

# Proverbs 13:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

## Analysis

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This proverb warns about the company we keep: 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.' The principle is relational influence—we become like those with whom we associate. 'Walketh with' (halak) implies ongoing companionship, regular fellowship, and shared journey. Wisdom is caught as well as taught; walking with wise people forms character through observation and imitation. Conversely, companionship with fools leads to destruction (ra'a—to be broken, shattered, harmed). This isn't merely practical advice but spiritual reality—community shapes us profoundly. Paul echoes this: 'evil communications corrupt good manners' (1 Corinthians 15:33).

## Historical Context

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Ancient cultures understood corporate identity and communal influence in ways modern individualism obscures. One's companions determined social standing, moral formation, and practical opportunities. Proverbs repeatedly warns about bad company (1:10-19, 22:24-25, 23:20-21) and commends wise association. Early Christianity's emphasis on church community and separation from the world reflects this wisdom.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. Who are your closest companions, and are they making you wiser or foolish through their influence?
2. What steps might you need to take to spend more time with wise, godly people and less with those who lead you toward folly?

## Interlinear Text

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הַלֹּךְ	אֶת	בְּחִכְמֵי יִם	וְחִכְמֵי	וְרֵעַ הַ	כְּסִילֵי יִם
He that walketh	H854	with wise	men shall be wise	but a companion	of fools
H1980		H2450	H2449	H7462	H3684
יִרְעַ:					
shall be destroyed					
H7321					

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 9:6** (Parallel theme): Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

**Proverbs 15:31** (Parallel theme): The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise.

**Revelation 18:4** (Parallel theme): And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

**Psalms 119:63** (Parallel theme): I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

**Hebrews 10:24** (Parallel theme): And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

**Malachi 3:16** (Parallel theme): Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

**Acts 2:42** (Parallel theme): And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

**1 Kings 12:8** (Parallel theme): But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him:

**Proverbs 7:27** (Parallel theme): Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

**1 Kings 12:10** (Parallel theme): And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.