

قال إمام جعفر الصادق (ع) :  
عَلَيْكَ أَنْ تَصْحَبَ ذَا الْعَقْلِ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدْ كَرَمَهُ وَ لَكِنْ أَنْتَفِعَ بِعَقْلِهِ.

*“Keep the company of a wise person. If you do not benefit from his generosity, you would, however, gain from his intellect.”*

Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq (A)

Some prominent Islamic linguists are of the opinion that the word إنسان ‘Insaan’ (human being) is derived from أنس ‘Uns’ (sociability; emotional closeness). Therefore, one of the natural human tendencies is the need for friendship and social intimacy. An isolated, affluent person, in spite of all his expertise, status and material prosperity, would become perplexed and unhappy. The extensive survey of man’s behavior, published by those who have for centuries studied human beings, has this primary characteristic: he strives consistently and without intellectual reluctance to establish close connections with others.

In light of the innate urge to live collectively and avoid solitude, human beings gravitate toward anyone who conforms to his expectations for association and friendship. It is commonly accepted that a friend has a definitive role in the outcome and quality of everyone’s life and seldom one may find someone who is not affected by some type of relationship. In other words, human beings unconsciously, as time progresses, acquire some of the characteristics and inclinations of their friends. Imam Ali (AS) stated:

لَا تَصْحَبِ الشَّرِيرَ فَإِنَّ طَبْعَكَ يَسْرِقُ مِنْ طَبْعِهِ شَرًّا وَ أَنْتَ لَا تَعْلَمُ. إمام علي بن أبي طالب (ع)

*“Avoid the company of the wicked; verily your nature will snatch a wickedness and you would not be aware of it.”*

People often identify their own personality in others, and then strive to make a friendship and close association. In general, it is the similarity in character which brings people together. The Holy Qur’an states:

يَا وَيَلَّتْ لِي لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا

*Woe to me! Ah, would that I had never taken such a person as a friend! The Holy Qur’an, chapter 25, verse 28.*

The statement quoted by The Immaculate Qur’an brings out some central features of an ill-conceived affiliation. It is clear from the context of this verse; the person who is making this statement is among those who, on account of making improper associations and a poor choice of friendship, have fallen into a life of transgression and iniquity. Hence, during the cataclysmic and dreadful moments of the Judgment Day he is uttering these words of regret.

A close study of the Islamic account on selecting a friend reveals that there are many specific as well as general criterions for choosing a friend. The Holy Prophet (SAW) said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و آله : " الْمَرْءُ عَلَى دِينِ خَلِيلِهِ وَ قَرِينِهِ."

*“Man is in the creed of his friend and close companion.”*

Therefore, we must examine on which parameters and guidelines Islam sanctions a well-suited friendship and a sound affiliation with others. On looking back at the theme ‘hadith’ the prescription for ways to make a friendship and the formula for forming an association emerges. Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq (AS) emphasizes the word ‘wisdom,’ a dynamic terminology analogous with enlightenment and understanding, which from the Islamic point of view is a critical quality in a person one should consider before choosing a friend.

Furthermore, intelligence is a resplendent source of eminence and a divine instrument of internal guidance. Its momentous blessings not only enrich the one who owns it, but it also benefits others. The Infallible Imams (AS) have accredited the intellect as an inner prophet, similar to the prophets of the physical realm (peace and blessings be upon them).

The principal mission of the prophets (AS) is to illuminate the hearts and minds of mankind and guide them along the correct path to perfection. Similarly, if an intelligent friend is not willing to be charitable, his wisdom, however, would always be a source of inspiration.

On the other hand, one must avoid the company of an ignorant person, even if he endeavors to provide assistance. Since he is devoid of wisdom, he would ultimately harm the person. To further illustrate this point, it suffices to contemplate in the following advice given by the Leader of the faithful Imam Ali (A) to his venerable son, Imam Hassan Muj’taba (AS):

**" يَا بُنَيَّ ! إِيَّاكَ وَ مُصَادَقَةَ الْأَحْمَقِ ، فَإِنَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْفَعَكَ فَيَضُرُّكَ**

*“Oh my son! Avoid the friendship of a fool, as he would tend to benefit you but he would harm you in the process;*

**وَ إِيَّاكَ وَ مُصَادَقَةَ الْبَخِيلِ ؛ فَإِنَّهُ يَقْعُدُ عَنْكَ أَحْوَجَ مَا تَكُونُ إِلَيْهِ**

*And avoid the friendship of a miser as he would refrain from you when you need him;*

**وَ إِيَّاكَ وَ مُصَادَقَةَ الْفَاجِرِ ، فَإِنَّهُ يَبِيعُكَ بِأَلْتَا فِيهِ ،**

*And avoid the friendship of a sinner as he would sell you for nothing,*

**وَ إِيَّاكَ وَ مُصَادَقَةَ الْكَذَّابِ فَإِنَّهُ كَالسَّرَابِ يُقَرَّبُ عَلَيْكَ الْبَعِيدَ وَ يُبْعَدُ عَلَيْكَ الْقَرِيبَ.** “ إمام على بن أبي طالب ( ع )

*And avoid the friendship of a liar as he is like a mirage, for he would make far things look near and near things far.”*

The most important fact relating wisdom and knowledge to friendship is that, The Holy Qur’an and the Infallibles (AS) have enjoined believers to choose Allah the All Knowing and His perfect representatives as the supreme choice for love and friendship. Moreover, the believer's friendship and his alliance with Allah and His emissaries is the bases on which his entire salvation depend. Naturally, this relationship extends to all those who try to attain closeness to their Creator. On the other hand a believer is commanded to unwaveringly avoid the company of those who disassociate themselves with Allah (SWT)