

SOME ADVICE – ABOUT ADVICE

By Robert J. Tamasy

When you are wrestling with a dilemma or problem, how willing are you to seek advice? And if you do look for advice, who are the people with whom you choose to consult?

Seth Godin, a noted author, entrepreneur, marketer and public speaker, recently offered observations about good advice. He called it “priceless. Not what you want to hear, but what you need to hear.... Not designed to make you feel better, (but) designed to make you better. Seek it out and embrace the true friends that care enough to risk sharing it.”

Godin says good advice is “priceless” because it is not what we *want* to hear, but what we *need* to hear. Too often we seek advice from people we feel confident will tell us what we desire to hear – to reinforce our conclusions or affirm decisions we have already made. But true friends and trusted advisors are not those that “tickle our ears,” but those willing to risk – to tell us difficult truths if necessary.

I remember a time when I had been at a good job for a number of years. Some aspects of it remained enjoyable, but I was feeling increasingly restless. One reason I was not inclined to explore other job opportunities was security – my compensation was reasonable, I felt “comfortable” in my role, and as with many people, the “known” seemed less threatening to me than the unknown.

Then unsolicited, a friend asked me, “If money were no object – if you were assured of receiving the income you needed – would you stay where you are?” The question caught me off guard, but after some hesitation had to admit I probably would make a change. Then, again totally without being asked, three other friends made similar suggestions. As a result, I did start to explore some other job opportunities I learned about and within a few months found a much more rewarding and challenging position. Their advice had indeed proved to be “priceless.”

The Bible speaks often about the benefits of good advice and wise counsel, particularly in the book of Proverbs. Here is some of the advice the Scriptures provide about advice:

Demonstrate wisdom by soliciting advice. We can easily convince ourselves that our thinking is right and we do not need the counsel of others. But by seeking advice, advisors might show the errors in our reasoning. “*The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice*” (Proverbs 12:15).

Seek counsel from several sources. To ensure you are getting correct counsel, it is helpful to consult with several people whose insight and wisdom you trust. “*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed*” (Proverbs 15:22).

Receive good counsel and grow in wisdom. Not one of us knows all the answers so seeking advice from others gives us access to their insights and understanding – to our benefit. “*Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise*” (Proverbs 19:20).

Do not fail to consult the "Counselor." In Isaiah 9:6, God is called "Wonderful Counselor." In seeking advice we would be remiss not to consult with Him through prayer and reading the Scriptures for teaching that applies to the given situation. *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him"* (James 1:5).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Typically, how receptive are you to seeking and receiving advice?
2. Who are the individuals you would turn to first when in need of wise counsel? Do you consider them "good friends" with the courage to tell you the truth, even if you did not like what they had to say? Explain your answer.
3. Would you agree with Seth Godin that good advice is "priceless"? Why or why not? If you do agree, can you think of any examples when that proved to be true for you?
4. Which of the biblical admonitions about seeking advice and counsel, if any, seem most meaningful or relevant for you?

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions from the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

Proverbs 11:14, 12:5, 13:1, 19:27, 20:18, 24:5-6, 27:9, 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12