

## GETTING GUIDANCE

A doctor went to a party one night and saw one of his patients out on the dance floor with a beautiful woman. The doctor went up to his patient and asked, "What are you doing?" The patient responded, "I'm just following your advice Doc! You told me to find a hot mama and I need to be cheerful." The doctor responds in disbelief, "That is not what I said at all. What I said to you was that you had a heart murmur and you need to be careful." Have you ever noticed that sometimes in life we hear what we want to hear?

So far in this series we have learned that in life our direction determines our destination. As we move through life we will face a number of mid-course corrections along the way. When we see danger, it is best to avoid it and not ignore it. We want to take refuge and avoid the danger. We have also learned that one of the most common mistakes in determining which way to go is trusting our hearts, because our hearts often lie to us.

Today, I want to help you learn an essential lesson for success along the path. We are going to talk about getting guidance. The message today has to do with figuring out what you don't know. How do you do that? How do you discover what you don't know so that you can avoid the potholes and pitfalls and landmines you never saw coming? The answer is, you seek guidance.

Pro 15:22-25 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. 23 A man finds joy in giving an apt reply -- and how good is a timely word! 24 The path of life leads upward for the wise to keep him from going down to the grave. 25 The LORD tears down the proud man's house but he keeps the widow's boundaries intact.

Some people have a hard time asking for directions. I want to say 3 things today about getting guidance;

1. Acknowledge you need it

So how can you know what you don't know? It says in verse 22 that, "Plans fail for lack of counsel." The best way to get guidance is to seek advice. Specifically, you seek the right advice from the right advisers. There are three reasons we often fail to do this:

The first is that we think we already know what we need to know. This is *ignorance*. The second is that it feels better to have people think we know what we are doing than to admit to them that we do not have a clue. This is *pride*. The third is that often it is more work to figure out how to get advice than to just do something yourself. This is *laziness*.

Often we make plans without counsel, and those often fail or at least wind up being less effective than they could have been. At other times we do seek advice, but we get inferior counsel because we take it from the wrong people. We do not seek it from wise counselors.

It is like the story of the lady who found out that she had a skunk in her basement. Confounded as to how to get rid of it, she called the local police for help. Their advice was to lay a trail of breadcrumbs from the cellar door entrance into the yard so as to lead the skunk out of the basement. She followed their advice. The next day she called the police again asking for help. Now she had four skunks in her basement. Wisdom is not just about asking people, it is asking the right people.

Solomon was a very wise person, but his son did not follow in his father's footsteps. Maybe you remember the story of Solomon's son Rehoboam. The people wanted to make him king, but he was not sure about what to do.

2Ch 10:5 Rehoboam answered, "Come back to me in three days." So the people went away. 6 Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. "How would you advise me to answer these people?" he asked. 7 They replied, "If you will be kind to these people and please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants."

He asked his wise advisors what to do, and they gave him good advice. The problem is that he failed to listen to them;

2Ch 10:8 But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. 9 He asked them, "What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, 'Lighten the yoke your father put on us'?" 10 The young men who had grown up with him replied, "Tell the 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. 11 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.' "

Instead of listening to the wise advisers, he listened to his friends who had no clue of what it meant to be king. They had no idea of what to do. Of course, they gave him the wrong advice.

2Ch 10:16 When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: "What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!" So all the Israelites went home. 17 But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them. 18 King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labor, but the Israelites stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. 19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

Rehoboam's decision not to follow wise counsel split the kingdom of Israel. He listened to the wrong people. He failed to take the wise counsel of his advisors.

I heard about a comedian who said he was playing in a small lounge on the east coast when President George W Bush and his wife Laura came in. Mrs. Bush asked the President what kind of sandwich he wanted to order, and George W said, "I don't know." The comedian overheard the conversation and suggested the president order the pastrami on rye, hold the mayo. The comedian said, "At that point, I became a presidential advisor."

Even presidents sometimes need advisers. The first secret to getting good counsel is to be open to it and acknowledge that you need it. Wise people listen to wise people and add to their learning.

## 2. Ask people for it

After acknowledging that you need advice, the next thing you need to do is ask for it. The beginning of the book of Proverbs says;

Pro 1:5 let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance

That means you not only recognize that you need help, you ask wise people for guidance. Men are sometimes characterized as being not willing to stop and ask for directions. Maybe you have seen this comic – MAAD – Men Against Asking for Directions. There is another comic where some Amorites are sitting on a hill watching Moses lead the Israelites around in circles in the wilderness for forty years. The one turns to the other and says, "Wow, it's true. Men really hate stopping to ask for directions."

One of the reasons that people do not ask for directions is because they do not want to be seen as not knowing where they are going. We worry about how other people might see us. Instead of stopping and asking for directions and having to admit that we are uncertain or confused, we push on, and hope no one notices how lost we really are. We are too concerned with how others view us.

I heard the story about an Old Man and his Son who were walking home from town one day with their donkey. As they made their way home, their neighbors began to laugh at them and asked themselves, "Why are both of them walking? One of them should be riding the donkey." After much ridicule the man placed his son on the donkey and they continued on their way.

But soon their neighbors began to criticize them again saying, "Look at that! The boy is making that poor old man walk while he rides the donkey! Why doesn't the boy get off that donkey and let the old man ride for awhile?" Hearing this, the boy dismounted, and the old man got on the donkey. But before long the neighbors again began to criticize them and wondered out loud, "Why is that man riding the donkey and making that helpless boy walk? What kind of man is he?"

Hearing this, the father reached down and picked up his son and they both rode the donkey and continued their way home. But the neighbors again complained and said to one another, "Look at that poor donkey, having to carry two people on it back! Why don't they give that poor animal a break and get off of it before the animal gets hurt." In desperation the father and son did the only thing left for them to do. They picked up the donkey and carried it on their backs the rest of the way home.

You will never be happy in life if you are overly concerned with how other view you. You have to be willing to acknowledge when you need help and be willing to ask for it.

Pro 11:14 For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.

### 3. Admit when you have blown it

You need to acknowledge that you need help and then you need to be willing to ask for it. One of the reasons we sometimes do not ask for help is that we have really convinced ourselves that we do not need it, that we know better than others what is right.

A man was on the practice golf course when the club pro brought another man out for a lesson. The pro watched the fellow swing several times and started making suggestions for improvement, but each time the pupil interrupted with his own version of what was wrong and how to correct it. After a few minutes of this interference, the pro began nodding his head in agreement. At the end of the lesson, the student paid the pro, congratulated him on his expertise as a teacher, and left in an obviously pleased frame of mind. The observer was so astonished by the performance that he asked, "Why did you go along with him?" "Son," the old pro said with a grin, as he pocketed his fee, "I learned long ago that it's a waste of time to sell answers to a man who only wants to buy echoes."

In the passage we read this morning it says;

Pro 15:25 The LORD tears down the proud man's house but he keeps the widow's boundaries intact.

I like the way the Message bible says it;

Pro 15:25 GOD smashes the pretensions of the arrogant; he stands with those who have no standing.

Pride is one of the greatest enemies of walking in the way of wisdom. Recognizing that you do not have all the answers, that you are not perfect. Successful people are open to the fact that they don't know everything they need to know and are quick to go to people who do.

Pro 12:15 The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

Prudent people seek wise counsel. Simple people just do what seems right to them. If a good friend were to come up to you and say, "I'm worried about the direction you're headed." How would you respond?

The fool says, "You don't need to worry about me." The wise man says "You are worried about me? Really? I'm so grateful you care. Tell me what you're seeing."

A dad comes to his son and says, "I'm worried about some of the habits you're developing." The foolish son says, "Leave me, alone, Dad." The wise son says, "Tell me what you're seeing."

A mom comes to her daughter and says, "Honey, I think your behavior could be getting you into trouble." The foolish daughter says, "Mom, you are so old-fashioned." The wise daughter says, "Tell me what you're seeing."

A supervisor comes to an employee and says, "I know this is none of my business, but can I give you some advice?" The foolish employee says, "If it's none of your concern, mind your own business." The wise employee says, "I need all the advice and counsel I can get."

All of us need guidance. None of us is perfect. All of us has blown it. The best way to remind ourselves of this is to remember all the times in life when we thought we were going the right way when in fact we were lost.

Pro 13:10 Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.

In January of 1985 an engineer working for NASA observed that under unusually cold conditions, an o-ring seal on the Space Shuttle's solid rocket booster would fail. Further tests were done, and in July of 1985 he wrote a memo to the Vice President of Engineering which stated: "It is my honest and very real fear that if we do not take immediate action to dedicate a team to solve the problem, ... then we stand in jeopardy of losing a space shuttle flight..." Even in the hours leading up to the launch of the Challenger in January of 1986, he and other engineers were stating their belief that it was not safe to launch the shuttle. Despite the engineer's concerns, the decision was made to launch.

We all know the results of that decision. I still remember watching on the TV as the shuttle exploded in the air. As we have read already;

Pro 15:22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

In Louis Carrol's book Alice in Wonderland, Alice comes to a fork in the road and doesn't know which way to turn. She sees the grinning Cheshire Cat and asks which direction she should take. The cat replies, "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." Wise advise.

Who are you looking to for direction? Who are your wise councillors?

I heard the story of a man who had bought a boat and kept it in a marina on the coast of Florida. A hurricane warning went into effect, the storm was brewing just off the coast and was about to hit land. He didn't know what to do. He have made a sizable investment in this boat and he didn't want to loose it so he asked for advice. A friend, who had experience with both boats and hurricanes gave him this advice. "Don't attempt to tie the boat to the dock or anything on land. It will be torn to pieces. Here's what you need to do. Your only hope is to anchor deep. Take four anchors, and drop them deep and the boat will ride out the storm." That's good advice spiritually as well. If you don't want to drift away, if you want your life to mean something, if you want to leave your children an example of what it means to be a Christian, anchor deep in your fellowship with Christ.