

"The Power of Relationships"

8/4/19

2 Cor. 6:14-15 NIV "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? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"

Why is Paul so strong on the issue of Christian relationships?

Because he knows that no one has a stronger influence *ON* you than those closest *TO* you.

No one will decide the direction of your *tomorrows* more than those you hang with *today*.

No one can carry you closer *TO* the Lord, or carry you further *FROM* the Lord than your closest friends.

This is why the Bible warns, "The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray" (Proverbs 12:26 NKJV).

Both God and the devil know this!

So here's a true statement: When God wants to bless you, He puts a key person in your life; likewise, when Satan wants to destroy you he puts a key person in your life!

It's fairly easy to tell which of the two has taken place by asking yourself one simple question:

Does this relationship make me a stronger Christian?

If the answer is no, then it's not from God and it's not for you.

If the answer is yes, then God has put a key person in your life!

Now, this is a difficult topic because relationships aren't just a *head* issue, they are a *heart* issue—we become attached to people.

The deeper a friendship goes, the more our affections and loyalties go with it.

And the more our affections and loyalties become involved, the more difficult it is to obey God should He say—"It's time for you to make a change in who you're hanging with."

The Bible is filled with vivid examples of how relationships can either bless or destroy a person.

For example, Solomon was the wisest man in the whole world.

The Bible says, "So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart" (2 Chron. 9:22-23).

Yet Solomon made many foolish choices with the relationships in his life.

The Bible says, "But King Solomon loved many foreign women...women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, *and* Hittites— 2 from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.' Solomon clung to these in love....⁴ For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods;" (1 Kings 11:1-2, 4 NKJV)

King Solomon, the wisest man in all the world, ended up at the end of his life building altars to foreign gods where children were sacrificed alive in fire to those false gods!

We say, “How could this happen to such a great man of God known for his wisdom?”

Psalms 106 tell us exactly how by laying out 4 incremental, downward steps a person takes once they’re unequally yoked to someone that doesn’t honor God.

God had told Israel to have nothing to do with the idolaters occupying the land He was giving them, but they didn’t listen.

The Bible says in vs 35:

—“But they *mingled* with the Gentiles” (Ps. 106:35a)

Their slide down began with *mingling*, just hanging around with the wrong people where relationships began to form.

—Then as they mingled with them they, “*learned* their works.” (106: 35b)

This doesn’t mean they learned their trades, but they learned to worship their false gods...

Their faith in the true God became compromised and corrupted and they drifted away from Him.

—Then third, “They *served* their idols, which became a snare to them.” (106:36)

They’ve now gone from *learning* about their false gods to actually *servicing* them.

And they became trapped by it—They became ensnared by the very idolatry that God had led them into the land to destroy!

—And finally, “They even *sacrificed* their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood.” (106:37-38)

Now they’ve hit rock bottom.

What began as harmless *mingling* has taken them down the dark road of *sacrificing* their own children to demons.

*You know you’ve become ensnared in a Satanic trap when you start sacrificing what is most precious in order to serve what is most vile.

From mingling to learning to serving to sacrificing— Israel was destroyed by wrong relationships!

This is why the Bible says, "Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Cor. 15:33 NIV).

Now, the good news is that the exact opposite happens in a godly relationship!

There is probably no better example of a godly friendship in the Bible than that of Jonathan and David.

Jonathan was the son of King Saul, and remained a true friend to David, and David to him, all the way to the day of his Jonathan's death at the hands of the Philistines.

I want to point out 3 quick things that stand out to me about their friendship..

I. It was formed around a godly victory

David and Jonathan met following David's defeat of Goliath.

The Bible says that immediately following this God-glorifying victory over Israel's enemy that, "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1 NKJV).

Some relationships are formed around sinful activity.

Others are formed over mutual selfish pursuits.

Most friendships are formed around shared values with people who are like us...(birds of a feather)

—Godly friendships are formed around mutual love for God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

David loved God and so did Jonathan, and when Jonathan saw a kindred spirit in David, their lifelong friendship began.

For the Christian—any friendship worth having is formed around a mutual love of Jesus!

The second characteristic of the godly friendship between David and Jonathan is:

II. They protected one another from the enemy

Now, the enemy in this case just happened to be Jonathan's father, King Saul.

Saul had become insanely jealous of David, and sought daily to kill him.

And when it looked like Saul might very well succeed, Jonathan stepped forward as his protector—“By no means! You shall not die!” (1 Sam. 20:2 NKJV)

And from this point on, Jonathan became David’s protector and saved his life more than once from Saul’s spear.

In the same way, a godly friend will step in as a protector when he sees the enemy attacking you.

Worldly friends aren’t concerned about your faith, your spiritual victory, or the purpose of God for you.

But in a godly friendship, *your* enemy becomes *your friend’s* enemy—His attitude is, “If the enemy attacks you, he has attacked me!”

And a third characteristic of the godly friendship between David and Jonathan is:

III. Encouraging God’s purpose for each other

David had been anointed by the prophet Samuel to be King over Israel, a position that in the natural was Jonathan’s as Saul’s son!

***But Jonathan was more committed to God's will for David than he was to his own desires.**

That's a friend!

The Bible says that in the last meeting the two friends would have on this earth, David was hiding in the woods from Saul and was deeply discouraged.

The Bible records, "Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God. 17 And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel..." (1 Samuel 23:16-17 NKJV).

A true friend will come to you when you're in the woods of discouragement and lift your hands!

Jonathan encouraged David in his calling: "You shall be king over Israel!"

A godly friend will ALWAYS encourage your calling and purpose in God!

"As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend" (Prov. 27:17 NLT).

In closing let me tell you about the best Friend you can ever have—His name is Jesus!

He's the Friend that sticks closer than a brother, a Friend that will never leave or forsake you.

He once said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13 NKJV)

And that's exactly what He did!

Make Him the closest Friend you have, and you will only choose friends that honor Him!

