

ADVICE IS ONLY GOOD WHEN IT IS HEEDED**By Robert J. Tamasy**

Advice is like medicine. It usually only works when taken as directed. In today's very complex business and professional world, it is impossible to understand all the many factors that affect key decisions. There is wisdom, therefore, in seeking counsel from individuals who can provide valuable insight.

Many people, however, are inclined to seek advice only from people who will agree with and support what they already intend to do. This can be problematic, even disastrous. Proverbs 12:15 concisely describes people who are receptive to sound advice, along with those who are not: "The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice." Another verse from Proverbs cites the wisdom of receiving and acting upon good advice when it is offered. "Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise" (Proverbs 19:20).

In the Bible's Old Testament, we see Moses striving to provide proper leadership to the many thousands of Israelites freed from captivity in Egypt. As with any society, these people were becoming entangled in disagreements and disputes. Moses felt responsible for resolving these conflicts. Every day he "took his seat to serve as judge for the people and they stood around him from morning till evening" (Exodus 18:13). Can you imagine the pressure Moses was under trying to pass judgment over hundreds of matters from the early morning hours until the late evening?

His wise father-in-law, Jethro, recognized the problem. "When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, 'What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?... What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone'" (Exodus 18:14-18).

Jethro suggested delegating most of those responsibilities to "men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain.... Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves" (Exodus 18:21-22). Moses listened to his father-in-law's insightful advice and saved everyone a lot of headaches.

Contrast this with Rehoboam, who had succeeded his father Solomon as king of Israel. Proverbs 11:14 says, "For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure." However, the young king apparently could not discern between wise and foolish counsel. Rehoboam first consulted with the elders of Israel who had served Solomon. The people had asked him to "lighten the harsh labor and heavy yoke [your father] put on us," and the elders urged him to comply. "If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them...they will always be your servants" (1 Kings 12:4-7).

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Pride, however, caused Rehoboam to reject this advice and consult with young men who had grown up with him. They advised, “Tell these people...’My father laid on you a heavy yoke. I will make it even heavier...” (1 Kings 12:8-11). He followed their advice instead, and a great division resulted. All but the small Israelite tribe of Judah rejected him and chose a different king. As a result, Rehoboam’s reign was doomed from the start.

When we are ill, taking medicine as prescribed can help to restore health. To build and maintain healthy leadership, listening to wise counsel can also serve as ‘good medicine.’

© 2025. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A. Stoddard. Bob's biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How receptive are you to receiving advice when it is offered? Do you actively seek advice and wise counsel when faced with a difficult decision? Explain your answer.
2. Why do you think some people are reluctant to solicit or accept advice? What factors are involved that cause some to reject wise counsel?
3. What are some ways of identifying whether advice is wise and well-conceived, as was the case with Moses and Jethro, or foolish, as was the situation when Rehoboam chose to listen to the advice of his young friends over the elders of Israel?
4. Can you think of any examples – that you have experienced yourself or observed with others – when advice was ignored or rejected resulting in very negative consequences? What factors were involved?

Challenge for This Week

What challenge or decision are you dealing with right now that might benefit from your being willing to seek advice and wise counsel from trusted friends, a mentor, a colleague, or someone with greater expertise than you presently possess?

Examine your openness to receiving well-intended advice. If you find that you are hesitant or reluctant to ask for or receive sound counsel, especially that which is based on teachings in the Bible, pray about this. It might help to confide with someone else.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
Psalm 119:9-11; Proverbs 2:1-8, 12:5, 15:22; 19:27; 20:18, 24:5-6, 27:9

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