

## The Influence of Worldly Friends

7-13-14 PM

The Bible presents two views of worldly friendships (we might define them as friends who are not Christians). Both are found in the same letter of I Corinthians:

I Corinthians 5:9-13 - worldly friends are not a sin

I Corinthians 15:33 - worldly friends are dangerous

As we see in I Corinthians 5:9, we can have friends who are not Christians. In fact, in Luke 16:1-9 Jesus taught that it was useful. We see that Paul had them (The *Asiarchs* of Acts 19:30-32). Ultimately, these are the people whom we bring to Christ

But we need to be VERY careful with non-Christian friends, which is the point of the second verse. We can summarize this with three reasons:

1. They can influence us
2. They can influence us
3. They can influence us

First, they can influence us if we feel the need to be a follower. There is nothing wrong with being a follower; a Christian is a follower of Christ. But whom do we follow? The Bible suggests we should follow the examples of righteous men among us; too often, we follow our worldly friends. They run into ungodly behavior, and by the pressure of influence we follow them.

Second, there is another way which non-Christian friends influence us. They end up easing our attitudes towards sin. This seems particularly true when they have "Christian" values. When we do not make it clear in our minds they are not in Christ, we begin to accept their conduct as righteous. Remember, even if it is not conscious, they desire to "convert" us too. Recall the words of Paul in II Corinthians 6:14-18 - do not be unequally yoked with the unbeliever.

Finally, understand that sometimes their relationship with us is driven by the fact that they are ministers of Satan (II Corinthians 11:15). They draw us into sin intentionally; they DO NOT have our best interests. Think of Delilah in Judges 16:4-19. Such was Samson's weakness, to have a "friend" of worldly value.

So how do we handle friends who are not Christians?

#1 - DO NOT be a follower. Now that you know that you choose whom you follow, make a conscious choice NOT to be a follower of worldly people.

#2 - KNOW the doctrine of the world. Be aware that worldly friends have perspectives that are tainted and dangerous. Be aware of their religious flaws, and do not imitate them.

#3 - GIVE UP evil companions. MANY friends are just bad news. Leave them out of your life.

Conclusion: Remember that worldly friendships can be useful. However, we must control those relationships. Finally, in many cases, we may need to sever those relationships