



Five Things God Uses to Grow Your Faith #3 :: Providential Relationships {Andy Stanley}

INTRODUCTION

If you are like most people, you can't tell your life story without referencing people who played significant roles along the way. The same is true of your faith story. In this third installment of *Five Things God Uses to Grow Your Faith*, Andy explains the role that providential relationships play in the development of our faith.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have everyone in the group answer the following:

1. Looking back, are there people you feel God providentially brought into your life at crucial times? Who? How did God use them? (If this is a couples' group, ask if anyone has seen God providentially bring someone into one of their children's lives.)

Ask for a few volunteers to answer the following:

2. Looking back, is there a time when you feel God brought someone across your path that could have helped you, but you resisted the relationship?

Allow those who have an answer to the following to share their stories:

3. Are there those in your circle of relationships that would say YOU are someone God providentially dropped into their lives?

Have two or three people read the following from two or three different translations: Proverbs 13:20.

Biblically speaking, a fool is someone who knows the difference between right and wrong but doesn't care. A wise person is one who knows the difference and seeks to do what is right. Fools see life as disconnected. They live as if today's decisions will have no impact on tomorrow. A wise person understands that life is connected and that today's decisions have the potential to create tomorrow's reality.

4. What is the promise to those who "walk" with the wise?
5. What is the consequence of being a companion of fools?

Those were the easy questions. Think about this one.

6. Based on your experiences, why do you think Solomon highlights what a person *becomes* (i.e., "wise") in the first half of the verse, while he highlights what will *happen* (i.e., "suffering harm") in the second half?



7. Why didn't he say, "He who walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools becomes a fool"?

At the end of his message, Andy made a statement that he has used for years when teaching students: "Your friends will determine the direction and quality of your life."

8. Was that true for you when you were in school?
9. Is it still true or *as true* for you now that you are in a different stage of life?

As you close, ask each person in the group to pray a sentence prayer thanking God for a relationship he or she views as providential.

MOVING FORWARD

The promise from Proverbs 13:20 can be read alongside a similar warning from the New Testament: *Bad company corrupts good character* (1 Cor. 15:33). The Bible makes it clear that certain relationships are pivotal in our spiritual development, while others can lead us in directions we never intended to go.

But we don't live in a vacuum. We're surrounded by wisdom and foolishness from all sides. Is it possible to completely ignore the companionship of fools? Should you? How do you balance the relationships in your life that strengthen your faith and the relationships that could inhibit your spiritual growth knowing full well that these relationships could also be the pivotal for others to draw closer to God?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

*Walk with the wise and become wise,
for a companion of fools suffers harm.*
Proverbs 13:20