THE POWER OF ASSOCIATION

TEXT: (Proverbs 29:12, ESV)
12 If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked.

INTRODUCTION

1. "If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his officers will become wicked" (Proverbs 29:12, NCV).

I. THE POWER OF BAD ASSOCIATIONS

1. "If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked" (Proverbs 29:12, ESV).
2. "Now Jehoshaphat had great wealth and honor, and he allied himself with Ahab by marriage. Some years later he went down to see Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered many sheep and cattle for him and the people with him and urged him to attack Ramoth Gilead. Ahab king of Israel asked Jehoshaphat king of Judah, 'Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?'

   Jehoshaphat replied, 'I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will join you in the war'" (II Chronicles 18:1-3, NIV).

A. Five Fateful Steps of Association

1. The Alliance:
   a. "Jehoshaphat had great wealth and honor, and he allied himself with Ahab by marriage" (II Chronicles 18:1, NIV).
2. The Visit:
   a. "Some years later he went down to see Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered many sheep and cattle for him and the people with him" (II Chronicles 18:2, NIV).
3. The Proposal:
   a. "Ahab king of Israel asked Jehoshaphat king of Judah, 'Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?'" (II Chronicles 18:3, NIV).
4. The Agreement:
   a. "Jehoshaphat replied, 'I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will join you in the war'" (II Chronicles 18:1-3, NIV).
5. The Close Call:
   a. "The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'I will enter the battle in disguise, but you wear your royal robes.' So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle" (II Chronicles 18:29, NIV).
   b. "Then Micaiah answered, 'I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, '"These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace"'" (II Chronicles 18:16, NIV).
   c. "When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, 'This is the king of Israel.' So they turned to attack him, but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him. God drew them away from him, for when the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel, they stopped pursuing him" (II Chronicles 18:31-32, NIV).

II. THE POWER OF GOOD ASSOCIATIONS

A. A Prayer of Protection

1. "Do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil so that I take part in wicked deeds along with those who are evildoers; do not let me eat their delicacies" (Psalm 141:4, NIV).
2. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13, NIV).

B. Proactive Prayer

1. "Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3, NIV).
2. "Do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil so that I take part in wicked deeds along with those who are evildoers; do not let me eat their delicacies" (Psalm 141:4, NIV).
3. "But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart" (Matthew 15:18, NIV).
4. "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character'" (I Corinthians 15:33, NIV).
5. "Evil companions will corrupt good morals and character" (I Corinthians 15:33, TPT).

C. Prayed for Accountability

1. "Let a righteous man strike me—that is a kindness; let him rebuke me—that is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it, for my prayer will still be against the deeds of evildoers" (Psalm 141:5, NIV).
2. "So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Romans 12:5, NIV).

III. ACCOUNTABILITY—THE SAFETY NET OF THE CHURCH

1. "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10, NIV).
2. "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13, NIV).
3. "Live creatively, friends. If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. *You* might be needing forgiveness before the day's out. Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law. If you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived" (Galatians 6:1-3, MSG).
4. "Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25, NIV).

A. Principles of Accountability

1. Confession and Prayer:
   a. "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (James 5:16, NIV).

2. Gentle Restoration:
   a. “My beloved friends, if you see a believer who is overtaken with a fault, the one who is in the Spirit should seek to restore him in the Spirit of gentleness. But keep watch over your own heart so that you won’t be tempted to exalt yourself over him” (Galatians 6:1, TPT).
3. Burden Bearing:
   a. “My beloved friends, if you see a believer who is overtaken with a fault, the one who is in the Spirit should seek to restore him in the Spirit of gentleness. But keep watch over your own heart so that you won’t be tempted to exalt yourself over him” (Galatians 6:2-3, TPT).
4. Spurring to Goodness:
   a. “Discover creative ways to encourage others and to motivate them toward acts of compassion, doing beautiful works as expressions of love” (Hebrews 10:24, TPT).
5. Ultimate Accountability:
   a. “So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God” (Romans 14:12, NIV).

B. Choosing Accountability Partners
1. “A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret” (Proverbs 11:13, NIV).
2. “Speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15, NIV).

CONCLUSION
1. “If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked” (Proverbs 29:12, ESV).
2. “Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm” (Proverbs 13:20, NIV).