

## Friendly Choices

Who do you automatically think of when you hear the word 'friendly'? We all want to be thought of as being friendly, do we not? And all of us want to have a friend. It is such a blessing to have a wonderful Christian friend!! The Father has blessed us to have a fellowship that binds us together in a way none other can. Through GOD's word we can share this with everyone. It is a great gift we can give to all we love!

But let's give just a little consideration to the idea of a friend. Who is your 'best' friend? JESUS tells us, "Ye are my friend, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John 14:15) All children of GOD want JESUS as a friend. James tells us, "...the friendship of the world is enmity with GOD? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of GOD." (James 4:4) The type of friendship we want to promote obviously would not be one to make us like the world.

To be friendly, (kind, caring, understanding, and helpful) is not necessarily the same as being a 'best friend' with someone. Everyone we are friendly to will not always be someone we even know very well. But our friends are those people with whom we share our lives and spend our time. Should we ask ourselves, who are my friends? Can they help me grow closer to the LORD? Why are they my friends? When we are best friends with 'good' people who are not living according to the law of CHRIST, it is sometimes difficult to see how that can weaken us spiritually. We may reason, they are very nice. They care about me. We don't go out looking to commit sin. So why should we not be best friends? It is very true that many individuals care for us and are extremely good to us and we love them. But are we deceiving ourselves into believing that cannot in any way weaken us spiritually? Let's hear what the apostle Paul has to say on this matter: "Be not **deceived** evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Cor. 15:33) Satan loves to deceive us!! Also let us point out that in scripture 'evil' does not necessarily mean wicked, mean or uncaring. Evil is an adjective for someone who does not concern themselves with judgment and doing things for GOD's glory. Solomon tells us in Proverbs 28:5: "Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understands all things." Which type of person will most likely be concerned about helping us grow in the LORD and getting to heaven?

Occasionally, there are individuals who just want to 'flirt' with the world. They aren't bad people; they may even attend worship regularly. Some may consider themselves very active in the congregation where they attend. But their constant companions are not sisters & brothers in the LORD. The choices they make are colored by the influence of the people they are constantly around. In most cases they aren't even aware of the differences that have crept into their actions and attitudes. The old devil doesn't care how he gets us – whether in defiance to GOD or just nonchalant blindness. Beware sisters of the dangers that can creep into your minds and lives while you are living your everyday life. Pray for those you must be around while in this world but be careful they do not lead you astray. Beware! Be sober-minded! Be careful of the choices you make – don't just follow the crowd or the way of least resistance. Be prayerful – keep the LORD close at all times. Some just desire to be accepted and hang between what is right and what is wrong in order to be part of the crowd. Then they find themselves caught up emotional and do not want to turn loose. Desire to please and belong in a crowd, especially when that crowd is of the world, can cause us to make some serious mistakes that can ultimately cost us much more than we ever dreamed. Don't flirt with danger – your soul is at stake!

As children of GOD we must be 'friendly' people. We are to do good and care about all men. "As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto **all men**, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10) We must be 'friendly' to those in the world in order to be able to share salvation with them! We especially want to share it with those whom we love dearly. But let us take heed and not allow the old serpent, satan to lull us into a false sense of security. Remember: "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the LORD, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of GOD that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of GOD that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of GOD." (Ephesians 6:10-17)