

# Run For Your Life

Selected Proverbs

## Introduction

In our last two discussions, we have attempted to rescue the concept of friendship from the murky waters of contemporary thought. We have studied the friendship between Jonathan and David and the qualities that made that such a good one. We have also looked at Saul and David and discovered how to destroy a friendship.

Today, I want to go to the Proverbs and literally, ransack them, as we relate the Proverbs to the subject of friendship. We will specifically discuss intimate friendships that according to the Bible, should never take place. We could subtitle this discussion, “Friendships You Should Run From”.

Now perhaps you are now thinking, “It sounds like he is suggesting that we should be a little more stuck up than we might have been before.”

No, that is not the case. In fact, I will address that point later.

I am talking about the inner circle; the core of friendship; I am going to be referring today, as I believe Solomon does, to the intimate or the close friendship. I will mention three circles of friendship:

- inner circle – intimate friendship;
- middle circle – casual friendship;
- outer circle – acquaintance.

In the life of a teenage girl, there are going to be boys, and in the life of a teenage boy, there are going to be girls, with whom they are friends simply because they are friendly. That, however, is a lot different from dating one of them.

There may be a business person at your office with whom you are a good friend and have lunch with periodically. However, spending all of the off-hours fishing and golfing together is a whole different story. That is moving them into the inner circle.

Let me put it this way, an acquaintance in the outer circle, or a casual friendship allows you to influence another person, usually for the sake of Jesus Christ, and also allows you to keep up the emotional barriers, or what I would call, “protectors”. To move into intimate friendship, however, is allowing the other

person to influence you because, for the sake of intimacy, you have let down the barriers and are transparent. That is indeed, a quality of a good friendship.

This is a very vulnerable position in which to be, by the way. God knew this before any of us discovered it. So several thousand years ago, He put into the Bible, principles that would, in effect, protect every one of His children who care to listen and who are willing to obey.

## The Introduction of Four Potential Friends

I want to first turn your attention to Proverbs chapter 1, where Solomon, the son of David, introduces four people. Three of these people are ones we are to avoid in terms of intimate friendship, but not in terms of being friendly or for the sake of expressing, through our winsomeness, their need for Jesus Christ.

Look at Proverbs 1:20-22.

*Wisdom shouts in the street, she lifts her voice in the square;*

*at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings:*

*“How long, O naïve ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing, and fools hate knowledge?”*

Skip to Proverbs 1:29-30.

*Because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord,*

*They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof.*

Now look at Proverbs 1:33a, which is referring to the wise one; the one who has wisdom.

*But he who listens to me shall live securely...*

This is basically, the key point, “Who will listen to wisdom?”

Now I want to take a close look at these people. To do so, we will be looking at a lot of passages quickly.

**1. The first potential friend is the simple or naïve person.**

Solomon gives three characteristics of a simple person.

- The first characteristic of the simple person is that they lack goals and moral direction.

Look at Proverbs 1:32a.

***For the waywardness of the naïve shall kill them . . .***

In other words, these people simply drift through life and go along with the strongest current of popular thought. Whatever the latest fad may be; whatever the latest trend in contemporary thought, if it sounds good, they think, “Well, okay, I’ll give it my best shot.”

I watched, several years ago, with angry sorrow, a documentary on public television. The camera had gone into the classroom of an Ivy League college and a very attractive, winsome, charismatic teacher was teaching a class for women. The subject was, “Women in Marriage”. She, who had a very liberal bent, was expounding the virtues of contract marriages. The class began, and the camera showed her asking the class the question, “Who, in this class, would be willing to be involved in a contract marriage?”

Only one or two of the nearly one hundred women in the class raised their hands.

The camera then showed that over the progression of several class discussions, this woman expounded the reasons that it made sense and was better not to jump into marriage for life, but to sign a one-year or two-year contract, or for someone really bold, a five-year contract. When this teacher ended her discussions, she asked the class the same question, “Who, in this class, would consider being involved in a contract marriage?”

Nearly all of the women raised their hands.

Why not? If you refuse to embrace what God has to say; if you do not listen to wisdom, then you become one who is simple. You are then without moral direction; without guidelines. So you will raise your hand to whatever lie may sound good to you – it may make sense.

- The second characteristic of the simple or naïve person is that they lack discernment and are gullible.

Proverbs 14:15 says this well.

***The naïve believes everything, but the sensible man considers his steps.***

- The third characteristic of the simple person is that they do not understand action and consequence.

In other words, the simple person does not understand the relationship between cause and effect.

Look at Proverbs 22:3.

***The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, but the naïve go on, and are punished for it.***

The prudent person realizes the relationship that if he does this, then this is going to happen. The naïve person does not realize this relationship – he never considers the consequence, so he blunders right through the action and, “bang,” he is hit.

Now this, by the way, as those who are parents know, is a characteristic of children. We were all born into this world, very naïve and very simple – we did not understand the relationship between cause and effect. As a result, every parent had to teach, and some are in the process of teaching, this to their children – younger children especially.

The parent tells little Suzie, “Suzie, if you touch that oven, you’re going to get burned.”

There are two ways that Suzie can learn. She can learn:

- propositionally;
- experientially.

By which of these would you suggest she learn?

She should learn propositionally, of course. This is to simply embrace the truth, “Mommy said that if I touch the oven, I’m going to get burned.”

She could also learn experientially by touching the oven – and getting burned.

I tell my boys, “Boys, if you jump on the trampoline like that, you’re going to jump right off and get hurt.”

They then have two ways to learn: propositionally or experientially. What do you think they do? They obey me immediately, of course!

What are you laughing about? You know them, right?

“Splat,” they learn experientially.

The point of this scripture is to give us propositional truth and, if we will embrace it, we do not have to experience the consequences of disobeying. The wise person, embracing the truth, considers his steps and avoids the tragedy. The naïve person continues on and receives the consequences.

## 2. The second potential friend is the scoffer.

Look at Proverbs 1:22 again.

*How long, O naïve ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing . . .*

Solomon will give us at least three distinctives of this person to separate him from the simply naïve person.

- The first characteristic of the scoffer is that they have a cynical, mocking attitude.

This verse tells us that these are people, and you have probably met people who are like this, captured with their cynicism. They are over-impressed with their own intelligence and spend their lives mocking people who do not seem quite as intelligent.

- The second characteristic of the scoffer is that they have an overwhelming attitude of pride and arrogance.

Look at Proverbs 21:24.

*“Proud,” “Haughty,” “Scoffer,” are his names, who acts with insolent pride.*

These are the synonyms of a scoffer. Proud and haughty, they act with insolent pride.

This is the kind of person, by the way, who gives you the worst trouble at work when they find out you happen to be a Christian. One of their favorite things to do is slam Christians because Christians embrace propositional truth; values. This person is always slamming the church.

Now I have to grant, the church gives them way too much material with which to work. However, this type of person tends to look for the latest headlines and then comes to work, making a bee-line toward you, to say, “Hey, what do you think about that?”

This is a scoffer. They enjoy, with their pride and arrogance, mocking propositional truth.

- The third characteristic of the scoffer is that they have an intense dislike of rebuke or correction.

Proverbs 9:7 reads, interestingly,

*He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, and he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself.*

Have you ever found yourself in this position? Try correcting a scoffer and, “wham,” you get it right back.

Continue to Proverbs 9:8, where Solomon wisely says,

*Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, reprove a wise man and he will love you.*

I find it interesting, in this context, that evidently, the wise person and the scoffer made the same mistake. However, the difference is in the way they respond to correction.

The scoffer says, “Who do you think you are?”

The wise person says, “I see what you’re saying. I had a blind spot. I missed that. Thanks.”

It is easy to see that we need to pursue wisdom.

## 3. The third potential friend is the fool.

Look again at Proverbs 1:22b.

*. . . fools hate knowledge*

Many expositors believe that this is simply a progression from naïveté or a simpleton’s posture, to scoffing at propositional truth, to eventually, as David says,

*The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God . . .” (Psalm 14:1 & 53:1)*

In other words, the fool says that there is no such thing as absolute truth.

Solomon gives us some distinctives of the fool.

- The first characteristic of the fool is that they hate the mention of God and God’s truth.

Look at Proverbs 1:7.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

The fool does not just make fun of the truth; they hate the truth and the mention of the truth. They have progressed further than the other two.

- The second characteristic of the fool is that they love rebellion.

Look at Proverbs 10:23. The way my text translates this verse is interesting.

***Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and so is wisdom to a man of understanding.***

One of the reasons that we have difficulty telling some people about Jesus Christ, who happen to be in this foolish or fool-like state, is because they are having far too much fun running from Jesus Christ. They are having a great time. They are wrapped up in, what the Bible calls,

***. . . the pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:25)***

One of the reasons their lifestyle is so attractive is that it is the fool's lifestyle – one with no absolute, no accountability, and in which, they are having a great time. The Spirit of God is going to have to bring them to the end of themselves.

- The third characteristic of the fool is that they not only destroy themselves, but also their friends.

Look at Proverbs 13:20.

***He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.***

This is the critical point – who your friends are determines your own personal spiritual well-being. In fact, this verse is the premise for our study today.

We become like those we allow to enter our inner circle. We digress to the lowest common denominator of character.

You might think, “Well, if I get involved in their life, I’ll help them up.”

No. The Bible says that they will pull you down.

Evangelism takes place in the two outer circles. Those whom you allow in your inner circle; whom you allow as intimate friends and with whom you drop your guard, if they are fools, *you* will suffer harm.

#### **4. The fourth potential friend is the wise person.**

Solomon introduces this fourth potential friend and let me say that according to scripture, a wise person is not necessarily intellectually smart; is not necessarily someone with their IQ up there in the clouds somewhere. According to the scripture, a wise person is one who has skill in living biblically.

This skill of the wise person is based on four things. Two of these are from Proverbs and two are from the New Testament. What does it take to have

the skill to live in a way that God would consider wise? Let us look at the ways.

- First, the wise person must have a passion to have wisdom for living.

Now you might think, “Well, that’s elementary. I thought that was just a forgone conclusion.”

It is not at all. In fact, turn to Proverbs chapter 2. The question is, “Do you really want wisdom for living?”

We would think that everyone who is a Christian would say, “Yes, I want wisdom for living.”

However, everyone who is a Christian does *not* say this. Notice Proverbs 2:1-4, and underline the word “if,” which is in these verses three times.

***My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you,***

***make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding;***

***for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding;***

***if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures;***

Understand the point – wisdom is *not* under the Christmas tree; *not* a birthday present that you get without asking, to open and say, “Well, what do I do with this?”

Wisdom is given to those who will not live without it.

Are you like this?

- Secondly, the wise person who has skill in living has a proper awe of God.

Continue to Proverbs 2:5-6, which tells us that *if* you have a passion for wisdom for living,

***Then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God.***

***For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.***

It is interesting that according to these verses, before anyone can find wisdom, they must find God. The ultimate truth is that the pursuit of wisdom is, in effect, the pursuit of God. When we find God, when we have *Him* as our intimate friend, we discover that one of His gifts to us, as a result of this passion, is wisdom.

Some of us would love to have wisdom without the intimacy with God. It will not happen. Some of

us live all week without caring where God fits in. But when we need wisdom for a decision we must make, we say, “God, I’d like it now.” It does not happen.

The pursuit of wisdom is the pursuit of God.

Let me give two ideas from the New Testament that amplify this.

- Thirdly, the wise person who has skill in living is a person who believes in the crucified and resurrected Christ.

In I Corinthians 1:23-24, Paul writes,

*but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,*

*but to those who are called [those who have received], both Jews and Greeks, Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

Skip to I Corinthians 1:30.

*But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God...*

A wise person is someone who has embraced the truth that Jesus Christ was crucified and that He arose from the dead.

Do you know what the church, in the broad sense, happens to be debating today? The church today is debating whether or not there is the historical fact of Jesus Christ dying on the cross and literally, rising from the dead.

According to this propositional truth, the Bible, without a belief in this, we have no hope of gaining wisdom. Without this doctrine, we might as well pack our bags and go home. In other words, without this truth, why should we have church?

- Fourthly, the wise person is one who personally applies scripture.

Turn to Matthew 7:24, where Jesus says,

*Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.*

Now let us review these four potential friends and summarize their primary mindset.

- The simple person is open-minded.

Without moral direction, this person is gullible; this person will go along with the latest fad or fancy.

- The scoffer is critical-minded.

This person is wrapped up in their cynicism.

- The fool is closed-minded.
- The wise person is spiritually-minded.

This person is teachable; submissive.

## The Digression of Ungodly Friendships

Turn back now, to Proverbs chapter 1, and let me amplify the danger of ungodly friendships – intimate friendships with those who have rejected biblical truth; who do not know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. In this chapter, Solomon gives us a fictitious story and we will look at this story to illustrate the point.

Begin by looking at Proverbs 1:10-12.

*My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.*

*If they say, “Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us ambush the innocent without cause;*

*“let us swallow them alive like Sheol, even whole, as those who go down to the pit;”*

Stop at this point. This passage gives the digression of ungodly friendships.

### 1. Step number one in the digression of ungodly friendships is involvement.

Proverbs 1:11 says,

*... “Come with us ...”*

“You don’t have to change your morals. In fact, you don’t have to act like you like it. What else do you have to do tonight? Just come with us.”

I look at this passage and I wonder what Solomon had in mind when he says,

*... “Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood ...”*

If someone asked me, “Stephen, would you like to come with us and lie in wait for someone’s blood?” Would I think, “Sure. Sounds great! What do I wear?”

It is interesting that the Spirit of God just, in a sense, rips the mask off. Look at Proverbs 1:18.

*But they lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush their own lives.*

Solomon gives the real picture in this verse. They are talking about something else, which leads to the second step.

## 2. Step number two in this digression is enticement.

Look at Proverbs 1:13.

***We will find all kinds of precious wealth, we will fill our houses with spoil;***

Now that sounds good. However, the Spirit of God says, “Oh, that’s just the advertisement. What they’re actually doing is lying in wait for their own destruction. They’re ambushing their own lives. They’re headed for disaster.”

## 3. Step number three is entanglement.

Continue to Proverbs 1:14.

***Throw in your lot with us, we shall all have one purse,***

This has come a long way from simply, “Would you like to go with us tonight.”

Now it is, “Let’s share the bank account.”

This is entanglement. We have to be wise enough in our living for Jesus Christ to know from the start with this invitation that it will ultimately, lead to entanglement.

Parents of teenagers probably have the most difficult time with this, especially when that young lady is asked out by non-Christian guys and she says to you, “Well, no Christian guy will ask me out. I don’t know any Christian guys.”

The standard is lowered. Then, what you think is a simple invitation, eventually leads to entanglement – a tragedy.

## How to say “No”

Now, let us ask the practical question, “How do I say, ‘No,’ to the enticement of friendly offers.”

I will give three ways.

- The first way is to meet enticement with conviction.

In other words, just lay it out on the table. Why is it so difficult for us to say, “I can’t, I belong to Jesus Christ.”?

Look at Daniel as an example. He was a Jew in a pagan court, surrounded by people he did not know, who were speaking a language he had yet to learn, and

through an interpreter, he was told, “Eat the king’s meat.”

This meat happened to be off limits to a Jew. It was part of the Levitical dietary law that they could not eat this particular meat. So what did Daniel say?

Daniel could have said, “Well, I just don’t like red meat. I’m a vegetarian.” – or something like that.

Instead, Daniel basically says, “I belong to God, and I will not eat that meat.”

- The second way to say “No” is to express conviction graciously, yet firmly.

One of the hardest words to say with grace, is the word, “No.”

Have you said this word lately? Do you want to practice?

Someone just said, “No!”

This is not a question! Say it now, would you? “No.”

This is kind of weird, isn’t it? Try saying it again. “No.”

That little word will keep us from so much trouble and disappointment.

- The third way is to avoid ungodly friendships.

In other words, do not open yourself up to the potential.

Turn to Proverbs 4:14-15 and look at the simple advice that scripture records.

***Do not enter the path of the wicked and do not proceed in the way of evil men.***

***Avoid it, do not pass by it; turn away from it and pass on.***

Do you have the idea now? In six different ways, Solomon basically says to stay away from people who will not encourage you to walk in the way of wisdom. To do this will take a lot of insight; a lot of wisdom in and of itself. Solomon does not cut any corners in saying, “*Stop! Get away! Avoid them!*”

From time to time, individuals come to me and tell me about a relationship in which they are involved or are becoming involved, and the other person is not a Christian. They will ask, “What do you think I should do?”

Having been a youth pastor and then, working with singles, I have given quite a bit of advice and have almost a pat answer. I will look at them and say,

“I want you to go home, get on a pair of tennis shoes, lace them up, and *RUN!*”

“Is that it?”

“That’s it. *RUN!* This relationship is already bigger than you.”

If you are involved in something that according to the Bible is not allowable and is pulling you off the path of wisdom, then the advice is, “*RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!!!*”

## Five More “Characters” To Avoid

Now Solomon does not stop at warning us about close friendships with just scoffers and fools; he continues through Proverbs to warn us against friendships with those who have five specific character traits. These are character traits that should be avoided, not only in others, but also in ourselves, as we look into the mirror of God’s word. Let us take a brief look at these.

### 1. **First, avoid the person who is a gossip or a slanderer.**

Look at Proverbs 20:19, which refers to one who literally, has an open mouth.

*He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, therefore do not associate with a gossip.*

In other words, do not move someone who is a gossip from a casual acquaintance into the inner circle of association.

It is interesting that the original Hebrew word for “slanderer” referred to a merchant who would go from city to city trading his wares. Eventually, it came to refer to the individual who goes around trading secrets and information. This is the person who says things like, “Did you hear . . . ? Have you heard . . . ? Would you like to know . . . ?”

Solomon says, “Do not associate with one who trades information.”

### 2. **Secondly, avoid the quick tempered.**

This is another character trait to avoid in friends.

Note Proverbs 22:24-25.

*Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself.*

This is laid out in this verse as clearly as it can possibly be laid out. We pick up traits from those we allow to become our intimate friends.

This is the reason friendship is so critical. This is the reason Solomon will later advise, “Get alongside a piece of iron because,”

*. . . iron sharpens iron . . . (Proverbs 27:17)*

“. . . and the friction between two people who want to know God tends to sharpen one another. But come alongside a piece of lesser substance and that iron will become dull.”

Look for iron and pursue being iron.

### 3. **Thirdly, avoid the person who is rebellious.**

Proverbs 24:21 talks about the person who wishes to change the authority that God has given them, whether it is the Lord or the king.

*My son, fear the Lord and the king; do not associate with those who are given to change,*

Basically, Solomon is saying, “Stay away from the law-breaker.”

### 4. **Fourthly, avoid the self-indulgent or the materialist.**

Look at Proverbs 28:7.

*He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father.*

The original word for “glutton” is not what you and I might do at our next meal. It actually refers to being light. It is interesting that it means “to regard as light: things, people, possessions.”

The reason this verse says that the glutton humiliates his father is probably because the father has grown in his maturity to understand the value of things, people, and possessions.

Solomon says, “Don’t hang around people who consider things lightly.”

This is a classic example, or even definition, of a materialist, who runs through life collecting stuff, not knowing the value of anything. This verse is a biblical illustration of materialism.

Our current economy, by the way, is wrapped up in gluttony. Our culture is becoming ensnared to materialism – not when a kid turns 16, but when he turns 6. I read, recently, that more than one billion dollars is spent every year, determined by the elementary school student – where they are entertained

and what they buy, in the form of toys and clothing – more than one billion dollars!

What are we doing? We are pandering to this and are creating little materialists who are only in the first grade; who are already light in their value. They do not understand the value of things and they grow up to become adults who do not understand the value of things. As a result, we are all surrounded by stuff.

#### **5. The fifth person to avoid is one who is immoral.**

Proverbs 29:3 says,

***A man who loves wisdom makes his father glad, but he who keeps company with harlots wastes his wealth.***

In this Proverb, a couple of immoral people are referred to – perhaps the adulterer and the harlot. Solomon’s definition of an immoral person is one who, by their suggestive speech and their illicit actions, reveal they have no moral standards. He says to stay away from this person.

Like a father to a son or daughter, Solomon is speaking to us in the same fashion, to, “Stay away.”

It is interesting that as we study the Bible, especially the writings of Paul, there are a lot of sins that we are, in a sense, told to stand and fight. We have our armor on, so let us take it on.

However, in the realm of sexual temptation, do you know what Paul says to do?

***Flee . . . (I Corinthians 6:18)***

In other words, “***RUN! FLEE!*** Don’t even stop to ask. Don’t stop to consider. ***TAKE OFF!*** Don’t even try to stand there and fight.”

Solomon says, “Don’t associate with those who are immoral.”

Now turn to Proverbs 13:20. Let us read this verse again and it will be the last one we will read today. This is the same idea put in a different way.

***He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.***

Solomon repeated to us over and over and over again that no matter where we think we are in our spiritual walk; no matter how strong we think we might be, we are to make our companion a wise person. When we do this, we will become wise. However, when we make a close companion out of a fool or a scoffer or a naïve one, we will become a fool

or a scoffer or a naïve one. Do not think you are bigger than scripture. This is what Solomon is saying.

You might think, “Now, wait a second! The New Testament tells us that Jesus was a “friend of sinners,” right?” (Matthew 11:19)

If you think of the three circles of friendship – inner or intimate, middle or casual, and outer or acquaintance – I think you will find an illustration of the way Jesus Christ conducted His life. He wept for the world and was indeed a friend of sinners, but who did He allow into His inner circle? He allowed twelve men. These twelve were those who would be willing to follow Him as disciples. One of them abandoned Him.

Now what about Jesus’ inner core? There were three men: Peter, James, and John. In the New Testament, they are always categorized as those whom Jesus invited to come with Him to the garden to pray. He pulled them aside for special instruction. In fact, I think we could even make a case that among these three men, He had one who was His closest friend – John. In the Gospel of John, we read that he was,

***. . . the disciple whom Jesus loved . . .***

Jesus Christ was a friend of sinners and of the acquaintances and the casual friends, but He was always in the process of making disciples. The friendship was a way to invite them to Himself.

We are to follow Jesus’ example. To pull into our intimate, close circle someone who denies the things that we hold dear, is to invite destruction and tragedy.

I contend that there is absolutely no biblical justification for bringing into your inner circle someone who does not know Jesus Christ as Savior. A man or woman you date, a boyfriend or girlfriend, a counselor or therapist, a person before whom you have let down all of your guards is one by whom you are in the process of being influenced, and potentially, for wrong.

## **Application**

Let me wrap this up by applying this study of friendships in three ways.

**1. Number one, we must be willing to be rejected by those who have rejected Jesus Christ.**

Are you willing? This is a simple fact – we must be willing to be rejected by those who have rejected Jesus Christ. It may be painful, but it is true.

**2. Number two, those who are capable of godly friendships are capable of standing alone.**

You may not have a boyfriend; you may not have a girlfriend, young people. As a career single, you may not be dating anyone. You may not have someone in your neighborhood or at your job, among all the people there, that you could call an intimate friend.

Let me tell you that this may be proof that you are right in the middle of where God wants you to be. It may simply be proof that God is causing you to become strong like a tree that stands alone and is buffeted by the wind. He is deepening you; He is developing you. And for you to be a friend and to have a friend, you must be capable of standing alone.

**3. Number three, the absence of godly friends does not justify the presence of ungodly friends.**

I want every mom and dad to write this down in their mind because you are going to deal with this. For all of us, the absence of godly friends does not justify the presence of ungodly friends.

Let me tell you a story in closing. In 1942, Boston College had the best record among football college teams for the year. I am not sure how the divisions were laid out at that time, but Boston College was at the top of the heap. The year was wrapping up and they had planned their homecoming game. It was planned against Holy Cross, which had only won four games that year.

A team with so few wins is the kind of team a school wants to play for homecoming, in order to be sure they win. All the celebrations are planned and presentations are to be made, so some poor scapegoat is found to smear and everyone feels good at homecoming.

So Boston College scheduled their homecoming game with Holy Cross. However, that particular night, everything the Holy Cross team did, went right, and everything the superior Boston College team did, went wrong. At the end of the game, the score was 55 to 12, with Holy Cross as the winner.

The Boston College guys were so embarrassed that they slithered back to their dormitory rooms and the school called off their big celebration. They felt so humiliated and knew they would get up the next morning and see some kind of front page story, “Boston College Creamed by Holy Cross”.

However, the next morning, the newspapers did not even cover the game. Instead, the front page story was about a fire that had broken out in the Coconut Grove Country Club. In fact, it remains, in American history, as one of the top four fires, in terms of tragic fatalities. Over 400 people died that night.

Now to us, this does not mean much. However, to every Boston College football player, it meant everything. Their homecoming celebration had been planned to take place at the Coconut Grove Country Club. Their humiliation and embarrassment; their pain had saved their lives.

Let this story be an illustration to you, my friend, if you are standing alone. The embarrassment and humiliation at the job or in the neighborhood; that pain is saving your spiritual vitality may be saving your life. Do not change. Stay true to Jesus Christ and, if He desires, He will give you iron. In the process, He will make you iron for His glory.

I want to ask you a couple of questions. Perhaps the Spirit of God would like to do surgery in your life. As you listened to the words of the Bible today, maybe God brought to your mind a friendship; an intimate association that you need to be willing to admit that God considers wrong. Would you be willing to embrace the propositional truth, without experiencing the tragedy, that the companion of those who reject truth; who reject Jesus Christ will suffer harm? Would you be willing to say today, “Lord, would You give me the courage to cause this train to stop and give me the wisdom to know what to say to get off this train that is headed for the precipice? Even though I hope for the best and desire the best, I will learn, through propositional truth. Lord, I will take You at Your word. I will obey You.”

My friend, if you can say this, I guarantee, not from my experience or life, but from the words of scripture, that God has a plan for you; God has a future for you and you will never be sorry in only allowing those who accept and pursue God into your intimate circle.

Perhaps today, you have identified yourself as one of these five people that we should be avoiding. Maybe you are the gossip. Maybe you are the

slanderer. Maybe you are the materialist. Maybe you are the rebellious one. Would you say, "Lord, forgive me for not being iron to be used in other people's lives. I ask Your forgiveness. As a child of Yours, I thank You that Your blood can cleanse and I ask that it do so. Help me to reenter the friendships that I have as a wise person."

God's word is alive. I pray for everyone who, in needing Him to work, has allowed Him to do so today. I pray He would give you the courage and the grace to stand alone, to correct friendships, and to correct character.