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Wisdom Worksheet: 12 Words to the Wise

Learning (*leqach*) (Prov. 1:5; 22:17-19)

Introduction

We have two options for dealing with interpersonal conflict: we either (1) *protect* our pride or (2) *learn* in our humility. The final pearl in memory's strand is *learning*.

Solomon taught *learning* as one of the twelve purposes of Proverbs, "*Let the wise listen and add to their learning*" (Prov. 1:5). Proverbs offers four insights to *learning* both *for* and *from* conflict. *The Thirty Sayings of the Wise* begin with four insights to *learning*,

"Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips.

So that your trust may be in the LORD, I teach you today, even you" (Prov. 22:17-19).

When it comes to *learning*, we must: (1) *pay attention*; (2) *listen*; (3) *apply our hearts to learning wisdom*; and (4) *keep the wisdom in our hearts, ready on our lips*. The purpose of *learning* wisdom is to *lean* on God (Prov. 22:19). We can remember these insights in four images: (1) *motivate like honey*, (2) *dig like miners*, (3) *soak like sponges*, and (4) *recall like warehouses*.

(1) Motivate like Honey (Prov. 22:17; 24:13-14; 15:33; 19:25)

Learning for conflict

First, we must *motivate like honey* to learn, in order to *pay attention* (Prov. 22:17).

Pay attention literally means "to bend the ear." Rabbis motivated their young students to *pay attention*, by giving them a spoonful of honey before *learning*. *The Thirty Sayings of the Wise* record this motivation, "*Eat honey, my son, for it is good; honey from the comb*



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is sweet to your taste. Know also that wisdom is sweet to your soul; if you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off” (Prov. 24:13-14). In order to learn wisdom *for* conflict, we must *motivate like honey* with our ears bent as we *pay attention* to our earthly sources of heavenly wisdom. This motivation should occur in all four chambers of the heart: (1) *will* (Prov. 8:10); (2) *intellect* (Prov. 15:33); (3) *spirit* (Prov. 20:27); and (4) *emotions* (Prov. 8:11). When we are humbly motivated to learn wisdom with all four chambers of our hearts, we *choose* it, *meditate* on it, *pray* for it, and *want* it. Consequently, it helps us to discover *how* we are *motivated to pay attention*.

Dr. Howard Gardner, a Harvard professor, has researched this topic discovering seven intelligences that exist in each person in varying degrees. Each one acts as an internal motivation to learn. They include: (1) *interpersonal*—the gift to connect with others; (biblical examples are Lazarus’ sister Mary, Peter, David, and Barnabas); (2) *intrapersonal*—the gift to connect with our own emotions (Joseph, David, Samuel, Daniel, John); (3) *math/logical*—the ability to work with numbers and systematize thought (Noah, Paul); (4) *musical*—the mastering of instruments and vocals (David, Moses, Solomon); (5) *bodily kinesthetic*—disciplining one’s body like an athlete (Sampson, David and his mighty men); (6) *linguistic*—being good with words (Aaron, David, Solomon, Paul); and (7) *spatial*—the ability to see how pieces fit within space (Noah, Nehemiah). Dr. Gardner has added to his original list an eighth intelligence: *naturalistic*—the ability to interact effectively with the environment (Adam and Solomon). Gardner has considered adding to the list: *spiritual*, *existential*, and *moral*.

Learning from conflict



In the midst of conflict, we either protect our pride or learn in our humility that begins with God as our object. Solomon observed vertical humility as the source of wisdom, “*The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor*” (Prov. 15:33). In order to humbly learn *from* our conflict, we must *motivate like honey* as we bend our ears and humbly *pay attention* horizontally to our counterparts in conflict. When we protect our pride, we do not *pay attention* vertically to the interests of God and horizontally to the interests of others.

Solomon noted how the humble *pay attention* and learn *from* conflict management, “*Flog a mocker, and the simple will learn prudence; rebuke a discerning man, and he will gain knowledge*” (Prov. 19:25). While in our conflict, we should *pay attention* to our motives, examining our hearts for pride that selfishly protects. We accomplish this by asking ourselves what is motivating us in the conflict. Next, we ask if our answer is consistent with God’s wisdom. Our motives during the conflict might seem innocent to us, but God examines our hearts to weigh our desires for pride or humility (Prov. 16:2).

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

Motivate like honey. In order to learn wisdom *for* conflict, write down the two intelligences that best describe you and pursue the development of these motivations. To learn *from* conflict, ask yourself, “What motivates me in this conflict?” Next, ask, “Are my motives consistent with God’s wisdom?”

(2) Dig like Miners (Prov. 22:17; 9:9; 16:21)

Learning for conflict



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Second, we must *dig like miners and listen to wise sayings* (Prov. 22:17). This means that we get into our Bibles and read a chapter each day in Proverbs. As we *dig* into the pages of the Scriptures, we *mine* for the wisdom that God offers through Solomon's writings. In order to *dig like miners*, we should determine: (1) *where* and (2) *how* we *dig*.

First, we ask, "*Where?*" "*Where* do we *dig* best: in *light* or *dark* settings; *eating and drinking* or *abstaining*?" "*Where* do we like the temperature set: *hot* or *cold*?" "*Where* do we prefer the background volume be turned: *loud noise* such as television or music, or *quiet*?" These are important questions for us to identify *where* we *dig* best.

Next, we ask, "*How?*" *How* do we *dig*: with *what* (*concrete*) or *why* (*abstract*)? *Concrete* diggers search for facts, asking, "*What?*" *Abstract* diggers seek ideas and theories, asking, "*Why?*" Some of us need to know *why* before we care to know *what*.

Learning from conflict

We flesh out our desire to *dig like miners* in our conflict by *listening* to the other person(s) involved. Solomon taught that we *listen* best when we are wise in heart. This wisdom resident in the core of our beings helps us separate wise conflict management from that which is foolish and shapes our words to be peaceful, enhancing *learning*. Solomon reflected, "*The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction*" (Prov. 16:21). *Instruction* is translated from the same Hebrew word as *learning* (see KJV).

Pause and Let Wisdom Work



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Dig like a miner. To learn *for* conflict, get out your Bible and read a chapter each day in Proverbs. *Dig* for the wisdom God offers through Solomon's writings. Determine *where* you dig best and whether you are a *concrete* or *abstract* digger. Knowing whether you dig for *what* or *why* enhances the probability that you will find what you are mining. In order to learn *from* conflict, *listen* to the other person(s) involved.

(3) Soak like Sponges (Prov. 22:17; 9:9; 24:32; 13:14)

Learning for conflict

Third, we must *soak like sponges*, or *apply our hearts* to wisdom, in order to *retain* it (Prov. 22:17). We need to develop a system to learn wisdom so that it soaks into the fabric of our lives. Typically, we do not remember information because we never really learned it. Consequently, we learn best when we develop a system to retain the information that we mine when reading the Bible. This soaking system enhances retention by hanging the information to be learned on something that we already know. Solomon advised, "*Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning*" (Prov. 9:9). The more we know, the easier it becomes to know more. To be effective, a soaking system should be: (1) *visual*, (2) *imaginative*, and (3) *active*.

We must determine *how* we best *retain*, or *soak like sponges*, as we *apply our hearts* to wisdom. We *soak* in either: (1) *sequential* or (2) *random* order. *Sequential* soakers must develop a memory system with prioritized order. An example is outlining information in a systematic (often chronological) order, creating bigger buckets for the smaller detailed information to fit. *Random* soakers need not prioritize order; rather, they



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can take in information as it relates to them. This frees *random* soakers to read the end of a book first, comprehend the big idea, and grasp concepts that are pertinent to their specific set of circumstances.

When we use *visual images*, *imagination*, and *action* as well as determine whether we *soak* best in *sequential* or *random* order, we are equipped to *recall*, not merely *recognize* what we have learned. For example, many of us can remember praying for multiple-choice tests over essays so that we would be required to merely *recognize* the answers. One effective method for soaking for *recall* is mind-mapping which features three functions: (1) *centering* the big idea, (2) *chunking* the parts into no more than four components placed in circular order with each connected to the central idea by drawing a line, and (3) *linking* each component with the next as well as the big idea in the center. This is accomplished by sketching images for each component. The placement of the images on different quadrants of the page allow for *recall*, rather than mere *recognition*.

Learning from conflict

In order to learn *from* conflict, we must observe our behavior as well as that of others in order to *soak* up wisdom. Proverbs notes that when our hearts *soak* up what we observe during conflict, we learn, “*I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw*” (Prov. 24:32). This soaking satisfies our thirst for wisdom, an endless wellspring of life for conflict management, “*The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death*” (Prov. 13:14).

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Soak like a sponge. To learn *for* conflict, develop a system to remember a key verse or concept in Proverbs. Hang the new information on something that you already know. Make the system *visual, imaginative, and active*. Perhaps, create a mind-map. If you are a *sequential* soaker, develop your system with order, first things first. Outline the order of what you are trying to remember before going deeper and adding to it. If you are a *random* soaker, then you can identify big ideas and proceed with adding the concepts that apply best to your situation. In order to learn *from* conflict, observe the behavior of all involved in the dispute, and apply your heart to soaking and retaining wisdom.

(4) Recall like Warehouses (Prov. 22:18; 2:1; 3:1; 16:23)

Learning for conflict

Fourth, we must *recall like warehouses*, storing up the wise sayings that we have learned and organizing them for efficient recall, “*Keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips*” (Prov. 22:18). Solomon informed that wisdom would come to us if we would function as warehouses, “*My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you*” (Prov. 2:1). *Accept* is translated from the Hebrew root for *learning*. Solomon went on to clarify that recalling flowed from warehousing wisdom in our hearts, “*My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart*” (Prov. 3:1). This occurs when we *soak* with the same method that we *recall*.

Consequently, we must determine *how* we *recall* what we learn. We *recall* by *seeing, hearing, or doing*. *Soaking* in the same manner that we *recall* enhances the *learning* process. For example, if we used images to *soak*, then we see the images when



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we *recall*. If we used sounds to *soak*, then we hear when we *recall*. If we used action to *soak*, then we do action when we *recall*. The converse is true as well.

Next, we must determine whether we recall *big* or *small* concepts. If we recall big concepts, we are *global*. We remember the book title, maybe a few chapter titles, as well as the major concept. If we recall small concepts, we are *analytical*. We remember the parts better than the whole, details more than broad concepts. Recognizing what we recall equips us to develop a system to *soak* in the same style in which we *recall*. This compensates for our weaknesses in *learning*. For example, if we are *analytical*, we should outline the big ideas of a book by first scanning it so that we do not miss the main message overlooking the forest through the trees.

Learning from conflict

In order to learn *from* interpersonal conflict, we need to *warehouse* information that is shared during our tensions. Too often we do not organize a system to retain and *recall* this information. The result is a wrong word spoken at the wrong time when God intended the opposite for the benefit of all involved (Prov. 25:11). Solomon offered wisdom for our words, “*A wise man’s heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction*” (Prov. 16:23). *Instruction* is from the Hebrew for *learning* (see KJV). When we function as *warehouses*, we promote *learning* for ourselves as well as others.

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

Recall like an organized warehouse. To learn *for* conflict, recall your memory verse or concept and apply it to your life. Whether you recall either *big* or *small* concepts by *seeing*, *hearing*, or *doing*, construct a system to help you *soak* and *recall* in the same



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way. In order to learn *from* conflict, *warehouse* the valuable information shared during interpersonal tensions, retaining and recalling it in a fashion that allows you to communicate wisely.

Conclusion

Learning empowers us with wisdom to wisely manage conflict. In order to learn *for* conflict, we must: (1) *motivate like honey*; (2) *dig like miners* reading a chapter in Proverbs each day; (3) *soak like sponges*, memorizing a verse or concept that helps us *retain* wisdom; and (4) *recall like warehouses* that wisdom on a daily basis. To learn *from* conflict, we must do the same: (1) *pay attention* to our counterparts; (2) *listen* to them; (3) *apply our hearts* to *soak* up their shared information to retain it; and (4) *recall like warehouses* that valuable information in order to communicate wisely, *keeping wise sayings in our hearts having all of them ready on our lips*.

We enhance our *learning* when we: (1) discover our *motivations* by determining our top two intelligences; (2) *dig where* and *how* we were designed; (3) *soak* to retain with a memory system in the order that we prefer, using visual images, action, and imagination; and (4) *recall* what we were designed to remember in the manner that we were designed to recall it. That's *learning*, and *learning* increases our wisdom for conflict management.

We were designed to learn wisdom so that we would *lean* on God, rather than lean on ourselves, protecting our pride. Solomon summarized the purpose of *learning* wisdom, "*So that your trust may be in the LORD*" (Prov. 22:19). Humility toward God is the *beginning* (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 11:2; 22:4) and the *end* (Prov. 22:19) of wisdom.



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Consequently, we *lean to learn*, and we *learn to lean*. Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24). He invites us to learn from Him because He is humble in heart (Matt. 11:29). When we humbly accept His invitation, we begin new life as His disciples with His Spirit dwelling in us. Consequently, when we learn both *for* and *from* conflict, it is not merely we, but Christ in us doing so.