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"Your Word Is Truth" "Bad Associations Spoil Useful Habits"

27

"NOBODY ever proved God a liar and nobody ever will." Are those words, uttered by a prominent presiding minister to a group of traveling ministerial supervisors, a statement of incontrovertible fact or just so much oratory?

For example, God's Word, the Bible, says: "Do not be misled. Bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Cor. 15:33) Today ever so many people constantly are trying to prove that they can have bad associations without spoiling their good habits. Are they succeeding? Or is the Bible true?

When a Christian youth freely associates with a group of young men who make a practice of stealing, what are they apt to tell him? "Oh, this is just for fun, just for thrills. We're playing practical jokes, don't you know?" Or they may say: "Really, what we are shoplifting is nothing of great value and so it doesn't matter; after all, we are taking these things from a big corporation that will never miss them." Or they may perhaps try to influence the Christian youth by saying: "We're poor, so it's not wrong to take things from these people who are rich. After all, we're being discriminated against, not given a fair deal, and so it is only right that we help ourselves to whatever we can get our hands on."

Now, by associating with others who talk and act that way, what is likely to happen? Does he break them of their bad habits or do they break him of his good habits? Even though he had been taught it is wrong to steal and that he should do to others as he would have others do to him, he will find himself being influenced by such unprincipled associates. He will be adopting their mental attitudes and viewpoints and will then join them in their lawless actions. The results of this have at times been disastrous, as when one Christian youth was excommunicated from his congregation for having been associated with a group of boys whose stealing led to murder and to their being sent to a prison for juveniles.—Eph. 4:28; Luke 6:31.

Or take another example—association with drug addicts. Use of narcotics, such as marijuana, at first was limited to those attending the colleges. Then high-school students took up the habit, and now it is found to be widespread in grade schools. The youths of today by reason of their greedy quest for pleasures and thrills are turning more and more to the use of narcotics. Here, too, either consciously or unconsciously, there is rationalization and specious reasoning on the part of youths for their doing so. It may be due to their lack of experience, or due to their frustrations and disillusionments. While actually the pawns of ruthless and avaricious drug traffickers, they apparently love to have it so.—Jer. 5:31.

So, then, if a Christian youth voluntarily chooses the company of those who crave drugs, will he remain uncontaminated or will he be influenced to experiment with drugs? His single-handed effort to resist them will be very weak as compared to their all-out effort to "hook" him on drugs. They will try to arouse his curiosity, or appeal to his vanity (his desire to be thought a "good fellow"), or they may seek to awaken in him the desire for illicit pleasures, saying 'stolen waters are sweet.'—Prov. 9:17.

Many other types of bad associates might be mentioned, but perhaps the most common kind today are those who are unprincipled in the matters of sex. Can Christian men have companionship with homosexual sodomites (or Christian women with lesbians) and not be influenced by them? Can Christians indulge in petting (which some think is perfectly normal Saturday-night entertainment) and not become involved? Petting often leads to a lack of respect for each other, guilty consciences, venereal disease and unwanted pregnancies.

The Creator placed in man and woman a very strong mating instinct. No doubt this was done to make certain that the human race would not die out. Now because of human imperfection, because of inherited sin, because of the influence of Satan and his demons, and because of world conditions—as seen by the wave of pornographic literature and motion pictures that are flooding the world—it is harder than ever before to control this mating or procreative force until marriage and then limit it to one's own mate. Therefore one needs all the help one can get to lead a clean life. Good associations not bad associations will give one that help.

Yes, bad associates may pose as your friends but they are not interested in your welfare. They would like nothing better than to see you also enslaved in their bad habits, to ease their own consciences. But, whatever their motive, how foolish to choose such persons as companions! Surely to do so is to be misled, and to have your useful habits spoiled. By ignoring Bible principles you do not keep your integrity toward God.

You can also find bad associates that will spoil your useful habits within the pages of popular magazines or lewd novels. And when you watch immoral conduct portrayed on the stage, on the motion picture or TV screen, are you not also having association with those who are bad? And can these not also spoil your useful habits? They most assuredly can!

For our good the Bible counsels: "Let fornication and uncleanness of every sort or greediness not even be mentioned among you, just as it befits holy people; neither shameful conduct nor foolish talking nor obscene jesting, things which are not becoming. . . . Let no man deceive you with empty words, for because of the aforesaid things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. . . . Keep on making sure of what is acceptable to the Lord; and quit sharing with them in the unfruitful works that belong to the darkness, but, rather, even be reproving them."—Eph. 5:3-11.

"Do not be misled." There is no escaping it. You cannot walk on hot coals without scorching your feet, nor can you carry live coals in your bosom without being burned. (Prov. 6:27, 28) You cannot voluntarily associate with bad persons without being influenced to your harm. You cannot prove Bible principles untrue. Just as a rotten apple in a barrel in time causes the good apples close to it also to become rotten, so bad people influence for evil those who choose to associate with them. You cannot prove God a liar; his Word is truth.—John 17:17.

Not only should wisdom cause you to avoid bad associations but so should loyalty, love for your righteous Creator, Jehovah God, and for his righteous principles.—Jas. 4:4.