

Keeping Good Company

Description: Being selective in ones choice of friends and company helps to preserve and safeguard one's religion. This insightful lesson explains how one can achieve this.

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Objectives

- To learn how to be selective when choosing friends and your company.
- To be aware of the amount and kind of influence peers have on each other.
- To know the benefits of befriending righteous Muslims.

Arabic Terms

- *Iblees* - the Arabic name for Satan.
- *Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.
- *Shaytan*- sometimes spelled *Shaitan* or *Shaytaan*. It is the word used in Islam and the Arabic language to denote the devil or Satan, the personification of evil.
- *Zakah* - obligatory charity.
- *Masjid* - the Arabic term for mosque.

One of the best ways that the Muslim can preserve and safeguard their religion is that they be selective of who they take as friends and company. Without great effort, one can see the amount of influence peers have on each other. Sufficient is that saying of the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him:

“A person is on the way of life (*deen*) of his close friend, so let people look into whom they take as close friends.” (*Abu Daawood*)

An obvious fact is that close friends usually are so because of the things they have in common. They share the same interests and hobbies, relate to each other well, and try to please each other by fulfilling those things their friends like. For this reason, they are on the same *deen*, or way of life. If a person is a crook, he will have crooks as friends; if a person devotes their life to science, they will have other scientists as friends; and if one devotes their life to Islam, they will choose other good Muslims as friends.

When one chooses evil friends, they will encourage him to do evil deeds, or at the very least they will not encourage him to do righteous deeds. On the other hand, if a person carefully selects their friends and only accompanies the righteous, they will advise and enjoin each other with righteousness and piety, and prevent and warn each other from doing evil. A clear example of this is that if a Muslim who prays befriends a person who does not, when the time for prayer comes, their friend who does not pray will most likely not remind him that it is time for prayer. Rather, it may be that when the one who does pray wants to excuse himself to pray, their friend might even try to prevent him or tell him to pray later. Also, if one befriends a person that does not care much about committing sins, they might encourage their friends to commit the same sin. Allah mentioned what a person who had evil companions will say on the Day of Judgment in the following verse:

“And (remember) the Day when the wrong-doer will bite his hands and say: ‘Woe to me! Would that I had taken a path with the Messenger. Woe to me! If only I had not taken so-and-so as a friend!’ He has led me astray from this Reminder (the Quran) after it had come to me. And Satan is ever a deserter to man in the hour of need.” (Quran 25:27-29)

The Prophet said in regards to the evil companion:

“The example of a righteous and evil companion is like one who carries perfume and another who is a blacksmith. As for the one who carries perfume, he will either give you some perfume, you might buy it, or [at least] you will find a pleasing scent with him. As for the blacksmith, either he (the blacksmith) will burn his clothes, or you will find a hideous odor coming from him.” (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

This is especially important to those Muslims who have recently embraced Islam, or those people born in Muslim families who have recently chosen to abide by the tenets of the religion. They may have many habits and may have become accustomed to various ways which are regarded as sins in Islam, and they need good company to help them in their struggle to put them aside. A good example may be smoking or drinking. If a person wants to “kick the habit” it would be detrimental for them to befriend those Muslims or keep company with previous friends who smoke or drink. Rather they should keep company with those who will remind them of Allah and involve themselves with learning and teaching the religion along with practicing its tenets.

Quite often, many of those who enter Islam face opposition, disagreement and harm, especially from those closest to them. You should keep this in mind and know that through this is an elevation of your level, a purification of sins, and a trial through which Allah is testing you, all to see the extent of your truthfulness and steadfastness on your religion. Having pious Muslims as friends will be an added support for you, and they will try to be there in your time of need.

There are many ways one can meet and befriend righteous people, and one of the best places is the mosque (*masjid*). There you will find the best of the Muslims. Allah said, describing those Muslims who frequent them often:

“The Mosques of Allah are frequented only by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, establish the prayers, offer the obligatory charity (*zakah*) and fear none but Allah. It is they who are expected to be on true guidance.” (Quran 9:18)

If your mosque has classes, be sure to attend them, as the best of gatherings are those in which the religion of Allah is discussed. If you are a university student, a good place to meet good people may be the Muslims Students Association. If there is no mosque in your area and you live far from Muslims, you might consider moving to an area which has more Muslims. If not, you can at least try to attend a mosque in a larger town once a week. In the meantime, there are some beneficial groups and study circles you may find on the internet. At all costs, you should try your hardest to keep good company; people who will encourage and help you to practice your religion.

One may think that it is acceptable to keep close friends with those who practice other faiths believing them to be good people. We should know that the worst sin in Islam is that one follows a religion other than it. There is much harm in associating with people of other faiths. It is obvious that they do not follow the religion of Islam due to the doubts and confusion they might have about it. These people may openly discuss their doubts and confusion with Muslims, or try to convert them to their religion, either in an outright or in a hidden manner. Muslims who do not have enough knowledge about Islam may themselves start to doubt about the issues they raise. This is only one of the many detrimental effects which might result in frequent association with people of other faiths. This is not to say that you should cut off from all your past relationships, but that you should be careful in who you mix with and to what extent.

It is not enough, however, that you befriend just any Muslim either. Rather, you should seek pious knowledgeable Muslims who themselves are trying their utmost to adhere to the tenets of the religion. You may see many Muslims falling short in fulfilling the obligations and refraining from the prohibitions of the religion. The extent to which one falls short differs from person to person, but it is all due to the fact that the *Shaytan* (Satan) is trying his utmost to misguide people. Allah says:

“[Satan (*Iblees*)] said: ‘By Your Might, then I will surely mislead them all.’” (Quran 38:82)

Do not let this discourage you; rather, let this be your greatest incentive to try your hardest in serving this religion and calling to it.

It is also of utmost importance that you understand your religion from its proper and trusted sources – the Book of Allah and the authentic teachings (*Sunnah*) of His Messenger. Let the Messenger of the religion, Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, be your role model and leader, and learn his biography so you can pattern your life after him. Try as much as possible to accompany the knowledgeable people, and other good practicing Muslims who practice what they preach, and know that not all of those who say they are Muslims should be trusted in knowledge. Rather, you must make sure and carefully examine those who you take your knowledge from or what

you read by comparing them with the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* of His Messenger, Muhammad, and his rightly guided successors. Take whatever is in accordance with his *Sunnah*, and leave whatever opposes it.

We ask Allah that He keep our hearts firm upon the religion, and not lead us to misguidance after Guidance has been granted to us. May Allah make us see the truth as the truth and grant us the guidance to follow it, and may He make us see falsehood as falsehood and grant us the guidance to avoid it.

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