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Wisdom Worksheet: 12 Words to the Wise

Wise Counsel (*tachbulah*) (Prov. 1:5; 12:15)

Introduction

Where do you go for wise advice? When experiencing interpersonal conflict, we either *use* or *refuse wise counsel*. When we *refuse* it, we ignore the subject altogether or seek counsel from the wrong source. Some of us are so bent on going solo in our decisions that we rarely seek input from others, even overlooking God. Still, others of us carelessly pursue advice from foolish sources. The final pearl on mastery's strand is *wise counsel*. Solomon noted its importance for us to make wise decisions, "*A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel*" (Prov. 1:5 NASB). The NIV translates *wise counsel* as *guidance*. In essence, it is sound advice.

After King Solomon had died, his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king. Rehoboam had watched his dad write 3,000 proverbs, rule over God's people, and offer wise advice to many. He also had witnessed his dad take on 700 wives and 300 concubines who led him astray (1 Kings 11:3). He had gazed as his dad pursued earthly knowledge for the sake of contentment, pleasure for the sake of satisfaction, money for the sake of security, military might for the sake of control, and assets for the sake of significance. On his first day as king, Rehoboam was presented with conflict: the people had asked him to lighten their load (1 Kings 12:1-5). Rehoboam's first order of business was to address that conflict which required *wise counsel* as his kingdom dangled in the



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balance (1 Kings 12:1-5). This story provides us an example of how Solomon's son was afforded the opportunity to either *use* or *refuse wise counsel*.

Solomon had offered Rehoboam insight into the heart condition of one who *refuses* to seek *wise counsel* compared with the heart of one who *uses* it, "*The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice*" (Prov. 12:15). Simply stated, a wise person seeks *wise counsel*; a foolish person does not. A study of Proverbs reveals Solomon's four pillars regarding the pursuit of shrewd advice. Each one focuses on the heart of the person providing the information. *Wise counsel* is: (1) *guidance from the wise*, (2) *deceit from the wicked*, (3) *success from the Lord*, and (4) *sweet from a friend*.

(1) Guidance from the Wise (Prov. 24:6; 11:14; 15:22; 20:18; 1 Kings 12:6-7)

First, *wise counsel is guidance from the wise*. In the battle of interpersonal conflict, we need the counsel of more than one confidant in order to experience success. Solomon advised, "*For waging war you need guidance, and for victory many advisers*" (Prov. 24:6). If we do not seek *wise counsel*, we lose. King Solomon warned, "*For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure*" (Prov. 11:14). Regardless of our personal best efforts to plan our way through conflict, those plans will fall short without the input of others. Solomon taught, "*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed*" (Prov. 15:22). He complemented this teaching by communicating the wise way to plan conflict management, "*Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance*" (Prov. 20:18). The wise in heart seek *wise counsel* even when planning their approach to conflict management.



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The entire assembly of Israel had approached young King Rehoboam and presented him with this conflict: “*Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you*” (1 Kings 12:4). Rehoboam immediately sought *wise counsel* from the elders who had served his father, asking them specifically how they would answer the group (1 Kings 12:6). They responded with their guidance, “*If today, you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants*” (1 Kings 12:7).

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

Seek guidance from the wise. In the midst of your conflict, seek *wise counsel* from more than one credible source. Perhaps it is a friend, family member, coworker, pastor, small group leader, business owner, or teacher. Resist the temptation to go it alone on autopilot as you maintain control of your own life. Then ask yourself if the counsel is consistent with the wisdom in the Scriptures. Finally, *use the wise counsel* by planning your approach to wise conflict management.

(2) Deceit from the Wicked (Prov. 12:5; 1 Kings 12:8-11, 14)

Second, *wise counsel is deceit from the wicked.* The advice of the wicked is not *wise counsel* at all, but a trap. The bait lures us, but hidden inside is a hook. Solomon cautioned, “*The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful*” (Prov. 12:5). A wicked counselor deceitfully hides the hook of the consequences of his selfish motives inside the bait of gratifying our own selfish desires.



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Rehoboam *refused* the advice of the elders and turned to the young men who had grown up with him (1 Kings 12:8). He asked them for counsel regarding how to answer the assembly (1 Kings 12:9). These wicked opportunistic parasites had a vested interest in Rehoboam's decision because their quality of life had depended on the king's economic flow and political power. The young men offered their deceitful advice, "*Tell these people who have said to you, 'Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter'—tell them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions'*" (1 Kings 12:10-11). Their self-serving interests should have provided Rehoboam with the clue that he was being deceived. Instead, he trusted in his own selfish interests and fallen wisdom. Rehoboam followed the deceitful advice of the wicked and increased his burden on the people (1 Kings 12:14). Rehoboam's choice to *use* the foolish counsel led to his loss of power.

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

Recognize and refuse deceit from the wicked. When you are seeking advice, listen for self-serving clues imbedded in the words of your chosen sage. Next, filter the advice through wisdom's biblical grid discerning whether the counsel is *deceit from the wicked*. Then ask yourself if you are motivated solely by a selfish benefit to follow the tainted advice. If self-serving clues exist, *refuse* the deceitful counsel. Finally, seek the *wise counsel* of another trusted mentor.

(3) Success from the Lord (Prov. 21:30; 1 Kings 12:20-24)



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Third, *wise counsel is success from the Lord*. Solomon preached, “*There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD*” (Prov. 21:30). In seeking *wise counsel*, we must remember that the information we receive is merely advice. By definition, we are still accountable for our decisions regarding conflict. At the same time, the Father has given us access to the Holy Spirit Whom Jesus called our Counselor (John 14:26). Consequently, if the guidance we obtain from another person conflicts with an unmistakable Holy Spirit prompting, then we must follow the *wise counsel* from God because it will lead to the success He has in store for us. His vision will be followed by His provision. Any challenge in interpreting God’s prompting is not due to the Sender, but typically inherent in the receivers, namely us. Therefore, God’s leading can be confirmed through *wise counsel* from a Spirit-led person who clearly understands our circumstances. Occasionally, this confirmation requires the solicitation of additional human resources. It is helpful to remember that a genuine Holy Spirit prompting is consistent with: (1) the Bible, (2) *wise counsel*, and (3) the life and teachings of Christ.

As a consequence of following the deceitful advice of the wicked, Rehoboam had lost his throne of Israel to Jeroboam and was left ruling over only Judah including the tribe of Benjamin (1 Kings 12:20). Jeroboam was Solomon’s former labor secretary who had fled to Egypt after Solomon had learned of the prophet Ahijah’s forecast that Israel would be divided between Solomon’s offspring and Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:29-40). Ironically, this was due to Solomon’s foolish disobedience (1 Kings 11:33). Rehoboam prepared for war with Jeroboam in order to regain the fullness of his monarchy. He had



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gathered all 180,000 of the fighting men in Judah and Benjamin when God spoke through Shemaiah, who was known as the man of God (1 Kings 12:21-22). Yahweh warned Rehoboam not to fight (1 Kings 12:23-24). This time, Rehoboam *used* the *wise counsel* from the Lord and experienced success.

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

Succeed with wise counsel from the Lord. Become a rapid Holy Spirit Responder. Take every conflict to God in prayer and listen for His prompting. Verify whether it is His will by determining its consistency with: (1) the Bible, (2) *wise counsel*, and (3) the life and teachings of Christ. When all three are in agreement with your discernment of the Holy Spirit prompting, *use* the *wise counsel* from the Lord.

(4) Sweet from a Friend (Prov. 27:9; 1 Sam. 20)

Fourth, *wise counsel is sweet from a friend.* Solomon illustrated, “*Oil and perfume make the heart glad, So a man’s counsel is sweet to his friend*” (Prov. 27:9 NASB). When we are experiencing interpersonal conflict, it is wise to seek the sweet *wise counsel* of a true friend who has our best interests at heart. As opposed to wicked deceivers acting from their selfish interests like those who had grown up with Solomon’s son Rehoboam, a credible friend of this caliber can guide us to the sweet spot where God’s interest intersects with our unselfish interests and the interests of others. Our hearts will rejoice when we define the target of profitable conflict management in these terms, and we *use* the sweet wise counsel from a friend.

Rehoboam’s grandfather David had realized that *wise counsel* from his friend, Jonathan, was sweet. It spared David’s life (1 Sam. 20). Later, David married Bathsheba



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who gave birth to Solomon, Rehoboam's father. While Solomon was young, David taught him wisdom which Solomon passed on to his son Rehoboam (Prov. 4:1-9).

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

Taste the sweet wise counsel from a friend. Read the story of David and Jonathan recorded in 1 Samuel 20. During your next interpersonal conflict, seek the *wise counsel* of a friend like Jonathan who has your best interest at heart. Experience the benefit of sound advice from a person who not only knows you well, but also is familiar with the Bible's wisdom as well as the heart of God. *Use* your friend's *wise counsel*, and taste the sweet success intended by your Creator.

Conclusion

Proverbs uncovers Solomon's four pillars regarding the pursuit of *wise counsel* amidst conflict. Each one focuses on the author of the advice. *Wise counsel* is: (1) *guidance from the wise*, (2) *deceit from the wicked*, (3) *success from the Lord*, and (4) *sweet from a friend*. Like Solomon's son Rehoboam, we either *use* or *refuse wise counsel*. Therefore, in order to *use wise counsel*, we must: (1) *seek guidance from the wise*; (2) *recognize and refuse deceitful advice from the wicked*; (3) *succeed with wise counsel from the Lord*; and (4) *taste the sweet wise counsel from a friend*. This insight comes from our wise Counselor, the Spirit of Christ, dwelling in us (John 14:26).