

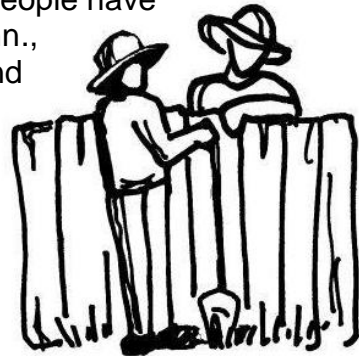
## Staying on the Right Path

On Feb. 26, 1995, Barings Bank, England's oldest, declared bankruptcy after losing nearly \$1 billion. How could such a thing happen? Lack of accountability.

David Jeremiah, author and senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, Calif., relates to the story in his book, *Turning Points*. "A 28-year-old Barings trader in Singapore had been given too much authority – like letting a schoolboy grade his own tests," Jeremiah said. "He lost money in stock trades, and no one knew about it – until all of the bank's money was gone.

"If that trader had been surrounded by associates who were closer to him, his failures might have been caught before they turned into a freefall," Jeremiah observed. "It's hard to overestimate the positive influence that good and godly friends, mentors, and role models can have on our lives – or the negative results that accrue when we have a 'lone ranger' mentality. Not only can friends keep us from going astray, they can move us in the right direction as well."

Surveys have shown that in our disconnected culture, most people have few, if any, close friends. In the small town of Cookeville, Tenn., where I grew up, I knew the neighbors for blocks around – and they all knew me and my two brothers. In fact, they felt it was their responsibility to let Mama Hunter know where we were and what we were doing, especially if we got into something requiring discipline. I didn't like it at the time, but looking back today, I thank their memory for helping raise us. Regrettably, today I don't know some of my neighbors several doors up the street.



How about you? Don't be a stranger! Be a good friend, and if so, you will have good friends who can help you find, and stay on, the right path.

Peer pressure can have a negative or positive effect. Make sure your peers are of the positive kind.

*As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend (Proverbs 27:17).*

– Beecher Hunter