

# How to pick a business partner? (29:24)

He who is a partner with a thief hates his own life; he hears the oath but tells nothing.

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## THE TEXT (NASB)

He who is a partner with a thief hates his own life; he hears the oath but tells nothing.

*Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not. KJV  
- Proverbs 29:24*

## INTRODUCTION



Pick **a partner** very carefully.

The dangers with business partnerships are usually invisible at the start; they come later.

Being partner with, **a thief** may seem to start well, but it leads to a lesser quality of life. Stolen goods seem wonderful, until the consequences come.



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## COMMENTARY

The text is more descriptive than prescriptive. It reveals a truism and lets the reader decide how to act. By entering into a partnership with someone who steals, we position ourselves to be exploited, even if we experience some short-term gain.

A partner with a thief is an accomplice in two crimes. The dishonesty begins with assets and continues in the realm of speech (or lack thereof). But dishonest gain costs much more than expected. Sin breeds more sin. The partner shows misguided loyalty. Perhaps he thinks the thief will reward him for his loyalty. He does not want to be a tattle-tale.

### Translation: *Oath*



The Hebrew word for **oath**, אלה (??•I?h, pronounced “ah-lah”), can also be translated as *curse*, from God or man. *Curse* isn’t referring to foul-mouthed language common among thieves, but to the solemn judicial instruction to speak the truth, as in a court of law.

Those who are under oath **but tell nothing** are making their own problems worse! First they foolishly work with a thief. Then, despite being under oath they refuse to confess their transgression. It’s double financial folly. See the text: [Should you admit your mistakes?](#)

Note the following commentaries written hundreds of year ago.

### Classic Comments

Matthew Henry (1709): “He is as bad as the thief; and, being drawn in to join with him in the commission of the sin, he cannot escape joining with him in the concealment of it, though it be with the most horrid perjuries and execrations. They hear cursing when they are sworn to tell the whole truth, but they will not confess.”

Adam Clarke (1832): “He has no fear of God, or reverence for an oath, because his heart is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

JFB Commentary (1871) : “The partner of the thief would rather risk the punishment than reveal



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the truth.”

## Lucky Lottery Losers

Partnerships can be problematic even with free money. You might think that free money, winning a lottery, is an easy financial problem to solve. No! Office lottery pools can get messy fast.

Back in 2011, 19 Bell Canada employees who were part of an office lottery pool won the \$50 million dollar jackpot. The very next day, other employees came forward to stake a claim on the winnings, putting a pause on the winnings distribution until the dispute could be resolved. These disputes took two years to resolve and was the source of much strife and workplace animosity, as the non-winners looked on enviously of their co-workers, and those that felt they deserved a portion of the winnings felt cheated. After two years of this, the final decision had been made and the 19 winners were given the remainder of their winnings.

[Read more about this here.](#)

## Prison and Death



The penalty for thievery may not be death, but prison. In prison the thief usually does not die, but loses his living time, and that's almost as bad. Greed is a killer. It first blinds its victim to the consequences of dishonesty and then leads him to death. Ironically he thinks he loves his life by getting more stuff but actually he **hates his own life**.

By hating his own life, it's as if he had a hidden death wish; semi-suicidal. Those who want to get rich quick, at any cost, have hidden despair. They are without hope and grasp at financial straws rather than praying, planning, and working for healthy, uncontaminated profits. They won't work to get clean money. Thieves usually like partners—not because they like people, but because they view people as a tool to increase their own wealth. A thief loves things and uses people. It should be the other way around—use things and love people.



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## OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus gave strong warnings about thieves and robbers.

In contrast, He described Himself, as an “anti-thief,”—a giver rather than a taker. Furthermore He said that *everyone* else who preceded Him—all other teachers and prophets—as *takers* (John 10:7-9). That’s amazing! It looks like the height of arrogance, exclusivity to the extreme. Jesus claimed to be the one and only giver—*the* (not just “a”) source of life and good things.

Jesus spoke as if He was God Almighty (John 10:33). No wonder some hated Him and plotted His death.

## APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Find out as much as possible about someone before you enter into a business partnership.
- Don’t let greed grow within you; it blinds its victims to the final cost.
- If you are already in a partnership with questionable business practices, then get out before your personal freedom is compromised.

Which of these, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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## KEY WORDS

apathy, integrity, life, lottery, partnerships, penalty, prison, thief, worse life (quality)

## ILLUSTRATION

### Who is Quick Buck Betty?



Quick Buck Betty wants to make money fast, and is always looking for “hot tips.” Researching and understanding investments takes too long; she just cares about the returns—especially the short-term returns.

It doesn't matter how the money is earned—in fact she'd rather not know at all! Betty is just eager to “make it” or, even better, have someone else make it for her. She has little time for Steady Eddy and Diligent Daniel—their methods take too long.

Betty views the stock and bond markets like the lottery and casino. She doesn't invest; she gambles. She likes to “play” the markets. Day trading is one of her passions.

