

Walking with Wise Men

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It says I said to read together verse 20 in unison. Everybody have it there? Are you ready? Here we go, all together,

20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

What happens when a man walks with wise men according to this verse? He's wise. He gains wisdom. What happens when a man walks with fools? He's destroyed. He comes to destruction. His life is ruined. And I want to talk this morning about "Walking with Wise Men." Walking with wise men.

When I started preparing this, I thought this is a message for young people and the more I studied this, the more I realized this is a message for all Christians and so let's pray and ask the Lord to speak to our hearts and help us.

Father in heaven, I thank you for the word of God and, Lord, Proverbs has always been a real favorite, I guess, of mine and these sayings and these practical statements you've given us that are so clear and are so helpful, so I pray you'd take this one thought, this one truth you've given us here, this one verse of caution and promise, and help us to take it very seriously regardless of our age, regardless of how long we've been saved. Help us to take this to heart. So Holy Spirit, I pray with all my heart that you fill me and that you would speak through me as I yield my will to you, present my body, and give us open hearts, help us to examine ourselves and evaluate what we're allowing to influence us, who we are allowing to influence us, who we associate with whether in person or through media. So please speak to us and help us I pray. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

I've said this often over the last 25+ years I've been pastor here, I said it often in previous ministries: God is concerned with every detail of our life and if you read the Bible very carefully, that comes out very clearly. The Bible addresses all different aspects of life. For instance, the Bible, did you know that God is concerned about how we use our time? It talks about redeeming the time. He talks in Proverbs particularly about the use of time and not being lazy and not squandering and wasting our time away. You know, every day goes by we never get that one back again. Every minute that goes by, it's gone, it's spent, it can never come back again. How many folks here if you could you would go back in

time and do some things differently? Anybody here? Sure, and so how we use our time is very very important. How we invest our time, God's concerned about that and he addresses that and he instructs us in that matter.

Another area the Bible and God is very concerned about is the use of our money. How many people were aware of the fact that God addresses the use of our finances? Sure, in fact, Jesus spoke often of that, about finances and how we use our money and the resources that God has entrusted us with. In fact, the fact of the matter is our money is really not our own, not as a child of God. I believe and our church believes, we've always taught and preached that the Bible teaches the tithe, teaching giving our tithe. I believe that's very clear and people like to argue with that a little bit. To me, it's very very clear; there's nothing to argue about as far as I'm concerned. And some people approach the tithe this way, they'll say, "Well, the money I have, it's all mine. I decide what to do with it." That's one approach. Other folks have this approach, "Well, the money I have, 90% of it is mine, 10% is God's. I give God his 10%, that other 90% is mine." I don't think that's scriptural. I think this is the scriptural approach: it's all God's and he entrusts me with it. I am a steward to care for the resources God has given me. So I didn't mean to go off on that, but some of you look like your wallets were very full so I thought I'd just touch on that.

No, God's concerned about how we use our time, how we invest our time. God's concerned with the use of our finances and how we invest that. Hey, get this one, God addresses and is very much concerned about how we talk. Boy, you read Proverbs, you go through and Jesus referenced this a lot. All through scripture is the lips, the mouth, talks about the lips of a fool, the tongue of the wise. Jesus said, get this, Jesus said that every idle word that we say we will have to give an account for someday. Man, if that doesn't put the fear of God in you, I don't know what will. Anybody here ever say something and you say, "Oh, why did I ever say that?" Anybody know what I'm talking about? Say something and you can't ever take it back?

And so God's concerned about the details of our life, our use and investment of our time, our use of our finances, how we handle our finances, how we talk. Here's one that doesn't usually go over too well but the Bible is very clear he is concerned about how we dress. The Bible talks about that. Now that's like I said, especially in this day and age, you know, people bristle with that a little bit but it's clear in the scripture to me. Let me just say this: God expects us to dress modestly. Can I get that much at least? Can I get at least get an amen on that? God expects us to dress modestly and not just the women, men also. Dress modestly, that's a foreign concept in our day and age. Can I put it this way and I'm not trying to be unkind, my responsibility is to teach and preach the Bible. I believe God expects ladies to dress like ladies and men dress like men. Excuse me.

So details of our life, our finances, our time, how we talk, how we dress. Here's one that is addressed occasionally throughout scripture: God's concerned with how we wear our hair. Now he's more concerned about some others than others about that. I was traveling this week and I saw a gal, I mean, I saw her and I thought, "Man, if I was allowed to have hair and I could have long hair, I'd want it like hers." It was the coolest thing in the world.

She had long hair and it was braided real tight braids, just thousands of them hanging down and had little things in it and I thought, "That's pretty cool. I'd look good in that." But God said, "No."

So I'm horsing around here a little bit but do you get the point I'm trying to make? Everything matters to God, the details of our life and some of these areas here. I was reading a sermon this week earlier in the week and the fellow made this statement, I forget who it was, Tozer or somebody made this statement, they said the Bible is not like a cafeteria where you can just kind of go through. Did you ever go to the cafeteria and you get that tray and, "I'll take some of that. No, thank you, I don't care for that. Oh yeah, I want lots of that. Oh, extra that, yeah, absolutely." Anybody know what I'm talking about? And he's saying the Bible is not that way. The Bible is more like the military, "Take it or leave it." Right?

So we need to take, if God is concerned about these areas of our life, the details of life, then we ought to be concerned about it, we ought to pay attention to what God says. How many people agree with me, we ought to pay attention to what God says? And it's not like a cafeteria where I can pick and choose, "I just want this or that." And one area of life that God is very concerned about and he addresses very clearly is dealt with in our text for today and that is this, our associations in life, who we associate with, who we are companions with, who we walk with. In one aspect, a very clear aspect of this was who our friends are.

Look at verse 20, "He that walketh with wise men," then the next part, "but a companion of fools." I put in the margin of my Bible and I maybe encourage you to do the same, I put in the margin of my Bible beside that verse the importance of right associates. Or you could word it this way, the importance of right friends. How many people agree it's important for young people to have the right kind of friends? How many people agree with me it's important for young couples to have the right kind of friends? How many people agree with me it's important for middle-aged folks to have the right kind of friends? Would you agree with me it's important for old people like 78 years old to have the right kind of friends?

"He that walketh with wise men," he that associates with wise men, he that chooses to be around wise men, "shall be wise: but a companion," somebody that associates with and put it in modern lingo, I just want to impress you that I know the modern lingo, he that hangs with fools. Impressive, huh? I'm telling you, I'm relevant. He that is "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." The importance of right associations, the importance of people – get this – the importance of people that I allow to influence me, God's concerned about that.

Now here's my thoughts. I'm already into the outline. Here's my first thought on this passage. I want us to consider the concept being presented here, the concept in this verse. Now what do I mean by concept? It's simple, it's not complicated. By concept I mean the thought or the idea, the teaching behind this passage. What is he teaching us? What is the concept here? What is he trying to say to us? It's very basic. It's very obvious. Who I

choose to associate with will have a profound impact upon my life. God has created us as social beings. I don't believe God created us to be alone. God created us to be a part of a society. The church is the body of Christ. It is the local, what's the term we use? The local assembly, coming together. God said when he created Adam, "It is not good for man to be," what? "Alone." And so God has created us as social beings. God has created us in many ways to need and desire the interaction with other people, however, when sin entered the world and man's nature fell and now we have a sinful nature, that natural, that God-given desire, that God-given need to interact with others now suddenly we need to be cautious about that because we have a sinful influence there. And who I associate, whether it's a wise man or it's a fool, who I associate with, who I walk with, who I'm a companion with has a profound impact upon the kind of person I am and who and what I am.

I put two ways that it's impacted. 1. The concept here, two aspects to this concept, number one, my associates, the people I associate with will influence what kind of person I will be. Now this is where we think of the young people as they're growing up. We say to them be very very careful who your friends are because they're going to influence you, they're going to have a profound impact on what kind of person you're going to be 5, 10, 15, 20, 30 years down the road. My associates have a profound impact.

Come over to chapter 22 of Proverbs and we're going to jump around Proverbs a good bit, we might go out of the book a time or two. Notice chapter 22 and verse 24 and I'm just giving an illustration here of people that I associate with, how they influence me, in this case in a very negative way. Proverbs 22, come down to verse 24 and notice what it says, "Make no," what? "Friendship." Can I just paraphrase that just for the sake of the message, the context of the message? Don't walk with this kind of person. Remember he said back in chapter 13, "He that walketh with wise men." Don't walk. Or a companion, make no friendship with what kind of person? "An angry man." Make no friendship with an angry man, "and with a furious man thou shalt not go." Don't walk with him. Don't be a companion with that and the next verse he tells us why. Look at verse 25, "Lest thou," what? "Learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul." Now this is just one illustration, just one case and in this case it's a negative aspect of this thought but he says, "Listen, you be real real careful about who you make friends with. You be very very careful about who you walk with. You be very very careful about who you're a companion with, you spend a lot of time with, who you choose to be with." And in this case that's an angry man, it's a furious man. Well, that's going to be a snare to your soul. That's going to hurt you spiritually. It's going to have a profound impact upon your life.

Now this is a negative application but that truth, that concept has both negative and positive implications. Did you ever notice you get around somebody, an angry person, and you end up being, what? Angry, I get angry. I try not to but it's a snare to my soul. Did you ever notice you get around a happy person and somebody that's kind of jovial and, boy, they're just happy, what happens? I tend to gravitate over to that and I get happy.

I visit in the nursing homes a good bit, the guys were there Thursday night making visits, and I think Ed was looking for a room. [laughter] I'm sorry, Ed. And I noticed when you walk down, Pastor Matt and I were visiting Helen the other day and we're walking down the aisle and there's people that are sitting out in the hallway there and I noticed two things about the folks in the nursing home when you walk down the aisle. 1. They look you in the eye. They always look at your eyes. I think I may have mentioned this recently. But another thing is this, when I smile to them, 80% of the time they'll, what? Smile back. Do you know what that is? That's influence. That's influence.

Did you ever watch somebody laugh and before you knew it you're laughing? You don't even know what they're laughing about. I remember years ago we had a Sword conference, Brother Smith was here and we had a couple of girls from the Northeast Baptist School of Theology, it doesn't exist anymore. But they had come down, they were providing special music. Anybody remember them, Emma and Becky, remember those girls and the others that were with them? They were a blessing and Brother Fox has a very unique laugh, "Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha." And one of those girls recorded him laughing on her phone and she made it her ringtone and every time her phone went off, "Aha, ha, ha, ha." And do you know what everybody around did? They started laughing also.

If you watch a video of somebody just laughing and laughing and laughing, it's not long, you can't help it, you just start smiling and you get cracked up and you don't even know what they're laughing at. Do you know what that's called? It's called influence and the concept here is this: the people I choose to be around, those who I choose to allow to influence me and I spend time with, I give attention to, that I want to be a companion with and walk with, they are going to have a profound influence on what kind of person I am going to be. What kind of person I will be.

Take your Bible, if you would, keep your place here because I want to look at other passages here, look at this verse here in chapter 13, but come back to 2 Samuel 13. I used to preach on this a good bit to young people in different places and it's a tragic story. 2 Samuel 13, this is David's son Amnon. How many people have ever heard of Amnon, David's son? David had another son, Absalom, by a different wife and he had a daughter by a different wife than Amnon. Absalom and Tamar were brother and sister. Amnon was a son of David, had a different mother than what they did, and let me say this before I read it and this is a bit of a disturbing passage and we won't look at the whole thing. It really is disturbing. I believe Amnon was a good man. I really do. I believe he had convictions. I believe he had a tender conscience and I believe that he was faithful, he was true and honest, and the reason I say that is Tamar trusted him. If you know the story, she trusted him. She had no reason to doubt his integrity, his purity, his intentions when he called her in later.

How many people, let me just ask this, this will help me, how many folks are at least somewhat familiar with this event, this story? All right. This is what the story is. Amnon "fell in love" with his half-sister Tamar, and he wanted her and he wanted her bad. Now look with me, if you would at verse, well, let's start in verse 1 of chapter 13. "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," by a different mother, "loved her. And Amnon was so vexed," I mean, it bothered him. I think he knew in his heart that his feelings for his half-sister were wrong. That word "vexed" means "troubled," it troubled him. And he 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." And that's where I say I think he was a good man. I think he had a good conscience. I think he had convictions. This is not right and he's really struggling with this. And as far as I can tell, in and of himself, though he was vexed and, boy, he was still having victory. He wasn't giving into what he wanted. He knew it was wrong. He knew he should not do this and up to this point he did not give in to his sinful desires.

But something happened. Look at verse 3, "But Amnon had a," what? "A friend," and that friend was a fool and that friend changed everything. Look what happens. "Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab," it was actually his cousin, I believe, "the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very," what? He's dishonest. He was "subtil," he was tricky, he was sneaky. Can I say this? Jonadab did not care what was right and wrong. Jonadab was not concerned about acting wisely or Amnon acting wisely and because of Jonadab's influence on Amnon, Amnon did some terrible terrible things that ultimately cost him his life. He walked with a fool and he was destroyed. He was destroyed.

So the concept here, first of all, is that my associates, who I am with, the kind of person I walk with, I am a companion with, has a profound influence on what kind of person I will be, what kind of person I am, my behavior. Again, I don't believe for one minute, I am convinced in my heart and mind and I could be wrong but I'm convinced that Amnon would never have done what he did had he walked with wise men, but because his friend was a fool, he acted foolishly and destroyed his life and destroyed other people's lives around him. He hurt Tamar deeply.

So my associates influence what kind of person I will be. The second aspect of this concept here is my associates – get this – identify what kind of person I am. You've all heard this saying: birds of a feather flock together. And I have seen that and I have seen that. When we used to take, when I was youth pastor we'd take young people down to camp. They weren't there, I don't know how in the world, they have some sort of, and it's probably true for all ages but I'm just picking on teens this morning, they have some sort of radar that picks up people who are just like they are, and they wouldn't be on the camp for, we went to one camp and there was like 600 kids there, teenagers, and they weren't there 10 minutes and all the rebels in the youth group had paired up with total strangers who just happened to be rebels. And all the kids that loved the Lord and were trying to live for God and trying to do right, they, somehow they ended up with kids of the same feather. Isn't that amazing?

So that tells me if I want to know what kind of person I am, if I want to know what I am like and get an accurate picture, sometimes we see ourselves differently than what we really are, if I want to know what am I, what kind of person am I, look around at the people you choose to associate with, look around at the people you choose to walk with

and that's a pretty good mirror of what kind of person I am. I used to put it this way years ago: I am now or I am becoming like the people I choose to associate with. A number of years ago, Dr. Smith was here, Dr. Sheldon Smith was here and we were talking about something, it was during a conference, we were having dinner together or something, I don't remember the exact setting, but we were talking about different movements within the Independent Fundamental Baptists, and I'm telling you right now, there are a lot of changes going on, taking place with the people that I would identify with, and just subtle changes and different things and we're talking 10-15 years ago, maybe more. And he made this statement and it stuck in my mind all these years and it was a word of caution. He said this, "You will fall the way you are leaning." You will fall the way you are leaning. What was he saying? He was saying the direction I'm going, the crowd I'm running with, the people I'm leaning with, that's where I'm going to end up being. That is a reflection of who and what I am.

I went to school with a number of good men, we were close friends. Within the school there when I was there, it was a pretty good size, and there were all stripes. I mean, you just had very very, there was unsaved people there, there was carnal, there was people that were just lukewarm, there were some on fire for God, and I came down there, a new Christian, I was fired up, I wanted to do right, I loved the Lord, I wanted to serve God. I didn't know how or where or what or what was going to happen but I just wanted to serve God. And we got together some of us and after we graduated, my buddies and I kind of went our ways. I'm glad to say a lot of the fellows I went to school with today are sticking true to the old book and standards and gospel and soul-winning and what is right. But a bunch of them have changed and some that were pretty close to me, and I watched them and it was just little subtle areas, just a little crowd they would run with, just a little group they would go here that on the surface and it wasn't all that, but they were leaning and today there are some that are so far gone from the old book and the old paths and what is right and true, and they're out there. Do you follow what I'm saying? Is everybody with me? I didn't hear anybody say anything there. All right, good, okay. Phew, I got worried for a second there.

So it tells me a lot of what I am by the people I choose to be with. Maybe I go a little overboard, maybe I'm overly cautious but I try to be very very careful about who the preachers are I bring through here. I try to be very very careful because they will influence us. I am not a member, I do not attend and I am not a member of the Ministerial Association because that is not where I want to be and that does not reflect who I believe I am and what I want to be, and I don't want to be influenced that way. Now do you follow what I'm saying? Very very careful.

We try to be very very careful in our music we bring in here. I would far rather err on the side of caution because who we walk with, who we associate with has a profound impact upon who and what we are. And maybe you say, "Preacher, you could lighten up on some of that stuff." And probably maybe but I want to walk with wise men. I don't want to be a companion of fools. I don't want to end up that way.

I like this statement as I was studying this and it's so obvious but I think it's profound: if I walk with wise men, I will end up where wise men end up, and if I walk with fools, if I'm a companion of fools, then I'm going to end up, where? Where fools end up, right? So where do wise men end up? Where do wise men? They end up with greater wisdom. They end up with the blessings of God, successful in life. He behaved himself wisely. He acted wisely. He made wise decisions and thus he was successful and had God's blessings. Here is a fool and they behaved themselves foolishly and they make foolish decisions and their lives are destroyed. Their lives are destroyed.

Some of us have been around long enough we've seen it happen to people. Pastor Matt and I talk a lot and, "Man, they've got potential. That kid's got potential. She's got potential. He's got potential." But a huge factor on how they actually end up in life is going to be the associates they have. There's a church has tremendous potential, that church could be something for the power of the gospel and influencing this world with the gospel, but who they run with, who they bring in, their associates are going to have a profound impact on whether they're going to be wise or not, whether they're going to have an effect or not.

So the concept here is simply this: who we associate with, who we run with, who we walk with, who we are companions with has a profound influence on what we will be and reflects in many ways what we are. Write this statement down: it is important that we have right associations. It is important. I was reading, I mentioned in Sunday school I'm reading actually a couple of books right now, one on missionaries around the world, primarily the South Pacific, but I was reading about Hudson Taylor, how many people recognize that name, Hudson Taylor? A great missionary to, where? China. Made a profound impact on the church in his day for missions. And after he had passed off the scene and Communism was settled in and taking hold of China, the Communist government, and I wasn't aware of this until this week because I read this, the Communist government commissioned an author, a Communist author, and get this, they commissioned him to write a biography of Hudson Taylor. Now my first thought was this, why in the world would the Chinese Communist government want a biography of Hudson Taylor? He's the exact opposite of what everything they represent and stand for. Their purpose was this, they wanted him to write a biography of Hudson Taylor that was filled with misinformation, dishonesty, they wanted to discredit his name and testimony because of the influence he was still continuing to have in China and it was hindering their Communistic goals.

So they commissioned this guy to write basically fake news about Hudson Taylor and he accepted the commission and he began studying and researching and interviewing people that knew Hudson Taylor and putting things together, and the more he associated with Hudson Taylor, so to speak, the more he realized how wrong Communism and Atheism was and Hudson Taylor's pure, wise, godly influence indirectly through interviews and reading his writings and his sermons, the fellow at risk of his own life put the pen down, canceled his involvement in that project and became a Christian. I thought, "Wow!" You talk about the influence of associations even indirectly through something like that.

So that's the concept. 2. I want us to consider the characteristics that are referenced here in this passage. The wise and the fool, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise but a companion of fools." How do I identify if a person is wise or if they're a fool? How do you know? Can I just look at them and say, "Well, that guy's a fool. Well, she's wise." How do we identify that? Well, the Bible gives us some, the Bible gives us a lot of information on this and I don't have time to give everything I've got here, although it's snowing, there's nothing to do, we might as well just spend the day. No, let me just give them to you quickly.

1. I put this down: a wise man is teachable. Chapter 1, verse 5; chapter 9:9; and chapter 10:14 of Proverbs tells us that a wise man is teachable. He is willing to learn. In fact, let me just read that first passage, chapter 1, verse 5, "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning." However a fool is a know-it-all. A fool, you can't teach a fool nothing. Do you ever say this about someone, "You can't tell that guy nothing. They know everything. Man, they don't learn anything. They won't study. They won't sit under anybody." It's a fool. A fool.

A wise man is teachable. Do you know who I thought of as I was studying that section out? I thought of Jesse Harsh. Old Jesse Harsh was a wise man. He said some of the most profound statements in the world. He said some of the most hilarious statements in the world. But he was 80-some years old, I think, when he showed up here late '70s, early '80s, am I right, Charlie? Where's Charlie? Oh, he's out in the parking lot frozen solid. Old Jesse showed up here, he started asking me questions. He was from a different denomination a little bit. He started asking me questions. He'd come and say, "Preacher, what about this in Revelation?" I'd say, "Well, it's exactly what it says." He said, "What about this in creation here?" And he'd say, "What do you think about this?" And he'd come and finally he was going to another church on Sunday mornings and he'd come here Sunday nights and he'd ask me these questions. I realized pretty quick that that was stuff that was preached on in the morning. He said, "Do you think Genesis 1, that's literal or is that just an allegory?" I'd say, "No, it's literal." He'd say, "Revelation, do you think that's prophetic or...?" I said, "Yeah, that's exactly what it says." Next time he came he said, "What about Jonah, what do you think about Jonah?" I said, "I'll tell you what I think, Jesse, you need to get out of that church and get somewhere where they believe the Bible." He said, "That's what I thought." Eighty years old and he says, "I want to join the church. I want to follow the Lord in baptism." How about that? He'd come to Bible Institute late '70s, early '80s. He's attending Bible Institute and learning. He'd come to me and I'm telling you the truth and Charlie can verify it, he'd go out the back door tears rolling down his cheek. He said, "Preacher, I wish I'd heard these things 50 years ago." Do you know what he was? He was teachable. That's wisdom. Wisdom.

So a wise man is teachable so I want to associate, I want to walk with somebody who doesn't know it all, I want to walk with somebody that sits and listens to the teacher, sits and takes it in, is willing to learn. That involves humility, not some proud, "Ain't telling me nothin'." I don't want to hang around with that, they're going to be destroyed. A wise person is someone that fears God. Chapter 9, verse 10, that fears God and what does that mean? There's all kinds of definitions for that word "fear." I think this is what he's saying

there: a wise person is somebody that understands, "I am accountable to my Creator. I have to answer to God and I respect that and I fear that, to an extent, to use that word. I understand that. I respect that. I understand that some day I have to give an account to my Creator." That's wisdom. A fool says, a Psalm tells us a fool says there is no God. A fool says nobody has authority over my life. Let me put it this way, a fool says this, "Ain't nobody telling me what to do." Fool. A wise man fears God and says, "You know what? I need to watch my P's and Q's. I've got to be careful because I am accountable. I'm accountable." I want to walk with a guy that fears God. I want to walk with a guy that respects our supreme authority in life. I don't want to be a companion of somebody, "Ain't nobody telling me what to do. I'm gonna do what I want, when I want. No fear." Sorry, that ends in destruction.

A wise man receives correction, chapter 9, verse 8. He's willing to be corrected. If he's wrong, he accepts it humbly. A fool says, gets mad if somebody corrects them or chastens or, you know, in some way corrects them. Man, they get mad, they get bitter, they're ready to fight. Do you know who I thought of as I was studying this, a wise man receives correction? I thought of King David when he messed up and Nathan, the prophet Nathan said, "Thou art the man." What did David do? [punching sound] He didn't do that. He humbled himself and said, "You're right. I've sinned." Read Psalm 51, that's David's response to Nathan's correction. That's wisdom. Wisdom. I want to be with somebody that's wise, that is willing to receive correction so I can learn that and I can be that way.

When I was down at Highland Park Baptist Church, huge, run 6,000 in the auditorium plus all the other ministries, and there was an assistant pastor there at the time, this was early on in my years down there, his name was Dr. Cliff Robinson. And one day and I don't remember what it was, I do not remember what the circumstance was that prompted this but I tell you, I remember clear as if it was yesterday sitting in a student body chapel and Dr. Cliff Robinson got up, 4,000+ students, Dr. Cliff Robinson gets up and he says, "Yesterday," and I don't remember what he said or did something, and he made this, he said, "I was wrong." And he says, "We must never get too big to admit that we are wrong. We must never get too big to be willing to be corrected." And man, that had a profound impact on my thinking, that somebody of that caliber, that public would say, "I was wrong."

So a wise man receives instruction, a fool gets angry and hates the one that tries to correct them. A wise man is pure in his heart and mind, chapter 14, verse 16. A wise man doesn't want to sin against God, a fool doesn't care about right and wrong, he just wants what he wants. "I want to get what I want and I want it. I don't care."

A wise man sees beyond the immediate, chapter 22 in verse 3; chapter 27 in verse 12. It says, "The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself." Now this is significant to me. A wise person, a prudent person, a wise person says, "You know, I'm going to look beyond the immediate and I'm going to see what the consequences of this decision are going to be 5, 6, 10 weeks, months, years down the road. I want to look beyond the immediate, what action, what consequences is me taking this action, what is going to be the effect down the road?" A prudent man foreseeth the evil and he hideth himself. If I

make this decision, then that's going to be true. I'm not going to do that. I'm going to hide myself in that. If I react this way, then that's going to be the consequences. I'm not going to react that way. That's wise. A fool just goes barging in.

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself but the simple pass on and are punished." "Just do it. I don't care. I'll worry about tomorrow tomorrow. I'm doing this now. It doesn't matter how it affects my kids. It doesn't matter how it affects my church. It doesn't matter how it affects my business. It doesn't matter how it's going to affect my family or my future. This is what I want to do and I'm gonna do it." A wise man says, "You know, if I make that decision, if I take that action, if I react this way, you know, down the road there's going to be consequences. I'd better not do that." That's the kind of person we ought to be with. A fool says, "Just do it." A wise man says, "Well, what's the effect going to be? What's the result going to be?"

A wise man, I put this one down, wins souls, Proverbs 11:30, "he that winneth souls is," what? I want to be around people that care about others and their eternal destiny. I want to be around people that care enough to get involved in people's lives to try and bring them to Christ. Do you know what I found kills my soul-winning zeal? Hang around people that have no soul-winning zeal. I was with Larry Kuntz this week, Director of Bible Time. That guy is a soul-winner. The previous director was a soul-winner. I like being around them because I get stirred up and then I want to win souls.

So the concept is this: who we associate with influences us tremendously and the characteristics of the wise and fool, and I end with this, the consequences of walking with wise men. "He that walketh with the wise man shall be wise." Shall be wise. He the "companion of fools is going to be destroyed." What do you want? What do I want for our church? Do I want our church to be a wise, soul-winning, pure, God-fearing, Christ-honoring, loving church? Or do I want it to be destroyed? Much of that has to do with who we run with, who we allow to influence us. What about your home? What about your life? Young people, what about your future? What do you want your future to be? You don't care? It sounds like a fool talking to me. You want to be wise and want to be successful and fulfill the purpose God created you, stand before the judgment seat of Christ, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"? Well, then you'd better be careful that only wise people influence you. Am I making sense, everybody okay?

So the consequences are profound. Can I say this? We ought to be friendly to everybody, amen or not? You ought to be friendly to everybody but we ought to be very selective about our friends. Ought to be friendly to everybody. I don't care who it is, the biggest fool in town, I'm going to be friendly to him. But I'm not going to be tight friends with him because I want to walk with the wise.

When I first got saved, did I ever tell you about it, May 7, 1979? I got saved, I had a bunch of friends, I'm using that term loosely, I had a bunch of friends. Now when I got saved, God changed my life immediately, I mean, drastically and I don't know why. Other people it doesn't happen for everybody this way but for whatever reason when God saved me, it was bold and different person instantly. And I did not deliberately abandon

my friends. I mean, I didn't even think about it. They were my friends but as I began to grow, I mean, within a very brief time I was a completely different, I had completely different values, I had a completely different perspective on life and God and everything, and guess what happened to my friends I had then? Anybody want to guess? They started falling off. They disappeared. They faded away. I didn't push them away. I didn't say, "I can't be your friend no more, you're smoking dope." I didn't say that, I just didn't smoke dope. They did. They weren't interested and I didn't do this and I didn't do everything to get along with that horrific lifestyle and they just faded off.

And now I was friend-less for a period of time in my mind, and so I was attending church and a whole new culture, a whole new world, a whole new everything. These people were way different than what I associated with before. So just if they were in the church and they were a Christian, boom, they were my friends and a bunch of these "friends" got me to go to a Christian rock concert. I mean, explosions, lights, smoke. I'm sitting there and there's thousands of people. I'm sitting there and I'm thinking, "This is what I just came out of. This is what messed me up to begin with." And I learned something early on that just because they're in church or just because they're a Christian doesn't mean I ought to walk with them. And there were some that were very loose in their morals. Were they saved? Probably, I think so, but they were pretty loose in their morals and they were pretty loose with their standards and they were pretty immodest and I thought, "I need to be a little more selective on who I walk with." I was friendly, I hope I was, and I got to Bible college and here I found you have the whole spectrum, and I learned early on that I need to deliberately walk with the wise or I'm going to be messed up. I'm going to be messed up. And that's what we need to do as a church and that's what we need to do as individual Christians.

What are we allowing to influence us? Now I had a whole lot of other thoughts. What about television? What about the books we read? What about the stuff we look at on the computer? What about the music we listen to? Is it wise? Does it meet the criteria of wisdom or is it foolish? Because it's going to have a profound profound impact on us.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, I ask, Lord, that you would take these thoughts and I trust they apply to our lives, that your Holy Spirit would speak to our hearts and apply them to our lives. Help us to be very very careful young and old, as a church and our ministries, me as a pastor and, Lord, help us to be wise that somebody would want to walk with us to be wise, that our influence would be that.

With our heads bowed and our eyes closed and you'd say, "Preacher, God spoke to my heart and I need to pay a little more attention to this and maybe examine and evaluate what I'm allowing to influence my heart and mind." And you'd say, "Pray for me, preacher, that I would be wise in what I allow to influence me." Is there any like that by the uplifted hand? "Preacher, pray for me. God has spoken to my heart." And it's not just young people though it does include them but all of us. Any others? "Preacher, I need to be careful." Maybe there's something glaring, the Holy Spirit is glaring in our hearts and

minds and says, "That has to go. That has to be changed. That has to be addressed." I urge you this snowy morning, address it. Get that right. Let the Lord have his way.

Is there some this morning that say, "Preacher, I want to be the wise man. I want to be that wise person that has a positive influence, that draws people to Christ, that uplifts and encourages and strengthens." Is there any like that? "Preacher, that's my desire to be that one that they could walk with me." God bless you. Hands all around.

Is there someone here this morning that would say, "Preacher, I'm not sure I'm saved. I can't honestly say I know for sure I'm going to heaven when I die." I tell you, the wisest thing in the world is to trust Jesus Christ as Savior. Is there any like that? "Preacher, pray for me. I'm not sure that my sins are forgiven and I'm on my way to heaven. I need that settled. I need God's forgiveness and cleansing of my sin that I can be saved." Any at all?

Father, bless now our invitation and I ask that you would have your way in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's stand together. Our heads are bowed, eyes are closed. We don't have the piano this morning. I'm going to ask Brother Mark would you be able to....