

- **\*READ Proverbs 4:1-9\*** Teaching, instruction, wisdom, and understanding are the words used to these verses by Solomon to describe the counsel or advice that he is striving to instill into the one who is reading the words that he has written in this book of the Proverbs. While we might say that the whole Bible is a book of teaching, instruction, wisdom, and understanding...the Proverbs, more than any other, is a book of true counsel and advice that can help the reader to live a happier, more productive, and just a flat out better life.
- As humans, we were created to live lives where we are continually interacting with one another. No matter our position whether it be as a parent, teacher, friend, or whatever...we are constantly interacting with one another in one way or another. Often within these interactions, we seek to share counsel and advice with one another in order to help one another to enjoy those happier, more productive and better lives. In fact, throughout Scripture we see time and time again where counsel and advice is shared between individuals. Sometimes we see where good counsel given, and other times we see bad counsel given. Sometimes we see counsel heeded, and other times we see it not followed. Sometimes the result is a positive one, and other times we see where a negative result comes with the counsel.
- Whether we are giving or receiving counsel, we ought to do everything we can in order to have a positive result. This can be done by considering many of the Proverbs that we have read over the past few weeks that help to teach us how we can be successful in the giving and receiving of counsel. Let's begin by recognizing that God has blessed us with the ability to give and receive counsel from others.

**I. The counsel of others can be a blessing. (27:9; 20:15; 11:14; 24:6)**

- A. **Proverbs 27:9** says, *"Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man's counsel is sweet to his friend."* We seek to counsel others and give them advice because we want what is best for them and we want for them to succeed. Maybe the perfect example of such is what we see in the Proverbs where Solomon seeks to counsel his son to live a good life. Solomon describes this as a sweet part of man's life.
- B. But it isn't just that it is a good thing, but it is something that is one of the best parts of life. In **Proverbs 20:15**, Solomon says that *"There is gold, and an abundance of jewels; But the lips of knowledge are a more precious thing."* To hear the words of knowledge and understanding from another is something that is beyond value. In fact, Solomon says multiple times that listening to counselors can bring us victory in life.
  - 1) *"Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory."* (**Proverbs 11:14**)
  - 2) *"For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory."* (**Proverbs 24:6**)
- C. We might know or have known people in our lives who had this attitude where they didn't want to give or be given any sort of counsel or advice from anyone about anything. This sort of attitude denies the blessing of God to gain much in this life from the counsel and advice of others, and we ought to do better than this by recognize the good that comes when we give and receive counsel.

**II. The wise listen to godly counsel. (1:5; 12:15; 13:10; 15:31-33)**

- A. Furthermore, I would argue that the Proverbs teach us that those who are wise are willing to do just that, they are willing to heed good and godly counsel from others. *"A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel."* (**Proverbs 1:5**) One of the most well known Proverbs might be **Proverbs 12:15** and it certainly fits well into this discussion. *"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel."*
- B. Go back to the man who doesn't listen to counsel of any sort. That man wouldn't qualify as someone who fits what is written in chapter one or here in chapter twelve as a wise man because he won't listen to the counsel of others. Instead, he could very well be described as a fool who thinks what he does is the only right way. No one else would be able to advise him against doing what his mind is already set upon doing.

- C. While others might listen well to the counsel of others, this person's insolence would lead him to nothing but trouble and strife. (*"Through insolence comes nothing but strife, but wisdom is with those who receive counsel."* **Proverbs 13:10**) Those who fail to listen to godly counsel will only ever hurt themselves. Their stubborn heart will ruin much of their chance of making good and godly dissections that would come through the counsel of others. King Rehoboam in **I King 12** comes to mind.
- D. Solomon really addresses this point well in **Proverbs 15:31-33**. *"He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding. The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor comes humility."* I can just imagine someone listening to this later on and saying, "Nick...are you trying to tell me that I must always listen to the counsel of others, no matter what they say?" I wouldn't suggest that as being something that we do, and neither would Solomon.

### III. It is important to test the counsel of others. (14:15,18)

- A. In fact, someone who just listened to everyone else and did what they said would be considered a naive fool. Notice what is said in these two proverbs.
  - 1) *"The naive believes everything, but the sensible man considers his steps."* (**Proverbs 14:15**)
  - 2) *"The naive inherit foolishness, but the sensible are crowned with knowledge."* (**Proverbs 14:18**)
- B. It isn't that we are to just take what everyone counsels us in and do it no questions asked. But instead using some good old common sense tells us that we should test the counsel given to use and see if it is actually good advice and counsel. I think about the faithfulness of the Bereans in doing this (**Acts 17:11**) and the foolishness of the young prophet who took the counsel of the old prophet even though God had given different commandments. (**I Kings 13**) We do well with giving and receiving counsel when we see its importance, test the counsel, and using wisdom in applying it when we find it to be good and godly. But in order to accomplish these things, we need to recognize that humility must be present.

### IV. Approach the giving and taking of counsel with humility. (11:2; 15:14; 19:20; 12:1; 25:11; 26:17; 10:17; 1:25-30)

- A. Earlier we looked at **Proverbs 15:33**, and we read that *"the fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor comes humility."* This means that we will not prosper until we have implemented a good dose of humility in how we carry ourselves, and this is especially necessary when we are considering the giving and receiving of counsel. *"When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom."* (**Proverbs 11:2**)
- B. Those who approach the giving of wisdom with pride seem like know it alls, and rarely will anyone want to listen to them. On the other side, failure to listen to sound counsel because of pride will only result in ruin and their foolishness will be evident. If we want to benefit as God would have us to from counsel, then we will *"listen to counsel and accept discipline, that [we] may be wise in [our] days."* (**Proverbs 19:20**)
- C. It might be that the counsel we are receiving is coming in the form of discipline for a mistake we have made. Solomon says *"Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid."* (**Proverbs 12:1**) I must admit that I do appreciate Solomon's plain speech, but at the same time I can look back to different points in my life and see where I was being stupid because I didn't give a good listen and consideration to counsel that was given to me when I needed it. Pride was simply the issue, and I would've benefited much more by displaying some humility at that time. I was lucky to avoid true calamity as is mentioned in **Proverbs 1:25-30**. *"And you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, when your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind. When distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer. They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof."*

D. As mentioned earlier, humility isn't only needed when we are receiving counsel, but it is important when it comes to giving it, as well. A couple of proverbs that would do us well to keep in mind are **Proverbs 25:11 and 26:17**. *"Like apples of gold in setting of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances."* Sometimes we might think that we have the perfect piece of advice or counsel for someone, but we need to consider whether or not it is the right time to get involved. Solomon later tells us *"Like one who takes a dog by the ears, is he who passes by and meddles in strife not belonging to him."* Sometimes wisdom will tell us that we shouldn't get involved. Our involvement might just make things worse, or we might not know the whole story and not actually help at all. *("He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him."* **Proverbs 18:13**) Humility will help us to practice some self control and stay out of a bad situation.

**V. Not everyone will appreciate wise counsel (23:9; 9:7,8)**

- A. Finally...when seeing the importance of counsel, the good that it can do, and the necessity of humility...we can easily become frustrated when we see someone not seeing the truth of the matter and not heeding sound counsel. In this circumstance, we need to consider two final proverbs that will help us to understand that not everyone will appreciate our good and godly counsel.
- 1) *"Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words"* (**Proverbs 23:9**)
  - 2) *"He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, and he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you. Reprove a wise man and he will love you."* (**Proverbs 9:7,8**)
- B. There will be plenty of times in our lives where we are in good will and with good intentions trying to give needed and wise counsel, but we quickly find out that the intended recipient just doesn't want to hear, like the man we have brought up as an example throughout the lesson. They don't appreciate your efforts, and it might be at these times that we just need to move on and not get ourselves into trouble with this person's issues. Wisdom tells us that these types of people are fools, and it would do us well to let them be and let them enjoy their own dishonor. It may be tough to do this at times, but with God's guidance and wisdom we can do the right thing.

While giving and receiving counsel might be a common occurrence in life, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't give good consideration to how we go about doing so. The proverbs themselves offer wise and godly counsel to help us in our efforts, and it is our hope that this study will teach and remind us how we ought to go about doing such a thing. May God be with us, help us to remember this blessing, and give us the wisdom to give and receive counsel in such a way so that we may all benefit and be blessed in this life.

**\*PRAYER\***