

I can remember as a teenager that my mother was careful that her children didn't run with the wrong crowd. There were certain guys in my neighborhood that, according to my mother, were "up to no good."

If you do a Google search on the words "running with the wrong crowd" and "murder" you will find some 127,000 hits.¹ If you do a Google search on the words "running with the wrong crowd" and "crime" you will find almost 160,000 hits. This lets us know that murders and crimes of all sorts have been associated with those that run with the wrong crowd.

Those that have run with the wrong crowd have seen their lives changed in the worse possible ways.

Today we are going to look at the consequences of running with the wrong crowd. What are the consequences of running with the wrong crowd?

1. You get the wrong information

Psalm 1:1 - *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly...*

The Bible warns the believer over and over not to form intimate relationships with the unbeliever.

(2 Cor 6:14 NKJV) Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

There aren't many spiritual things we have in common with someone who hasn't surrendered to the lordship of Christ. For example:

- 1.) We have a different Father. We are children of God. Jesus says in John 8:44 that the unbeliever has the devil for a father.
- 2.) We have a different life – Colossians 3:3-4 - *"For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."*
- 3.) We live our life by the Word of God - Psalm 119:105 - *"Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path."* Jesus is our Lord. But the unbeliever is a puppet to the desires and the dictates of the world, flesh and the devil.
- 4.) We have a difference eternal home – Jesus said in John 14:2b-3 *"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."* The unbeliever will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. (Rev. 20:14-15)

When the Apostle Paul writes, *"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers,"* he is using the imagery of farm animals pulling a plow or some other piece of farm equipment. He wouldn't yoke a horse and a pig together...the horse would be trying to pull and the pig would be trying to stop for a meal.

In the same way, Christians should not allow themselves to be yoked together with non-believers because there would always be conflict—they would push and pull one another in opposite directions.

¹ <http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=%22running+with+the+wrong+crowd%22+murder&aq=f&oq=&aqi=>

A Christian should not partner with an unbeliever in a business deal. An unbelieving business partner may want to invest in products that are immoral or purchase supplies from a company that doesn't do business according to biblical principles.

When it comes to marriage, a couple should not be unequally yoked. Amos 3:3 says, "*Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?*" If one is led by the Spirit but their spouse is led by the flesh-- they are unequally yoked.

- A Christian will want to go to church, but their spouse may insist on sleeping in.
- A Christian will not watch movies laced with vulgarity and sensuality. An unbelieving spouse may see nothing wrong with that kind of movie.
- A Christian will want to follow the biblical command to give the first part of their salary to the Lord each pay period and but a spouse who does not follow Jesus may think that is foolishness.

Did you know that you “run with the wrong crowd” if the music you listen to dishonors God?

The crowd’s music can give you the wrong information. Worldly music can leave ungodly counsel in your mind through false philosophies about love, relationships and sins that are explicitly sung about.

Do you listen to songs like “Boom Boom Pow²” and enjoy the beat? Do you know that your soul absorbs the message which negatively impacts your walk with Christ?

YouTube has over 17 million plays for song, *Best I Ever Had* by the rapper Drake. This song is laced with profanity and the sad thing is that cut has a 5-star rating.

I wonder how many of our young people in the church listen to music like that and have had their values formed and cemented? How many of our youth hold loosely their Christian values because they rather embrace the values of the world communicated through this kind of music?

I know that music is a controversial subject and I am not playing the role of the “music police.”

Perhaps you are a Christian parent of teens, who has tried to warn your son or daughter about the consequences of listening to certain kinds of music. Perhaps your teen has responded to your pleas with something like, “*You used to listen to music that your parents had problems with...*”

I thought about that and did some research. I decided I would share with you some excerpts from songs that were popular during my grandparent’s generation; then my parents. Followed by my generation.

A “love song” from my great-grandparent’s generation:

Let Me Call You Sweetheart (1910)

Let me call you "Sweetheart," I'm in love with you.
Let me hear you whisper that you love me too.
Keep the love-light glowing in your eyes so true.
Let me call you "Sweetheart," I'm in love with you.

² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5ykmEAUzlw>

A “love song” from my grandparent’s generation:

Body & Soul (1930)

*My heart is sad and lonely
For you I sigh, for you, dear, only
Why haven't you seen it?
I'm all for you, body and soul*

*I spend my days in longin'
And wond'ring why it's me you're wrongin'
I tell you, I mean it
I'm all for you, body and soul*

*I can't believe it, it's hard to conceive it
That you'd turn away romance
Are you pretending? It looks like the ending
Unless I could have one more chance to prove, dear*

*My life a wreck you're making
You know I'm yours just for the taking
I'd gladly surrender / myself to you, body and soul*

By the way, this song was once banned for its suggestive lyrics.

A “love song” from my parent’s generation:

The Great Pretender (1956)

*Oh yes I'm the great pretender (ooh ooh)
Pretending I'm doing well (ooh ooh)
My need is such I pretend too much
I'm lonely but no one can tell*

*Oh yes I'm the great pretender (ooh ooh)
Adrift in a world of my own (ooh ooh)
I play the game but to my real shame
You've left me to dream all alone*

*Too real is this feeling of make believe
Too real when I feel what my heart
can't conceal*

A “love song” from my generation:

Betcha by Golly Wow (1972)

*There's a spark of magic in your eyes
Candyland appears each time you smile
Never thought that fairy tales came true
But they come true when I'm near you*

CHORUS:

Betcha by golly wow (wow) (wow)
*You're the one that I've been waiting for... forever
And ever will my love for you keep growing strong
Keep growing strong*

A “love song” from today’s generation

Well, you can purchase a CD with the title, *R&B Love Songs of 2009* and right on the cover you find a *Parental Advisory for Explicit Content*. Enough said.

In Mark 4:24 Jesus says, “*Be careful what you listen to. By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you; and more shall be given you besides.*”

Music is a powerful tool for God and but it is also used by the devil to give you the wrong information so as to oppress and capture you so that you might do his will (2 Timothy 2:26)

The wrong crowd and getting the wrong information.

If you are married you better watch the crowd you run with. There are a lot of jealous men and women out there who failed in their marriages and don’t want yours to succeed. I’ve seen couples poisoned by so-called “friends” who slipped them bad information.

The Scripture says in Psalm 1:1 - *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly...*

When you run with the wrong crowd you will get the wrong information.

2. *You will get to the wrong destination.*

Psalm 1:1 goes on to say, “*Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners...*”

Notice the progression in this verse.

First the person is *walking* in the *counsel* of the godly.

Next, he is *standing* in the *path* of sinners. (In other words, he’s getting more comfortable with the ungodly. Soon he will be *sitting* in the *seat* of the scornful.

Last year in our *Winning the War Within Series*, (July 6th, 2008) we looked at how the good soldier of Jesus Christ doesn’t conform the ways of the world

To illustrate this point we looked at a video clip that showed people influenced by the crowd. The clip showed a man walking on a lonely street and then all of a sudden a crowd shows up and begins to run. The man instinctively starts running with them.

In another segment of the video a crowd shows up and surrounds another man. All of a sudden, as on key, the crowd drops to the ground and the man they surrounded, not knowing that it was a stunt, falls to the ground too!

This is how it is when you run with the wrong crowd. You instinctively do what the majority does—even when you don’t know why they do it. You go in the direction that the crowd is going even when you don’t know where they are going.

In Matthew 15:14 Jesus speaks of the “*blind leaders of the blind.*” He said, “*And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.*”

There are many who are following the talk show personalities, politicians, performers, actors they will be following them right into hell.

Please do not think that I am making a judgment statement here. I am only telling you what Jesus has already said in Matthew chapter seven:

*Matthew 7:13-15 - "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are **many** who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*

When you run with the wrong crowd you will get to the wrong destination.

3. You take on the same characterizations

Psalm 1:1 - *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;*

Whether you start off running with the wrong crowd or the right crowd, you eventually end up taking on their characteristics. This is human nature.

When the Lancaster Baptist Church of South Carolina was in Baltimore helping us with ministry this past June, my daughter Shannon started musing about how she was starting to speak with a southern drawl—she began to have this cute little twang in her pronunciation.

Jack Canfield, the founder and co-creator of the billion-dollar book brand ***Chicken Soup for the Soul***, writes the following, *"Attitudes are catchy. Whether they're positive or negative, they're rubbing off on you. If you're around people who complain, judge, spread negative gossip, blame others, and play victim roles, chances are you do, too."*

You and I take on the same characteristics of those we hang out with. If you run with the wrong crowd, you are going to be thinking the wrong way and doing the wrong things.

Many of us are familiar with the television character Tarzan who was raised by apes. He was later rescued and returns to civilization but rejects human society because of his love for his tribe of apes.

Well I came across a real life "Tarzan"—a boy who was actually raised by apes.

He witnessed his father murdering his mother . . . fled in terror to the jungle . . . was raised by the animals . . . and was saved to eventually represent his country in the Special Olympics.

At the age of three, John Ssaybunnya of Uganda witnessed his mother being murdered - some accounts say she died at the hands of his father. Traumatized by the horror of what he had seen, he fled into the jungle. And there he should have died, but he didn't. He survived because he was adopted by a troupe of African Green monkeys who fed him and raised him as their own.

Three years later, in 1991, a tribeswoman saw him scavenging for food with the monkeys and reported it to the people of her village. When the villagers found the boy and attempted to take him away he climbed up a tree to hide and hurled down sticks. His monkey guardians put up a ferocious fight, believing that the humans were trying take away one of their own.

John, for his part, had learned the mannerisms of his jungle guardians, became adept at climbing trees and lived on a diet of nuts, berries and leaves for the whole of the three years he had been missing.

Back in the village, the terrified six-year-old found himself again cast into an alien environment. Instead of becoming the village idiot, he was placed in the Kamuzinda Christian Orphanage run by the Paul and Molly Foundation.

Native Ugandans Paul and Molly Wasswa, who have six biological children, umpteen fostered and adopted youngsters and who run a charitable foundation incorporating schools for 1,500 orphans, were not fazed by this new addition to their family. "He was just another child with a child's needs," said Paul.

He was also, however, a child covered with sores, scabs and his teeth were brown and broken. He had a tendency to scratch and bite when you came near him. He walked like a monkey, couldn't talk and threw his food around. Even today, he has an empathy with monkeys and is very protective of them.³

The danger in running with the wrong crowd long enough is that you eventually become one of them.

I hear it all the time. A teenager from a well to do family gets caught up in a gang and when he gets in trouble his parents says, "*But he's a good boy.*" No, he's a gang member.

I am reminded of the words of the Apostle John in 1 John 2:18-19: "*Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.*"

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, "*Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."*"

When you follow the wrong crowd...

- 1.) You get the wrong information
- 2.) You will get to the wrong destination.
- 3.) You take on the same characterizations

4. *You'll experience some of the same tribulations*

Psalm 1:3-5 – "*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so...*"

Unlike the godly man whose tree that is fruitful because it is planted close to the refreshing water...unlike the godly man who leaf doesn't wither and who prospers in whatever he does, the one who runs with the wrong crowd is unfruitful; he is drained; he is exhausted; he is worn out. His leaf withers and whatever he does deteriorates.

There is the story in the book of Genesis about Jacob's daughter Dinah who got into trouble running with the wrong crowd.

Genesis 34:1-2 - "*Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. The word "see" is a Hebrew word that can also be translated, "consider, discern, (make to) enjoy, have experience, gaze, take heed."*

Matthew Henry writes the following in his commentary about Dinah's decision to see the daughters of the land:

³ <http://lists.ibiblio.org/pipermail/monkeywire/2003-June/000406.html>

Young persons, especially females, are never so safe and well off as under the care of pious parents. Their own ignorance, and the flattery and artifices of designing, wicked people, who are ever laying snares for them, expose them to great danger. They are their own enemies if they desire to go abroad, especially alone, among strangers to true religion. Those parents are very wrong who do not hinder their children from needlessly exposing themselves to danger.

Indulged children, like Dinah, often become a grief and shame to their families. Her pretence was, to see the daughters of the land, to see how they dressed, and how they danced, and what was fashionable among them; she went to see, yet that was not all, she went to be seen too. She went to get acquaintance with the Canaanites, and to learn their ways. See what came of Dinah's gadding. The beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water. How great a matter does a little fire kindle! We should carefully avoid all occasions of sin and approaches to it.

As we follow the sad story of Dinah, we learn that “when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.” In other words, he raped her.

As the story continues, we find her brothers taking matters into their own hands and avenging the violation of their sister by killing all the Hivites. This causes all the other nations who hear of this act to detest the Israelites all the more.

Dinah took off from her own people and the security of a life in allegiance to God’s ways and ran with the wrong crowd. When you run with the wrong crowd, you will face some of the same tribulations the wrong crowd experiences.

Prov 1:10 My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent.

Prov 1:11 If they say, "Come with us, Let us lie in wait to shed blood; Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause;

Prov 1:12 Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, And whole, like those who go down to the Pit;

Prov 1:13 We shall find all kinds of precious possessions, We shall fill our houses with spoil;

Prov 1:14 Cast in your lot among us, Let us all have one purse";

Prov 1:15 My son, do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path;

Prov 1:16 For their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed blood.

Prov 1:17 Surely, in vain the net is spread In the sight of any bird;

Prov 1:18 But they lie in wait for their own blood, They lurk secretly for their own lives.

The Bible in Psalm 34:19 teaches that “many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers them out of them all.” There is no such promise for the one who runs with the wrong crowd.

5. You may face the same condemnation.

Psalm 1:1-3 “*Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.*”

Psalm 1:4-6 “*The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

When you follow the wrong crowd...

- 4.) You get the wrong information
- 5.) You will get to the wrong destination.
- 6.) You take on the same characterizations
- 7.) You'll experience some of the same tribulations

Lastly, when you follow the wrong crowd, you may face the same condemnation.

The psalmist says, "...*the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.*"

- It was the unbelieving crowd that laughed at and mocked Noah for building an ark when it had not ever rained. This same crowd perished when the rains and the flood waters came.
- It was the crowd that murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. This same crowd perished when the earth opened and swallowed them up.
- It was a crowd who spied out the land of Canaan and gave a bad report. It was these same spies that died by a plague and those who followed them, 20 years and older, weren't allowed to enter into the Promised Land.
- It was the crowd that followed the rebellious Absalom, King David's son.
- It was the crowd that followed Jesus for the bread and fish but forsook Him when Jesus said, "*Take up your Cross and follow Me.*"
- It was the same crowd that said "Hosanna in the highest" to Jesus but just hours later cried out to Pilate, "*Crucify Him, Crucify Him.*"
- It will be a crowd who will worship the beast and will take the mark of the beast on their hand or forehead.
- It will be a crowd whose names will not be found in the Lamb's Book of Life and will be cast into the lake of fire.

When you follow the wrong crowd... You get the wrong information; You will get to the wrong destination; You take on the same characterizations; You'll experience some of the same tribulations and you may face the same condemnation.

But there is "the right crowd." There is nothing wrong with running, just as long as you run with the right crowd.

The Right Crowd

Psalm 122:1 says, "*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."*" That's the crowd I want to follow!

We need to hang out with people with the same vision, trying to fulfill the same purpose; people who are on the same road, leading to the same destination.

We need to hang out with people are a member of the one body and filled with the one Spirit, who are called in one hope of their calling; realizing there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)

Hebrews 10:23-25 refers us to motto of this "right crowd:"

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Revelations 7:9-12 teaches us the song of this “right crowd.”

In this section of Scripture the Apostle John writes, “*After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying,*

"Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"... "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

That’s the song of the “right crowd.”