


# "The Art of Wise Living"

## Part 4

### Who's in Your Inner Circle?

# TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

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## Questions for Reflection

- Growing up, did you ever have a friend with whom your parents wisely forbade you to associate? At that time, how did you respond? Did you end up changing your response? Tell us about it.

Do your children currently have any friends with whom you'd rather they not associate? Why?

- Do you have **any** friends who will stick closer to you than a brother (Proverbs 18:24)?

Have you ever been that sort of friend to someone else? Tell us about it.

- Read Proverbs 27:6. Tell about a time when, out of love, someone told you a painful truth. Did you get defensive?

Regardless of how you responded, did you recognize the **validity** of their comment?

Have you ever thanked them for their costly act of love? If not—shouldn't you?

- Read Proverbs 13:20. **Which** of your current friendships are **making you wiser**? [Be specific!]

**Which** of your current friendships are **causing you harm**? [Be specific!]

What will you do about it?

**Ready to walk with wise friends?**  
For free hope and help, write to:  
[counseling@tcc.org](mailto:counseling@tcc.org)

## Application-Challenge

Are you surrounding yourself with foolish people or wise people?

- Who needs to be **removed from** your inner circle?
- Who needs to be **given access to** your inner circle?

**Take One Step:** What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



# Sermon Summary

We often find ourselves in situations where there is no "black and white, clear cut answer" as to what we should do—we have to decide between good and better, or between bad and worse. We need wisdom to help us navigate through this murkiness. Today I want to talk about a kind of relationship that you will never feel any pressure to make a priority, but Solomon highlights it over and over as being foundational to becoming a wise person. Unless we make a conscious choice, these critical relationships will get squeezed out of our lives. Proverbs cautions us that if we want to be wise, we need to be careful about who we surround ourselves with. We need to choose our friends very carefully, so the question is, "Who have you surrounded yourself with?"

The truth found in Proverbs 13:20 is either working for you or against you in your life today. If you surround yourself with wise people, if you allow yourself to be influenced by those who are wise, if you imitate their wise choices, then you will benefit from that. But if you are a companion of fools—even if you are not aware of it—you are being influenced by them, and it will not go well for you. It's not even a behavior thing—you don't even have to actively be doing anything wrong—it's a proximity thing. If we let them too close for too long, we will get burned. When we feel accepted by someone, we naturally drop our guard, and we become vulnerable to their influence—good or bad.

But some of us have decided that we want to go down a different path—a wiser path. And to change the trajectory of life we need to limit the amount of time that we spend with certain old friends—as hard as that may be. So we ask: "Well how do I do that? I have known them so long! How do I begin to distance myself from the foolish person in my life?" Proverbs 13:20 says that the key is degrees of closeness and limiting the influence they have on your life. Wise people should be on the inside—where they have greater influence. Foolish people should be on the periphery—where their influence is minimized.

In the age of Facebook, the bar is pretty low on who qualifies as a "friend". What we really need is a few—even one—who will really stick closer to us than our own flesh and blood (Proverbs 18:24). These are not mere acquaintances, who say, "Call me if you need anything." We need wise friends who are emotionally connected to us in costly ways; a fool will never do that. They are far too selfish; friendships are just transactional: we are "committed" as long as we receive back at least as much as we give.

A true friend will tell you what you need to hear, not just what you want to hear (Proverbs 27:6). An acquaintance will just flatter you. Why? Because they don't really care about you. They only care about what they can get from you. A true friend will confront you when they see you veering off the wisdom path. Who are those people who do this for you? For whom do you do this?

Are you surrounding yourself with foolish people? Who is it for you that needs to be removed from your inner circle? Who are those wise friends who are in your life? What are their names? There probably aren't that many of them, are there? Thank them on a regular basis for sticking closer than a brother because these kind of friends are rare. And Solomon says these kinds of friends will lead us to wisdom.

## Talking To God About This Week's Message

*"Heavenly Father, today I want to be a 'doer' of the Word, and not just a 'hearer'. Amen."*

## Talking To Others About This Week's Message

If a neighbor or friend at work asked you, "What kind of stuff do they talk about at your church?", how would you summarize the most important elements of this week's sermon and the key lessons you intend to apply to your life? How would you explain it in **plain language** anyone could understand?

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

**"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage.  
We can use it to explore the God's knowledge and wisdom...**

**Monday**— Proverbs 16:27-28

**Tuesday**— Proverbs 17:9

**Wednesday**— Proverbs 19:4-7

**Thursday**— Proverbs 27:8-10

**Friday**— Psalm 15:1-3

**Saturday**— ***In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord tomorrow with your church family,*** study Luke 6:43-45.

**Need blank copies for doing more**

**"Five Question Bible Study"?**

e-mail: [Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com](mailto:Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com)

Bible Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) is it found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text?