



## ***Wisdom Worksheet: Leading the Aggressive through Listening (James 1:19)***

### **The Problem: Desire for Control apart from Christ**

#### **The Style: Leading with the Will**

##### **Loud voice**

The aggressive raises the volume of his voice in order to take control of the task at hand. The volume increases as the conflict escalates. He often sees victory defined by the axiom, “The loudest voice wins.”

##### **Insulting**

In order to take control of the person involved in the conflict, the aggressive often uses insults which are designed to garner a reaction from the recipient. When one responds with the intended response, he yields emotional control to the aggressive.

##### **Steam Rolling**

To accomplish his end goal, the aggressive steam rolls over any competition including innocent bystanders. This works for him because most people allow it to occur.

##### **Must maintain control**

The aggressive will not be robbed of control or his will. He will leverage his difficult behavior to maintain control of not only accomplishing his desired task, but also the people in his way.

#### **The Solution: Leading through Listening**

In order to lead the aggressive, we must listen to his heart—his will, mind, emotions, and spirit. The chambers of the heart can be discovered by learning his



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choices, thoughts, feelings, and even his prayers. *Connect with his heart like a Lego* (Prov. 20:5). *Deflect his difficult behavior like a shield* (Prov. 17:9). *Reflect his heart like a mirror* (Prov. 27:19). *Direct him toward wisdom like a highway sign* (Prov. 24:11-12).

In an example from the Bible, Jonathan used wisdom's tools to do lead his aggressive father, King Saul, through listening (1 Sam. 20:24-34). Saul had exploded with his son Jonathan who modeled most of what we see in Proverbs for wisely leading an aggressive through listening: (1) *answer gently* (Prov. 15:1), (2) *ignore insults* (Prov. 12:16), (3) *confront lovingly* (Prov. 25:12; 15:31), and (4) *offer choices*, all of which are wise alternatives acceptable to you (Prov. 8:10; 16:16).

**Connect with his heart like a Lego: *Answer Gently* (Prov. 15:1)**

The aggressive will be loud, so rather than be intimidated by the volume, answer gently. Solomon said, "*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger*" (Prov. 15:1). A harsh word just adds fuel to anger's fire, but a gentle one smolders it. Rather than going with our fallen inclination to raise the volume as well, we must *answer gently*. Each word in italics is vital. First, we must answer or the aggressive will run over us. He will respect that fact that we clearly communicate a response. Second, the style of the answer should be gentle—powerful and controlled. This will help bring the volume down. A gentle answer gets us connected with the aggressive person's heart. He stops his rage and begins to think about our response. Jonathan appeared to gently answer his irate father (1 Sam. 20:24-29).



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*Pause and Let Wisdom Work*

Next time you encounter an aggressive, listen for any good hidden in the heart of the person, and affirm it. “That’s really a good idea!” or “You are really on to something!” are examples. Sometimes, the gentle affirmation will take place in a question, “Could you please explain that?” Remember, it’s difficult to argue in a whisper.

**Deflect his difficult behavior like a Shield: *Ignore Insults* (Prov. 12:16)**

The aggressive designs and deploys an insult to generate a reaction—one that gives him control. When we do not react, the insult is defused. We must *ignore insults*, rather than immediately showing our annoyance (Prov. 12:16). Ignoring an insult includes maintaining listening body posture and attentive facial expressions as we deflect flaming arrows soaring our way. Jonathan ignored his father’s insult (1 Sam. 20:30-31).

*Pause and Let Wisdom Work*

Next time an aggressive insults you, ignore it, deflecting his demeaning words like a shield. Paul said that we should take up the shield of faith that allows us to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one (Eph. 6:16).

**Reflect his heart like a Mirror: *Confront Lovingly* (Prov. 25:12; 15:31; 28:23; 1 Thess. 5:14)**

We must *confront lovingly* the aggressive (Prov. 25:12). *Confront* literally means “face to face.” Confronting by telephone, through another person, or via letters or emails is not actually confronting because it is not face to face. To confront lovingly means that



we have the difficult person's best interests in mind. When we confront the aggressive in love, we increase the chances that he will listen to us (Prov. 15:31). Confronting lets the aggressive know that we have peered beyond his behavior into his heart, getting to his ultimate desire of control. At the same time, confronting actually increases the aggressive person's level of respect for the confronter (Prov. 28:23).

Jonathan confronted Saul face to face with relevant questions (1 Sam. 20:32). In one of Scripture's most insightful statements regarding our wise conflict management with difficult people, Paul said to confront the aggressive (1 Thess. 5:14, NASB). This needs to be done in total humility, recognizing that we are capable of the same sin (Gal. 6:1). Often times we can seek to better reflect a person's heart by learning more when we ask, the question, "Can I have the opportunity to better understand what you are saying?"

*Pause and Let Wisdom Work*

Next time you engage with an aggressive, lovingly confront him face to face with the fact that you have connected with his heart. Because you have deflected his difficult behavior you can reflect your understanding of his desires.

**Direct him toward wisdom like a Highway Sign: *Give Wise Choices* (Prov. 8:10; 16:16)**

We must *offer choices* to the aggressive so that he is not robbed of his will (Prov. 8:10; 16:16). It is imperative that these choices are wise alternatives that are acceptable to us. This allows the aggressive to always choose while we remain in agreement with his choice. When we don't listen to the aggressive, we rob him of choosing wisdom.



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“Would you like to *call Bill* or *go see him* to reconcile?” is an example of giving a choice from acceptable alternatives. Whereas Jonathan’s questions were open-ended, he allowed his father the opportunity to choose wisdom. In Jonathan’s scenario, his father was still aggressive when Jonathan left him to choose (1 Sam. 20:32-34). Sometimes, that will be the case. When the aggressive remains heated and out of control, it might be necessary for us to leave the scene after engaging wisely.

#### *Pause and Let Wisdom Work*

Next time you are faced with an aggressive, after answering gently, ignoring his insults, and confronting him lovingly, now offer wise choices all of which are acceptable to you. This will help direct the aggressive toward wisdom.

#### **Summary**

Listening is how we wisely lead a difficult person, including an aggressive, through conflict. When we *answer gently, ignore insults, confront lovingly, and give wise choices*, we reveal the wise heart of Christ. He navigates us through conflict to community.