

SELF-DECEPTION: EVIL COMPANY

Joe Slater

“Do not be deceived: ‘Evil companions corrupt good habits’” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Do you care what kind of friends your children have? If not, you should! For good or ill, to one degree or another, their friends will influence them.

But peer pressure is not limited to the young! No matter our age, our friends have an impact on us. And it isn't just moral behavior that should concern us. Paul's immediate context in the text quoted above is false doctrine! Some in Corinth were teaching error about the resurrection. By accepting their weird views, brethren endangered their souls.

Paul began with a caution: *“Do not be deceived.”* He knew how inclined we are to think we are in complete control. Nobody's going to pull the wool over our eyes! We're strong. We can handle any temptation the old devil throws at us! (Who are we fooling?)

Jesus said that His disciples that they were *“in the world”* (John 17:11) but not *“of the world”* (John 17:14). Neither the Lord nor Paul taught that we should cloister ourselves in a monastery to keep from having any contact with unbelievers. Indeed, we must make contact with the world to influence people for Christ. As we do so, however, we must reject the world's sin and corruption. It's like a boat being in the water, but not *“of”* the water. The boat is fine in the water as long as the water doesn't get into the boat! Likewise, as disciples of Jesus, we function in the world, but we must not be the friends of the world lest we become enemies of God (James 4:4).

Be careful about the friends you make. Do not be deceived!

HE NEVER MADE IT

Ron Rizzi was involved in organized baseball for over fifty years, most of that time as a scout for major league baseball. When asked about the best pitcher he ever saw, Rizzi replied, “Brien Taylor.” Some of you are not baseball fans, so you never heard of Brien Taylor. Some of you are baseball fans and still, you never heard of Brien Taylor. He never made it even to the triple-A level.

Yankees gave Taylor a 1.55 million dollar signing bonus. You give a kid fresh out of high school \$1.55 million, what could possibly go wrong? One “off-field altercation” (a fight, in plain English) and Brien Taylor's arm and career were ruined.

I see two clear lessons here. They are so clear that I hesitate to state them for fear you will feel that I am insulting your intelligence. But I will risk it.

Lesson one: Do not give a kid too much spending money, too much authority, too much autonomy. There is a reason why God ordained that kids are to have parents. Yes, we can by-pass the need for two parents (one male and one female) with medical technology and wrong-headed adoption laws. We can by-pass the need, but we shouldn't. Kids need parents until they are really adults. Traditionally, no one was seen as an adult until he was 21 years of age. We changed that in 1971. How is it going? Has the change led to greater maturity and happier homes in our nation?

Lesson two: What happens off the field affects on-field performance. What happens away from work affects on-the-job performance. All of life is interconnected. What we do in private makes us what we are in public. You cannot soar with the eagles in the morning if you hooted with the owls at night. Or, as Jesus

put it, *“No one can serve two masters”* If we let our eyes dwell on evil, our whole life will be full of darkness (Mt 6:22-24).

Yes, we might get away with living wrong in private while acting right in public. We might get away with it for a time, but it never lasts. Yes, we might do good in private and have it remain unnoticed for a time. But eventually, what we are (good or bad) comes to light (1 Tim 5:24-25). Look at that passage carefully. On the negative side, we can see that Brien Taylor never made it - because all of life is interconnected. On the positive side, we can see that any one of us can make a positive difference in our world - because all of life is interconnected.

--Thayer Salisbury

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If We Work Upon Marble

*If we work upon marble, it will perish;
If upon brass, time will efface it;
If we rear temples, they will crumble into dust;
But if we work upon the immortal minds
And imbue them with the just fear of God
And love of our fellow-men,
We engrave on those tablets
Something that will brighten to all eternity.*

--Daniel Webster