

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith
Audio Script – November 05, 2009

Many addicts have come off drugs or alcohol only to return to their destructive abuse weeks or months later. In many cases, they would have remained clean had they stayed away from the friends and people who supported their usage to start with. It matters who you hang with, as we will see in today's Templates of Truth.

Paul made a profound statement of insight in I Corinthians 15:33 – *Do not be deceived; bad company corrupts good morals.* We scratch our heads in amazement at how good people can get so far off-track and bring so much destruction into their lives. In the final analysis, it is often the case that it all started when they started hanging out with the wrong crowd. An old adage reads: “birds of a feather flock together.” It means we often become like those we spend time with. Our standards reflect their standards; their values become our own. Soon, we are indistinguishable from them in both conduct and character.

The first Psalm gives three warnings: do not walk, stand or sit! The writer says it this way: *How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!* (Psalm 1:1). When we dig into the meaning of these Hebrew words and phrases, a clear and distinct cycle of degradation emerges. The term *walking* refers to accompanying. We get the picture of a simple stroll through the park with a person. It is the *counsel of the wicked* that is being accompanied. *Counsel* refers to advice, ideals, schemes and even plans. When not grounded in the godly principles of Scripture, that counsel is *wicked*. So, when you walk with the counsel of the wicked, you are casually strolling along, listening curiously to their twisted and distorted views of life.

After you have walked for awhile and your curiosity has been fed with their compromising perspectives, you find yourself wanting to spend more time with them. Your walking easily leads to stopping, *standing* and looking with interest and fascination into their way of life. The Hebrew word carries the thought of going to places you know they frequent and hanging out there, standing or waiting to see if they will show up so you can join them. You are beginning to enjoy their company. You have found ways of tolerating their *sinful* lifestyles. You are gaining a comfort level with their friendship.

Eventually your walking and standing develops into *sitting*. The Hebrew word for *sitting* means dwelling and abiding. You have moved from comfort and tolerance to outright acceptance. More specifically, the Psalmist qualifies acceptance to the *seat of scoffers*. Their *seat* is the places they live and frequent. You spend your time in their homes and the public places where they gather. You adopt their musical tastes, choices of movies, and endorse their political, ethical and moral opinions. You even see their point as they scoff (mock) God, religion, the church, the Bible and spiritual things. As others look on, they can see no difference between your life and the lives of the wicked, sinful scoffers you walk, sit and stand with. Your spiritual morals have become corrupted by the friendships you have chosen to inhabit.

The Psalmist makes no mistake in helping us know where this all leads to: *the way of the wicked*

will perish (Psalm 1:6). Suffering, pain, loss, ruin, destruction, shame, embarrassment, humiliation, and often more extenuating consequences accompany those who hang with the wrong crowd. Even believers can find themselves addicted to drugs & alcohol, embroiled in affairs, sitting in hospital emergency rooms or huddled in jail cells.

Paul gives the simple solution: *what partnership have righteousness with lawlessness...what has a believer in common with an unbeliever...therefore come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; then I will welcome you* (II Corinthians 6:14-17). In other words, those you have been hanging with have brought you down. You need some godly influence in your life. Get some new friends!

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.

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