

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Proverbs: Topical Applications of Proverbs
II. Motivational Commands, Proverbs 1:8-9:18

A. Things To Avoid

1. Avoiding Bad Company
(Proverbs 1:8-19; 4:10-19)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

If those with whom we associate are bad company, they can greatly hurt us, a truth we can readily illustrate:

(1) “Norway’s crown princess . . . Mette-Marit” is facing “scrutiny over her contacts with the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein . . . (She) said in a statement issued shortly after the (Epstein) files were released that she ‘must take responsibility for not having investigated Epstein’s background more thoroughly, and for not realizing sooner what kind of person he was.’” (“Norwegian crown princess apologizes to all ‘disappointed’ by her Epstein contacts,” Republican-American, February 7, 2026, p. B11) Crown Princess Mette-Marit also admitted, “‘Some of the content of the messages between Epstein and me does not represent the person I want to be. I also apologize for the situation I have put the Royal Family in, especially the King and Queen’” of Norway. (Ibid.)

(2) The Jeffrey Epstein case has hurt a lot of other people, too: Due to the failure of government officials to redact all of the sensitive material in the released Epstein files, “reporters with The New York Times . . . found dozens of uncensored photos of naked young people with their faces unredacted.” (“Government say it’s fixing redactions in Epstein-related files,” op. cit., February 4, 2026, p. A9)

(3) Bad company can negatively impact even Major League Baseball players: “Indicted Cleveland Guardian pitcher Emmanuel Clase is accused of throwing suspicious pitches to benefit bettors in at least 48 games over two years.” (David Purdum, “Guardian’s Clase allegedly rigged pitches in 48 games, document says,” February 5, 2026; msn.com) I recently heard a commentator on the sports radio station am 660 WFAN out of New York City claim that once Mr. Clase became involved with the underworld in gambling in his Major League Baseball career, it was very hard for him to get out of that involvement due to the great pressures that the underworld could apply on him!

(4) Bad alleged dating companions in AI chatbots and apps can harm a lot of minors: “(A) CT Insider investigation last year . . . revealed students in Connecticut were ‘dating’ AI chatbot companions that were pushing sexually explicit and violent conversations with minors.” (Ella Napack, “State crackdown on sexually explicit AI chatbots proposed,” Republican-American, op. cit., February 7, 2026, p. A1)

(5) Even evangelical believers in Christ can get involved in very bad and harmful company. When Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias died of cancer in May of 2020, thousands of believers worldwide along with Vice President Mike Pence mourned his loss because his “passionate gospel presentations had inspired generations of Christians to articulate their reasons to believe” the Christian faith. “But within four short months . . . the venerated image of an anointed preacher had come crashing down . . . (T)hree women came forward accusing the leader of sexual misconduct” and the leaders of the Ravi Zacharias International Ministry (RZIM) admitted that the accusations were true. (Megan Cornwell, “Ravi Zacharias’ sins of sexual abuse went undetected for years. Here are the lessons the Church needs to learn,” January 27, 2023; premierchristianity.com) Many believers did not know of Ravi Zechariah’s sinful life because RZIM tolerated a “shadow culture” where he lived under an “alternate” set of “rules” from everybody else in the organization, what gave him room to hide a worldly and abusively immoral life. (Ibid.)

Need: *So we ask, “If those with whom we associate are bad company who can greatly hurt us, what are we to do?”*

- I. **Proverbs 1:8-9:18 provides motivational commands to get readers to align with God’s “wisdom,” His *hokmah*, or fixed eternal moral order for success and blessing, and Proverbs 1:8-19 and 4:10-19 reveal what we need to know to avoid the bad kind of company that is harmfully contrary to God’s *hokmah*.**
- II. **To that end, Solomon described such bad company, he told us why we should avoid it and how to do so:**
 - A. Solomon described the bad company one must avoid for one’s personal welfare:
 1. Bad company entices others to sin with them, Proverbs 1:10.
 2. Bad company plots to take harmful advantage of innocent people in secret, Proverbs 1:11-12.
 3. Bad company plans to harm others in order to gratify their own personal lusts, Proverbs 1:13.
 4. Bad company like underworld criminals gets others to join them in a common purse to entrap them into being afraid to pull away from their evil alliance under threat of harm or an exposure of guilt, Prov. 1:14.
 5. Bad company hurriedly rushes to harm innocent people, Proverbs 4:16a.

6. Bad company passionately desires to harm innocent people, Proverbs 4:16b.
 7. Bad company delights in violently harming innocent people as if they are feasting at a party, Prov. 4:17.
- B. Solomon then explained why one should avoid such bad company:
1. Negatively, the people who constitute such bad company end up with ruined lives:
 - a. The wrongs committed by bad people eventually backfire to their own harm, Proverbs 1:17-19.
 - b. The pathway of the lives of bad company is as darkness, for they do not know what makes them stumble in failure due to their blindness to God's fixed, eternal, righteous order, Proverbs 4:19.
 2. Positively, avoiding such bad company leads one to greater success and blessing in life:
 - a. Avoiding bad company provides greater peace and blessing in life, Proverbs 1:8-9.
 - b. Avoiding bad company provides a longer earthly life, Proverbs 4:10a,b.
 - c. Avoiding bad company gives a clear, safe course in life that is easily travelled, Proverbs 4:11-12: (i) The word in the Hebrew text for "paths" (v. 11 KJV) is *ma'ggal*, literally "wagon-tracks" (B. D. B., *A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T.*, p. 722-723), what are obvious, unobstructed, well-worn and easily used paths! (ii) Thus, if one avoids bad company by heeding God's *hokmah*, His fixed, eternal, righteous order, his steps will not be "hampered" by obstacles, and even if he runs, he will not "stumble," Proverbs 4:12 NIV.
 - d. Avoiding bad company causes one's pathway in life over time to shine increasingly brighter in its clarity, insight and joy of divine blessing, Proverbs 4:18.
- C. Solomon also explained how one can avoid such bad company:
1. To avoid such bad company, one must not even set foot on their path, Proverbs 1:15; 4:14-15a.
 2. Rather, one must turn away from that path and pass on his way to take God's righteous path, Prov. 4:15b.
 3. Similarly, one should heed the guidance of his godly parents, Proverbs 1:8-9; 4:10a. [If one has no godly parent, the advice in Proverbs and elsewhere in Scripture should be heeded, cf. Psalm 27:10.]

Lesson: (1) *Bad company entices others to sin with them, they plot to take advantage of innocent people in secret, they harm others to gratify their lusts, they entrap others to exploit them in their sins and control those they entrap, they rush to harm others, they passionately harm others and they do so with violence.* (2) *We should avoid bad company since they end up in ruin, their wrongs backfire to hurt them and they stumble in life without knowing why. Positively, avoiding bad company provides greater peace, blessing, longer life, clarity, safety, easily travelled paths in life and blessing.* (3) *To avoid bad company, must have nothing to do with their path in life but turn from their path and heed the pathway directed by godly parents and God's Word.*

Application: (1) *May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.* (2) *May we heed Proverbs 1:8-19 and 4:10-19 in avoiding bad company by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit to avoid such bad company (Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:3-4).*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and/or provide additional guidance . . .)

We apply Proverbs 1:8-19 and 4:10-19 to the issues of concern in our introduction for blessing (as follows):

(1) On Major League Baseball player Emmanuel Clase's involvement in underworld gambling, his multi-million dollar contract as a star pitcher for the Cleveland Guardians gave him all he needed to avoid gambling. The right way of life in line with Major League Baseball's rules against gambling in the sport, what decent parents would also direct (Proverbs 1:8-9; 4:10a), would have kept him from entrapment in the underworld as Proverbs 1:14 warns.

(2) On AI chatbots and apps relative to artificial "dating" that uses sexually explicit and violent conversations, (a) Ephesians 5:3-12 claims sexually explicit speech is sin to avoid, (b) and 1 Peter 3:11-12 calls us to live peaceful lives. (c) Scripture and godly parents as Proverbs 1:8-8 and 4:10a direct will turn teens away from bad online sites.

(3) On the Jeffrey Epstein and Ravi Zacharias cases of sexual sins, (a) both men indulged in the worldly lusts of the flesh, the eyes and the pride of life in various ways, especially in the realm of massage therapy and therapists in violation of 1 John 2:15-17 and Proverbs 1:13. (b) Both men tried to hide their sexual abuses as Proverbs 1:11-12 warns, (b) both indulged their lusts at the cost of their victims as Proverbs 1:13 and 4:16-17 warn and (c) both hurt those who put foot on their paths as Proverbs 1:15 and 4:14-15a,b warn. (d) Jeffrey Epstein coerced his victims to stay silent about his abuses of them lest he harm their family members and Ravi Zacharias warned at least one of his victims that she would be guilty of sending many people to hell by destroying his soul-winning ministry were she publicly to charge him with sexual abuse like Proverbs 1:14 warns of bad people who try to control those they entrap.

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we heed Proverbs 1:8-19 and 4:10-19 to avoid bad company by relying on the Holy Spirit.