

The Path

Week 4: Getting Help Along the Way

Proverbs 15:22

July 28, 2019

I believe that... ***One of the most difficult things in life is to know what you don't know.*** I mean, there's a lot I don't know that I don't know I don't know. For example, there's a lot about physics that I don't know, there's a lot about NASCAR I don't know, there's a whole lot about women that I don't know, and there is definitely a lot about golf and baseball that I don't know. You probably have a few of these yourself. If you're a parent, how could you have known that you knew nothing about parenting until the day your first child was born?

In this series of messages from the Book of Proverbs we've learned that life is a series of mid-course corrections, that when we see danger, it would be good to take evasive maneuvers and avoid destruction.

- We've learned that one of the most common mistakes in determining which fork to take is trusting our hearts, because our hearts often lie to us.
- We've learned that one of the easiest ways to make a great decision is to ask ourselves the question, "What story do I want to tell about this part of my life years from now?"
- And we've learned that our direction, not our intentions determines our destination.

And, today, I want to help us learn an essential lesson for success along the path. The lesson has to do with figuring out what we don't know. Fortunately, Solomon, the author of Proverbs and purportedly the wisest man who ever lived, gave us some help with this as well. In Prov. 15:22, he wrote: ***Plans go wrong for lack of advice, many advisers bring success.*** NLT

Solomon says that if we're going to be wise about our future plans it's good to seek out some wise people who've been there, done that. But, we don't always seek advice because we either:

- ***think we already know what we need to know. (Ignorance)***
- ***feels better to have people think we know where we're going than to let them know we don't have a clue. (Pride)***
- ***think it's too much work to figure out how to get advice. (Laziness)***

Andy Stanley writes:

I am constantly amazed at how resistant folks are to take their cues from people who are where they want to be. But I'm even more amazed at how quick the average person is to borrow a page or two from someone who's never been where he wants to be. How about the parents who parent like their parents and wonder why their kids are turning out the same way they did? And then there are the couples who treat each other the way they saw their moms and dads treat each other and wonder why they are just as unhappy as their parents were.

This happens all the time among my friends. Friends are great for friendship. They aren't always great for advice giving. And often it is not their advice that gets us into trouble – it is the assumptions we make based on what we observe about our friends. These assumptions become a map we inadvertently follow. I call this phenomenon the herd assumption. The herd assumption happens when you assume that since everybody you know is doing something the same way, it must be all right. If everybody you know is mortgaged to the hilt, driving two leased vehicles, and applying for a home equity line of credit, then it can't be all that bad. If everybody you know works sixty hours a week and sees their family primarily on weekends, then it must work out. Somehow. Everyone can't be wrong.

So, how do we get good advice along our paths? What's the secret to good counsel, and where do you find it? Solomon says, ***...Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. Let those with understanding receive guidance (Proverbs 1:5 NLT).*** Wise people listen to counsel and get wiser. Discerning people listen to guidance and get further along their path.

The Secret to Getting Good Counsel is to first admit that:

Knowing that you will always need good counsel.

No one gets to the place where we no longer need wise counsel. I was listening to a comedian the other day who said he was playing in a small lounge on the east coast a few years ago when President and Mrs. Bush came in. Mrs. Bush asked the President what kind of sandwich he wanted to order, and W said, "I don't know." The comedian said, "At that point, I became a presidential advisor." He suggested the president order the pastrami on rye, hold the mayo. Even presidents need advisors. The first secret to getting good counsel is to be open to it. Wise people listen and add to their learning.

The second Secret to Getting Good Council is:

Asking more than one person's advice.

Without wise leadership, a nation falls; there is safety in having many advisers. (Proverbs 11:14 NLT)

Notice the word Solomon inserts before advisors in this Proverb? "Many." Not one, "many."

Here's something that's going to sound really obvious to you: most of the really important decisions in your life... seem really important to you. Right? And most important decisions seem to have a sense of *urgency* to them. They're so important they dominate our thinking. They're with us all the time, so we want to make those decisions as quickly as possible. And Solomon is saying – take the time needed to ask more than one person for advice.

The third Secret to Getting Good Council is:

Not letting pride keep you from admitting what you don't know.

Pride leads to conflict; those who take advice are wise. (Proverbs 13:10 NLT)

Pride may be the number one enemy of The Path. 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. Solomon describes this in terms of The Path in Proverbs 12:15 when he says: ***Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others.***

See what he's saying? "The Path" of a fool seems right to him. So a friend comes and says, "I'm worried about the direction you're headed." And the fool says, "You don't need to worry about me." What does the wise man say when a friend says, "I'm worried about you?" He says, "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 get you into trouble someday." - 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 business, then mind your own business." - The wise employee says, "I need all the advice and counsel I can get."

The Bible's most gripping example of this is the story of a young king named Rehoboam. His story is found in **2 Chronicles 10**. His story covers several verses, so I'd like you to turn there so you can read along with me. Rehoboam has just become king, and the people feel like they have been worked unduly hard by his predecessor. So before they allow him to be crowned as king, they ask him to lighten up on his demands for their labor.

Let's pick the story up at v. 5.

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." 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.'" 12 Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, "Come back to me in three days." 13 The king answered them harshly. Rejecting the advice of the elders, 14 he followed the advice of the young men and said, "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions." 15 So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from God, to fulfill the word the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite. 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.

After hearing their request, Rehoboam made three very smart decisions. He asked for time to decide what to do. He was wise enough to know that this was not a time for a rushed decision. The second thing he did was seek advice in making the decision. He chose to listen before he decided. And the third thing he did was he listened to many counselors, not just one, and not even just one group. What Rehoboam wasn't interested in, though, was actual advice. What he wanted was *confirmation* of his own conviction. So the reason he went to two groups for advice was that the first group didn't tell him what he wanted to hear.

Never mind that these men were older and wiser. Never mind that they had been there to help make his father the wisest and richest king of his day. Never mind that they had actually gone where Rehoboam wanted to go. This is the lesson of Rehoboam's entire life, which he has been allowed to parade before all of history.

The fourth Secret to Getting Good Council is:

Taking counsel from those who have been where you want to go.

The secret to getting good counsel is first knowing that you need it, then seeking it from multiple reliable sources, and truly listening to those sources to learn what you didn't even know you didn't know, and most importantly, taking counsel from the right people. From people we respect, who have arrived where we want to go with their character and reputations intact.

There is a real difference between the right road and the easy road. The easy road doesn't seek counsel. Or ignores the counsel it gets. Or seeks counsel only from those who are easy to get to. The wise man and wise woman seek counsel from wise people, listen to it, heed it, and walk a path that leads to where they want to go.

Imagine for a minute what your life would be like if you developed the habit, not of being impulsive in your decision making, and not of being indecisive either, but of consulting older, wiser, more successful people than you? Parents, imagine what we could learn, and what heartaches we could save our children if we counseled with successful seasoned parents?

Students, imagine how much better you will enter the work world if you link up from time to time with someone older, someone you admire and ask them their advice on things like how to study, how to approach homework, which classes to take, and what college or graduate school to attend? Employees, imagine the steps you could save if you sought advice from people of character and success in your field and asked for guidance once in a while.

It wouldn't be that hard, would it?

Some of us wonder why our plans fail so often. Honestly, some of our plans have failed because we sabotaged them. But many of our plans failed because they weren't the best plans. God's word says,

Plans go wrong for lack of counsel; many advisers bring success (Proverbs 15:22 NLT).

What will you do with this advice today?

1. Come back next week. (We're growing in wisdom every week, but we're not through yet. Solomon has just a few more lessons to teach us. Come back next week.)

2. Finish the book of Proverbs. If you've been reading regularly since we began the series, you should be close to finished now, but even if you're not, make a commitment today to finish the book in the next three weeks.

3. Ask God to show you the counselors He has for you.

4. Seek advice this week from someone who is where you want to be.

5. Follow Jesus. (Impose on a picture of a Connection Card)

I think it's very interesting that while Jesus was on the earth, the phrase he used more often than any other was "Follow me." That's a directional statement, isn't it? "Follow me." Walk behind me. Walk the path I'm walking. I effect he's saying – I've been where you want to end up (heaven) so, if you follow me, you'll get there too.