

One Friend - How To Choose A Good Friend

Sermon Title: **Part 3 - One Friend - How to Choose A Good Friend**

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Nathaniel Bronner: If you are around someone who has bad habits, they will eventually corrupt your good habits.

Female: You are listening to brothersoftheword.com. This is Part 3 of the message titled "One Friend", subtitled "How To Choose A Good Friend" by Nathaniel Bronner. This message is number 5644, that's 5644. Listen to over a thousand free messages on brothersoftheword.com

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Female: And now for 5644, One Friend, Part 3, How To Choose A Good Friend.

Nathaniel Bronner: Welcome to Brothers of the Word, because brother, you need the word.

And today, is the third and final part of a series that I had been preaching called, One Friend and the series originated from my youngest son, George, who's nine years old and there were some changes going on in his school and some of his friends weren't going to be in his class for the next year and my wife was concerned about it and she said, "George, what if you don't have any of your friends in class next year?" And my son spoke the profound words, "Mama, I don't need but one friend." And Part 1 dealt with the power of a friend and how much it changes our lives when we just have one good and true friend. Part 2 dealt with how to be a friend, so many of us want friends, but we don't know how to be a friend and the Bible says if a man wants friends, he ought to show himself friendly. So, Part 2 dealt with how to be a good friend. And today, I want to deal with how to choose a good friend.

And a poet once said, "Ask not about the person, but about who he accompanies. For everyone emulates whom he associates with." So, don't even ask about the person, all you have to do is ask who are they running around with? And when you find out who they are running around with, you find out about the person. The old adage that goes, "Birds of the feather, flock together," and not only do they flock together, they go to the same destination.

So what does the Bible say? What does the word of God say about choosing friends? The Old Testament, Proverbs 13:20, He

who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.” The Bible says basically if your friends, if your companions are wise people then you’ll be wise, but if your friends are fools -- it didn’t even say you’d be a fool, it’d say you’d be destroyed. What does the New Testament say? Corinthians 15:33, Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” So, if you are around someone who has bad habits, they will eventually corrupt your good habits. Old Testament, Proverbs 22:24, “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man, do not go: lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.” He said, don’t even go with anybody who just always mad. Don’t even associate yourself with someone always fussing and complaining and bellyaching and mealy-mouthed and just mad at the world. See, if you do, it will set a snare for your soul.

New Testament, 1 Timothy 6:3, “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud knowing nothing from such, withdraw yourself.” Basically what it says, this is -- look, if they’re not doing good stuff and talking good stuff and if they’re not in the same faith, if they’re not confessing Jesus, basically, it said, withdraw yourself, get away, move away, get away from them and don’t associate with them. If they’re not confessing Jesus and if they’re not talking good words because everybody who confesses Jesus, doesn’t good talk good words. As a matter of fact, 95% of the folks in jail believe in God, so just because they confess religion does not mean that they’re really walking a proper path. Old Testament, Proverbs 12:26, “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.” Choose your friends carefully.

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New Testament, 2 Timothy 3:2, “In the last days, perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” That’s a long list of stuff. But basically, what it says is, it starts like, they’re going to be lovers of themselves,

lovers of money and lovers of pleasure, from such people, turn away. Don't let them become your closest friends or else, it will lead you into destruction and into trouble.

Now, this last verse, most associate this actually with marriage, but in the context, it is really written and spoken, it's really not talking about marriage, but we use it for marriage, it's applicable to marriage, but it wasn't necessarily talking just about marriage. 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness and what communion has light with darkness and what accord has Christ with belief or what part has a believer with an unbeliever and what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God as God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them, I will be their God and they shall be my people. Therefore, come out from among them and be separate,' says the Lord." It's important who you choose as your friend.

I did a series a few years back called "The 10 Most Important Decisions of Life." And if you go and listen to that series and listen to those 10 Most Important Decisions of Life, decision number one was choosing the right friends. It's why parents are so concerned about who their children are running around with, it's an old country belief, but it's just as modern as it can be. Who you're running around with will determine where you will go. I was on a panel once and I remember a group of men asked me the question, they said, "Pastor Bronner, how can I tell my destiny? How can I tell where I'm going?" I said, "Simple thing." I said, "You haven't heard anybody say this before, but just look at who you're running with." Who you're running with will tell you where you're headed because if you're running with people who are going up, that's where you're going. If you're running with people going down, that's where you're going. Just look around and see who you're running with and that's going to give you a very good idea of where your destiny, your future is headed by just who you are running with.

If you ask anyone who was the greatest king, most people are going to say King David. Solomon was second but it was not an accident that Solomon was David's son, but David had the greatest friendship recorded in the Bible, absolutely the greatest. So, the greatest king had the greatest friendship and most who are any kind of halfway decent biblical scholars or

know halfway about the Bible, know who David's friend was and David was a shepherd, but he became the best friend of the king's son. Who you run with depends on where you go. David was out in the field, minding goats and sheep, but he became a friend of the king's son. Who you run with, it influences where you go. So David, our shepherd boy, our tender of sheep became the best friend of the king's son. So when he became best friend of the king's son, yeah, he had a divine destiny on him, but God placed him and he did some practical things. He put him around royalty, he became the best friend of the king's son.

See, the king's son felt like a king, he walked like a king, he talked like a king because people let me tell you, there's a difference between people on the top and people on the bottom and the way they think, the way they walk and the way they talk. I don't want to try to sound elitist, it's just real. There's a difference in the way you talk. When you change levels, your mindset changes, you talk different, you think different, you behave different, you want different things, you respond to life differently. So David left the fields and he became best friend with the king's son. There wasn't a higher natural position of anybody he could have become friends with, but the king himself. But he became friends with the man, who was supposed to be the next king.

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He walked with him, talked with him, ate with him, they laughed together. I don't know what they talked about, but I can imagine David may have talked about some things in the field and Jonathan talked about some things in the kingdom. David talked about some things that he saw down while he was grooming the sheep. Jonathan talks about some physical(ph) stuff, some things about politics and how you handle yourself, which fork to use at the royal table. There's a difference, so he began to groom David and he may not have done it consciously because people when you are around somebody, what they breathe on you gets on you.

We had the comedian, Sommore recently at our comedy show. And Sommore had her hair in what's called a pompadour. It's a little flip that comes up and that's the way she was wearing her hair and she said she's real careful about people she's around. She doesn't like to be around anybody with stinking breath and

Sommore said because folks with bad breath breathe on her and it stinks up her pompadour. And people that sounds funny and it wasn't a comedy routine, but it's real.

You see when you are around spirit and words when they began to speak it, it gets on you and their words send out a vapor into ether ways and it gets on you. Their thought patterns, get on you. How they handle situations, get on you. So when they're going through something and how they respond to it, gets on you. That's why you cannot be around a person who smokes cigarettes and you don't start smelling like cigarettes, you just can't do it. You cannot be around a person who smokes weed or some of you all know it is Mary Jane. You all know what I'm talking about, whatever name you call it, you know what it is and you can't be around a person constantly smoking and the stuff that get on you and as a matter of fact, if you are around someone smoking this stuff, long enough the stuff that just get on you, you get what's called a contact high. So you get a contact high, but the same principle applies either way if you are around negative folks, always talking down, always talking about what life has done to them, you'll get a contact low. So you can get a contact high from those who are in a priestly position or you get a contact low from those who are down low. So, it's important for you to choose your friends based on where you want to go.

And I know some of you are saying, "Pastor, that's just elitist. You ought to be friends with everybody." "Oh no, you all not to be because that's not even biblical." God had nothing to do with that kind of thing. You see that's a failure kind of thing. It sounds good, it's just not true. See, there are a lot of things that sounds good, it's just not true. It sounds like it's nice. It sounds like it's elevated, it's just not true. God told them, He said, "Come out from among them, separate yourself from them." Whenever God wanted to take people to another level, he always separated them from that old stuff. He always separated them from the stuff that kept them down. So, if you want to go to another level -- see, first choice, you've got to mean, do I want to change? And see, sometimes you don't, sometimes you're just as happy as you can be where you are and you have lived your life. Pastor, I know where I want to be. There's nothing wrong with that. Everybody is not meant to be king and most people would not be happy as king. If you have achieved contentment where you are, and with who is around you, that's fine. But, if there's

something that God has placed up on the inside of you, just trying to come up out of you, sometimes when you wake in the morning, you know you're not where you're supposed to be. You know it's supposed to be better than this. You know this is not all that life got for you, that's the person I'm talking to, that's the one who needs to make a change. See, I wanted to make a change even in business and I wanted to take business to another level and to be honest, I was already successful, but that's one of the principles about life.

Jesus put it this way, He says, "To them who hath it, shall be added unto." To them who have not even that they think they got will be taken away them. The world calls it this, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. I don't like that principle, but it's just real. See, it doesn't necessarily sound good, but it's true. You will find that anybody who is rich in anything, they have a tendency to get richer in that thing. I don't care what it is. Go to a non-mandatory educational class. What I mean by non-mandatory, I mean you've got to go through a certain amount of time just in school. Once you go to college, go to grad school, what you will find is you'll find the folks and they're already folks with knowledge. They're not the stupid folks, they're not the drop-outs, they're the folks with knowledge.

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The higher up you go, the more you will find the folks who already got the knowledge. Then you say, well, if they already got the knowledge, why do they need even more knowledge for? It's the principle. It's the principle of the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. So, I was already doing okay, but I said I want to do better. I want to move to another level and then when I read the material that talked about your income is going to be the average of your five closest acquaintances, as your five closest friends. I said, "Shoot, I make more money than everybody I know." I said, "I got to do something about it. I make more money than all of my friends."

Now, that's fine if you're far as you want to go, but if you want to make a change, you've got to move from the level of where you are -- as a matter of fact, some of my closest friends was highly broke all the time and you know what was happening when they were highly(ph) broke, I mean it would just be broke, broke, broke. I can't pay this. You know what was happening? And I

felt my pocket just drying up. The more they talk, I couldn't even focus on business because they're just talking about how bad their business, how bad their money, bad, bad, but no ideas about how to get out of it, just talking about how bad it is and before I know it, I'm getting a low contact. I'm just getting a contact low from that stuff. So, I had to say, I got to change my association, you've got to choose your friends and if you are content where you are, I am not knocking there. That is a blessed place to be content.

And you've got to be really careful about using what I call "narrow-based criteria" to choose your friends. You don't want to just choose your friends because they got money because they may have money and they're missing everything else. So, you don't want to just choose your friends based on narrow criteria. I would like to advise people, you need a balanced life in all five of the areas: The spiritual, your mental, your physical, your financial and your relationship. You need to choose friends who balance in all of those areas, so every one of those areas will say, I wouldn't mind being just like them in that area because guess what? People, when you start associating with them, they will pull you to be just like them in that area.

Now, sometimes, they're strong in one area. My best friend who passed away recently, we've just had a lot of fun. He had spirit. I mean, I would call him up on the phone, he called me, I just went to smiling because you all got friends like that it's just phone(ph). And sometimes people you just need to ask them, but it's just phone. But business wise, terrible difference because he never had any money, all since I've known him, if you lend him money, you ain't going to get it back. Bottom line, he just blew, threw money, messed up his money, always broke, never would handle his money right. He married a superwoman that helped him get his money straight and he actually went into accounting, took out all the money, blew it ahead. I was just as mad. I had to fly down there, tried to hold them together because she was about to leave that house because she cannot take all the money.

See, if you marry somebody, because that's friend, whoever you're tied to, you marry somebody and (00:17:59) money back, guess who's going to take your money? Guess what's going to happen? It's going to get on you and you will get the bad money. You know, you go in somebody's Camber shops and they got

what they call this money spray and all that. That's stuff don't work, but I can tell you this, getting around folks who've got bad money, that stuff will get on you. So, it got on her and messed up all of the money, had to end up taking his name of all of the accounts, but he was a super guy and once she handled all of the money, their relationship was just excellent. And I will call them and then we would just laugh because it would be nonsense. It would be nonsense. It was like going to a comedy movie. It would just be nonsense, so I understood this was not a friend who elevated me, this was a friend who relieved me. And sometimes, you got to understand there's a difference. So, life and friends make a huge difference.

Now, I want you to understand I'm going to report through the 1 Samuel 14th chapter. One day, Jonathan son of Saul said to the young man bearing his armor, "Come, let's go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side. But he did not tell his father. Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, "Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few." "Do all that you have in mind," the armor-bearer said. "Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul." Jonathan said, "Come, then; we will cross over towards the men and let them see us. If they say to us, 'Wait there until we come to you,' we will stay where we are and not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come up to us,' we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands." So both of them showed themselves to the Philistine outpost. "Look!" said the Philistines. "The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in." The men of the outpost shouted to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, "Come up to us and we'll teach you a lesson." So Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Climb up after me; the Lord has given them into the hands of Israel."

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Jonathan climbed up using his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer right behind him. The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer followed and killed behind him. In that first attack, Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre. Then panic struck the whole army -- those in the camp and field, and those in the

outposts and raiding parties -- and the ground shook. It was a panic sent from God.

The point is this. Jonathan and his armor-bearer went up, the two of them killed 20 men, so Jonathan was a great warrior. David was a great warrior. Jonathan was royal blood set to be king. David became the greatest king. The Bible said, Saul has killed his thousands, but David has killed his 10,000. Jonathan killed 10 to 1 and Jonathan was in the front, the armor-bearer just coming behind cleaning up, so this man went through and killed 20 men. So he was a great -- see, great warriors and wimps don't mix. Great warriors and wimps don't mix. Great warriors and wimps don't mix, so if you want to be a great warrior, you need to get around a great warrior and it will take you to another level. Choose your friends carefully.

And you see in life -- let me just give you an example, I'm going to use this clothes hanger(ph). Let's just say you're walking and you stumped your toe on something, you say, "Aw." There are three types of friends that I'll show just kind of this continuum. There is the highest type that will tell you, "I see that you've stumped your toe. You should move that obstacle out of the way and make sure that you note where it is if it's unmovable so that you do not stumped your toe again and if you can't move the obstacle, if it has to stand on your path of travel then I would suggest you get you some steel-toed shoes so if you do hit your toe, it won't hurt your toe." So your highest level of friends will tell you a direction to eliminate or reduce the negative thing that is happening to you and move you towards the positive.

And there's the middle level of friend, who will say, "I stumped my toe last week, too. As a matter of fact, I stumped it week before last and my toe still hurt." I know what that's like to have it hurt until, "Oh man, you hit that thing like that it's just go all through body. I stumped my toe last year. Yeah, I understand exactly how you feel with that stumped toe." That's the middle level of friend, they sympathize, they empathize with you, they're on the same level as you are and as a result, both of you go through the rest of your lives stumping your toes.

Then there is the lowest level of friend. The lowest level of friend says this, "Let's see what it feels like to stomp our toe." The lowest level of friend will take you from where you are in the middle all the way down to the bottom. "Let's see what it

feels like to take a hit of this. Let's see what it feels like to do this." The lowest level of friend will take you even from where you are to where you shouldn't be, the middle level just keeps you where you are, but the real type of friend that you truly need will take to you a higher level.

Choosing your friends. It is one of the 10 most important decisions of life. Choose them carefully, choose them carefully, choose them carefully and if you can't get the type of friend that you want then you got to be that kind of friend, that kind of fellow a woman wants. You've got to start improving yourself to where they will be drawn to you because water seeks its own level and you've got a person who's really doing well and you're on a really bad side, they're not going to want to fool with you, so you had to start training yourself. You can have close friends that you've never met by reading everything they've ever written. Listen to everything they've ever spoken.

There's so many resources of great men and women that you can surround yourself with their spirit and you never met Jesus, but you know his words. You never met Paul, but you know his words. You never met Moses, but you know his words, so there are countless examples of great men and women who have put their blood and soul and it's just reading material or spoken material. There are over a thousand sermons on brothersoftheword.com that you can download and listen to all day long absolutely free. If you can't have a friend in the flesh, have a friend in the spirit who you surrounds yourself with will change and determine the direction in which you go, higher where you are or lower. That choice is up to you.

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But it does make a difference of who you associate with. Choose your friends wisely and perhaps my closest friend on earth right now is actually my youngest brother James. We're the oldest and youngest of my father's children and each of us has sharpened each other. There's an 18-year gap between our ages. Age doesn't matter, but maturity does because you know some old fools(ph), there are some old fools and there are some very young mature people, so the age is not the important.

The important thing is that you latch on to someone who's going to take to a ride on the star. You latch onto someone who has

dreams and who is actively pursuing those dreams. Look at those five areas and you latch onto somebody where you could say, I would not mind my life being exactly like theirs because that's exactly where they will take you, exactly where they are. Whatever your goal is in life, if it's a physical goal, latch onto somebody where their body looks exactly like you want yours to look because they will take you there. All the stats show it. Not only does your money but your body will be the average of your five closest acquaintances. Bottom line, you want a good relationship, you need to hang with somebody who got a good relationship, you just really do. Don't you hang with nobody you know -- I don't even have to go there, but you understand. You need to hang with somebody who has whatever you want out of life. If you want money, hang with somebody with some money, hang with somebody that can take you to lunch.

I took a member out to dinner the other day and we were out and he's looked at the thing, he said, "Man." I said, "Whatever you want to order, I'll buy them." So whatever you want to order. If you want money, you need to go out to dinner with somebody who can get you the menu and say, "Hold out, man. Don't go over this line. No, no, no." If you want money, you need to hang out with somebody who has the fruit of that. My daddy used to go, I can't use his words, they did not have a vessel to urinate in or a window to cast it out. So you need to hang with somebody who has whatever you want in that area. There's a principle about it and if you can't find it all in one, you may have to piece it together.

You see, my friend, he didn't have money, no, he didn't have money. He didn't have physical. He's just out of shape as he could be, that's why he's dead now. He was out of shape, totally out of shape and I was pulling him up slowly because he said, "You know, every time I talk to you, you're usually calling me when you're out jogging or working out. I'm feeling so bad because I ain't doing nothing, man. I ain't doing nothing. I'm feeling bad." I said, "Well, you need to get up and do some." So he was slowly -- but he was too slow and too late, but what he did have, he had a great sense of humor and he had a great relationship. So whatever it is with the friend that you're seeking, find somebody who has those areas and they will take you. You want somebody that got it good, find you somebody who's happy, who has a smile on their face all the time and their spirit, every time you hear their voice, it will change how you

feel. Someone will just come over you. If you watch yourself in the mirror when you answer the phone and then they call, you'll see your expression change. There's a spirit. Spirit is number one, so if you're feeling depressed the whole lot, get with somebody who has a good spirit, but you have to start changing yourself as they won't want to get with you because the successful people, they have understood that principle. My brother Bishop Dale puts it like this, he says, "Never spend serious time with casual people. Never spend serious time with casual people, put your serious time with people who would want to take you to where you want to go.

But first thing is to decide where you want to go, that's another whole sermon, but choose your friends like your mother or your father would choose your friends because daddy and mama would look over those glasses and they didn't just want to know, who your friend was, they want to know who their folks were because they understood some basic principles that stuff flows down, so they understood basic principles, so choose your friends wisely and don't worry about folks trying to get a whole lot of friends because just like George says, "In truth, you really only need one friend." And you've got a friend in Jesus. You've the greatest friend, but you need an earthly friend. The disciples had Jesus in the flesh, He still send them out with an earthly friend.

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So you need an earthly good friend. We thank you for joining us today at Brothers of the Word because brother, you need the word.

Female:

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