The guy says, "Are you stupid? Now we're both down here." The friend says, "Yeah, but I've been down here before, and I know the way out."

Be the kind of friend that helps others find the way back to God or to strengthen their walk with God. That is the ultimate way for "iron to sharpen iron."

A. D.

FELLOWSHIP GATHERING

Saturday, October 19, 2024 at 12:00p.m.(CT)

The Venue at Smith Farm

1821 County Road 112

Woodland, AL 36280

Covered dish lunch and singing

WHICH SYNDROME DO YOU HAVE?

A syndrome consists of a number of symptoms or characteristics that occur together and identify a specific condition. When we speak about spiritual conditions then we can also recognize certain “syndromes” which are spiritual in nature. These diseases can be easily spotted by their symptoms. Let us now examine four different but closely labeled syndromes and see if we might be afflicted with one or more of these.

“IDOL” SYNDROME. This was the most common religious disease of God’s people during the Old Testament days of Israel. God had warned them, *“Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God”* (Lev. 26:1).

But they would not obey and their idolatry accounted for their captivity. Under the New Testament era the “idol” syndrome is making a fantastic comeback! Just look at the signs. More and more people (including members of the church) are spending more time with their “idols” than worshipping God *“in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). Some have already bowed down to the idol of money, the idol of family, the idol of career, the idol of hobby, and the idol of sports! Do you have this syndrome? Be careful because it is very contagious!

“IDLE” SYNDROME. Here is another syndrome which is gaining popularity. even among our brethren. Are you suffering with this one? The obvious symptoms are laziness and slothfulness. Those who are sick with the “idle” syndrome tend to make a lot of excuses for getting out of work. The *“sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold”* (Pro. 20:4a) and the lazy man will say, *“There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets”* (Pro. 22:13). Do you make similar excuses for: neglectful duties, willful sins, or missing church services? Do you sometimes find that you have nothing better to do than to waste precious time and stir up trouble (1 Tim. 5:13)? If you answer yes to any of these, you could have “idle” syndrome. I can only recommend that you get to the Great Physician

quickly!

“EYE DULL” SYNDROME. Seeing problems characterize this syndrome. When the spiritual eye becomes spiritually dull, sight is not as sharp or as keen as it should be. Hence, there is spiritual blindness. Many of us might be blind right now and not even be aware of it. We could have the “eye dull” syndrome without knowing it! Is your eye evil, always looking at the wrong things? Then your whole body is full of darkness (Mat. 6:23). Do you have obedient faith in Christ? If not, then the god of this world has blinded your mind (2 Cor. 4:4). Do you hate your brother? Then you walk in darkness and again, your eyes have been blinded (1 John 2:11). Any of the above items would qualify you for the “eye dull” syndrome. The only cure for this disease is to spiritually “look” toward the crucified Christ, just as the Israelites had to look at the brazen serpent in the days of Moses (John 3:14,15).

“I DOLE” SYNDROME. The last syndrome of this class that we will study is unlike the others. Someone affected with the “I dole” syndrome tends to distribute or share or give to those who are truly in need. In other words, “I dole” out to the poor and helpless! When the opportunity presents itself, someone in this condition automatically lends a helping hand to all his neighbors like a Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). The man struck with the “I dole” syndrome is full of good deeds and abounds to “*every good work*” (2 Cor. 9:8). He gives plenty of his time toward the cause of Christ and for the spreading of the Good News to lost souls (2 Tim. 4:2). And on the first day of the week he doles out a cheerful distribution (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7). Wouldn’t it be wonderful if everyone had this syndrome instead of the others previously mentioned?

So which syndrome do you have: “idol”, “idle”, “eye dull”, or “I dole”? By looking at the symptoms you display, it should be obvious. “*They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*” (Mat. 9:12).

RAY MCMANUS

Reprinted from *The Harvester* August 1994

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
October 2 - 4	Goochtown Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
October 10 - 13	Lockport Lockport, Kentucky	Timothy Lewis (Eubank, KY)
October 25 - 27	Oak Grove Eubank, KY	Hunter Bulger (Prattville, AL)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What was the first bird released from the ark?
2. Seven fat and seven thin of what type of animal appeared to Pharaoh in a dream?
3. Which direction did the scorching wind upon Jonah come from?
4. In the Parable of the Sower, what does the seed represent?
5. Who was appointed to replace Judas Iscariot as a disciple?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. What was Bathsheba doing when David first saw her?
WASHING HERSELF (2 Sam. 11:2)
2. Solomon judged wisely over the rightful mother of a child, but how did he determine who the child belonged to?
THREATENED TO DIVIDE THE CHILD WITH A SWORD (1 Kings 3:24-25)
3. What did Jesus do to each of the disciples during the Last Supper? WASHED THEIR FEET (John 13:1-5)
4. What event occurred to help release Paul and Silas from prison? EARTHQUAKE (Acts 16:26)
5. What does James say happens if we "*draw nigh to God*"?
HE WILL DRAW NIGH TO US (Jas. 4:8)