Bill Johnston had not thought being a Christian would be so difficult. It is late September and time to organize the annual golf trip to Las Vegas for his five long term buddies and himself. They have been making this trip for the last eight years and it has become a fixture in each of their vacation plans. After Jack Alderman had retired and permanently moved away from the Chicago area, Bill inherited the planner role. His job is to arrange the flights, hotels and golf tee times at area courses. In the past, Bill really enjoyed this process. But this year, things have changed.

The group consists of men in their mid-30s. Four of them are in middle management positions in large firms headquartered in the area while the other two work for small plumbing and electrical supply firms, respectively. All but one are married each with several children. The men have been friends for a long time and this relationship has fostered a real attachment among them. This strong commitment to each other has been evident in numerous cases during which one or more of the group members found they could lean on their friends with almost no hesitation. Beyond his wife Shirley and the kids, Bill has defined much of his being as a part of this group. Thus, this golf retreat is as much of a re-bonding of the guys as it is a golf vacation. However, the retreat has recently evolved into activities that Bill is no longer comfortable being a part of. The typical activities mostly consist of extensive golf each day coupled with gambling, quite heavy drinking, and the playing of what Bill defines as aggressive video games each night. In fact, the group has had a ritual of buying a liquor supply at the same liquor store near the Las Vegas airport and renting video games at the adjacent video outlet. To Bill’s knowledge, this conduct is not common for the men while they are at home.

The big event in Bill’s life since the last retreat has been his acceptance of Christ as his savior. Shirley, who became a devout believer in her teenage years, has been patiently encouraging Bill for most of their eleven year marriage. She came from a Christian home and has insisted that the children, ages 3, 5, and 8, be active in church so that they hopefully will accept Christ in a manner similar to her experience. However, she kidded to her friends that Bill would be a “project.” He came from a close-knit but non-Christian family in which his father Jake was an active outdoorsman. He treated his family well but also lived a somewhat separate life with a group of guys who got together at the local bar a couple of nights each week. As a teenager, Bill loved how these guys referred to him as “Jake’s boy.”

After all the years of his own marriage, Bill finally realized there was more to life than living in his father’s image. With Shirley’s obvious support, he began meeting with his pastor first just casually but, as time went by which included several late nights reading scripture, Bill became excited about the prospect of leading a Christian home with Shirley at his side. Two months
ago, he went forward in response to the pastor’s call at the end of the Sunday worship time. There, he publicly accepted Christ into his life. He immediately began attending the midweek bible study fellowship that Shirley had been a part of for several years.

What Bill had not figured on was that his new found faith and related commitment would be tested so soon. The men in his retreat group fully expected him to email them a plan for this year’s trip that was similar to those of the past that all the guys had bought into. What a dilemma! On the one hand, they were his long-term friends with whom the bond was something he did not want to weaken. It’s true that the “retreat” involved activities that he could no longer condone. He also knew that the benefits of this group of men and all they had been through may outweigh the problems associated with the golf retreat. He decided that one option his new found Christians may suggest – abruptly dropping his relationship with the men – is not going to happen. Bill hit it off with you at one of the first bible study meetings at the church. After he had agonized over what to do for several weeks, he has called you to ask your advice.

Bill made it clear, “First, an outright abandonment of his long time group is not an option I would consider. Furthermore, I have really enjoyed the golf trips in the past even though I now realize that my commitment to Christ means I must change my overall behavior.”

After your conversation, you realize that Bill is not well-equipped in terms of a Biblical underpinning for his behavior. As you think more about this situation, you recognize that any advice you can provide must start with understanding relevant scripture. Once he understands the relevant scripture, could Bill possibly convert this problem into a real opportunity to witness to his friends?

**ASSIGNMENT**

A new believer is faced with a situation in which he could reveal his Christian foundation. With Biblical insight, how should Bill proceed?
My Scriptural Research:

Group Scriptural Research:

Decisions / Recommendations:

Primary Scriptural References: