

THE VALUE OF HAVING MANY ADVISERS

By Robert J. Tamasy

Some time ago I received a phone call from a friend who told me about a new business venture he was planning. He asked if I, being a writer, could come up with a catchy, marketable title for the enterprise. My friends know me as the guy who is never at a loss for words.

Before starting to think of clever names for the business start-up, I asked my friend if he had done his due diligence in researching the pros and cons of this particular type of company. He said he had already done that, and was eager to get underway. I had no background in that type of business, but two of my friends had engaged in ventures like that in the past. So I urged my friend to contact them and ask for their feedback. My desire was not to discourage him or change his mind, but to ensure he had examined all aspects of the proposed business to avoid problems in the future.

Years ago I learned an important principle of decision-making. We tend to make decisions based on emotion, then justify those decisions with facts – facts to support the course of action we want to take. Sometimes this works, but other times an emotions-first, facts-second approach can lead to disaster. Feelings can and frequently do cloud sound judgment.

So how do we avoid this potential pitfall? By seeking advice and wise counsel from people we trust – even those who are not certain to agree with and support whatever we wish to do.

The book of Proverbs has much to say on this topic. For instance, it states, *“For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure”* (Proverbs 11:14). A similar passage tells us, *“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed”* (Proverbs 15:22). Here are other principles from Proverbs that relate to decision-making and seeking advice from others:

Be wary of trusting our own judgment alone. Decisions – especially hasty ones – can be very easily justified and excused. “This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and if I do not act now, I will miss out!” we reason. Or we tell ourselves, “They (those who disagree with us) simply do not understand.” But Proverbs 28:26 warns, *“He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.”*

Seeking advice from others can reveal faulty thinking. Are we making decisions based on emotions, or without considering all the factors involved? Wise advisers can offer assurance – or reveal flaws in our reasoning. *“The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice”* (Proverbs 12:15).

Humbling ourselves to listen to advice is itself an act of wisdom. Turning to others for their counsel can seem humbling, especially when we already believe we are right. But if our goal is to make the right decisions, the humility to consult with others is an asset. *“Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise”* (Proverbs 19:20). *“Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge”* (Proverbs 19:27).

It is said that “Hindsight is 20:20.” In seeking wise counsel – especially when pondering difficult, complex decisions – others can offer their own hard-earned “20:20 hindsight” without our having to gain it through the pain of foolishness and failure.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever made an important, even life-changing decision without consulting others and asking for their advice – one that you later regretted? If so, what decision did you make and what were the consequences you had to deal with?

2. How easy is it for you to approach friends and people you trust, asking for their advice? Why do you think some people find it so difficult to seek counsel from others?

3. If trying to arrive at a difficult decision, what would you look for in people from whom you would be willing to request advice? What “selection criteria” would you use?

4. What are some of the challenges involved in making complex decisions, and how can we best determine when the time has come to consult with trusted advisers?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Psalm 19:7-11; Proverbs 3:5-6, 13:1, 20:18, 24:5-6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

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