

Wise Men Accept Counsel

Exodus 18:13-27

There were two beggars who met in the streets one day. As they got to know each other, they asked each other. What happened that got you to this place? The first one said, "I didn't listen to anybody. I wouldn't take advice from anyone." The second beggar replied, "I am here because I listened to everybody. I always did what others recommended."

This short illustration shows the struggle we face to make wise decisions. Sometimes it is hard to know whether we should do what we think is best or follow the recommendations of others. Proverbs tells us, "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14b). We need to be open to the advice of others and realize the decision is ours to make. With God's help, we can make wise decisions.

In today's lesson, Moses had to make a choice; his father-in-law saw the struggle he was going through and gave him advice. Should Moses listen, or continue doing what he had been doing? Turn to Exodus 18 and listen to Pastor J Mark as he shares "Wise Men Accept Counsel" with us.

There are a few men in life who become famous for their wisdom. King Solomon was one of those men. The Bible tells us that there was never anyone as wise as Solomon, no one before him, and no one after him had wisdom like he did. When you read the book of Proverbs, you learn that he could speak on a wide variety of subjects, and he was well versed in all of them. That's very unusual. Men and women came from far and wide to hear his wisdom and ask his counsel.

The Bible tells us his wisdom was a gift from God. When Solomon was anointed king, he asked the LORD for wisdom, and God granted his request. He could have asked for wealth, or long life, or victory over his enemies. But instead, he asked God for wisdom to rule His people well. He acknowledged that he wasn't able to lead such a large group of people on his own. That request pleased God, and he blessed Solomon with outstanding wisdom (1 Kings 3:5-15).

As human beings, God has given each of us a mind that can think and remember. We may not have the capacity of Solomon, but we need to develop the abilities God has given us. There is so much we can learn, and then we can use it to bless and help other people.

A wise man is one who is ready to accept counsel. Nobody knows everything. Whenever we have a know-it-all attitude or position, we cannot learn. But a wise man is ready to be taught.

In Exodus 18:13-27 we have the example of a wise man who accepted counsel and became wiser. That wise man was Moses.

13. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

14. And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?

15. And Moses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to inquire of God:

16. When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.

17. And Moses' father-in-law said unto him, the thing that thou doest is not good.

18. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

19. Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:

20. And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

21. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

22. And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear [the burden] with thee.

23. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

24. So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.

25. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

26. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

27. And Moses let his father-in-law depart; and he went his way into his own land.

This Scripture provides us with several sure DIRECTIVES to condition us to accept counsel.

Directive number one:

Make A Careful Observation.

Jethro watched what happened as the court was in session. He saw how Moses judged the people. He observed Moses sitting there all day, taking care of the needs of the people. He noticed the demands that were made upon Moses, how the people came and stood in line from morning until evening waiting to have their case heard. He saw how Moses was overburdened with a long and tiring day.

So, Jethro said, "What are you doing? Why do you do this all by yourself? And all the people stand by you from morning until evening?"

Then Moses gave the reason. He said, "the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a matter, they come to me, so I have to make these decisions. I teach them the statutes of God and His laws."

Moses' father-in-law was a wise man. He made a careful observation. He saw what was going on. He saw the demands that were being made, and he heard Moses' explanation of why he did things this way. He was ready to give his counsel only after he had carefully observed the situation. He is a good model for us to follow.

Directive number two:

Plan A Comprehensive Exhortation.

So, Moses' father-in-law made some evaluations based upon what he had observed. From those evaluations, he made some suggestions for change.

First, he said, "What you're doing is not good. Your responsibility is too heavy. You can't keep doing this alone. You will wear yourself out! You should be teaching the people the things of God. You should stand before God for the people and bring their causes unto the LORD. But you have taken too much on yourself." So, Jethro gave his exhortation, advice, counsel.

He went on, "You can take care of this by delegating responsibility to other men. Choose from among your people capable men who fear God, men of truth, men who hate covetousness. Give them the responsibility to help lead. Organize and appoint rulers over groups of ten people, groups of fifty, groups

of a hundred, and groups of a thousand. Let these rulers work together on the various levels to meet the needs of the people.”

Jethro further advised, “You must regulate your procedure. You provide these capable men to judge the people at all seasons. The smaller matters they will take care of and the larger matters you will take care of. That way, they shall bear the burden with you. You will be able to endure. And all the people will go to their places in peace because their cases have been heard and dealt with promptly.”

It was a comprehensive exhortation. It addressed the whole problem. Jethro first observed what was going on. Then he evaluated how things were being done. And finally, he showed Moses how he could regulate his way of leading. He could do that by delegating responsibility to others. That is excellent counsel.

Directive number three:

Design A Complete Implementation.

Jethro came to Moses with a good idea, and Moses accepted it. “He listened to the counsel of his father-in-law and did all that he said.” He saw the wisdom of Jethro’s counsel, and he took steps to implement it.

Not everyone would be so accepting of the counsel as Moses was. Why do you think he accepted the advice of his father-in-law so readily? The Bible tells us why in Numbers 12:3. It says, “*Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.*” That doesn’t mean he was weak; it means he had a proper understanding of who he was in God’s sight and was willing to admit that he didn’t know everything.

So, Moses chose his helpers with care. That is important. If you give responsibility to people, they must be able to carry out their duties. He chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. This ensured that everyone would have their cases heard promptly and in order.

Moses put into practice what the plan required. He chose men who would cooperate. So they judged the people at all seasons. The easier cases they dealt with themselves. The hard cases they brought to Moses. I want you to see that Moses put this thing into practice immediately, and it worked. He considered the counsel; he chose his men with care; he carried out the plan. Wise men accept counsel.

Let’s recap these directives that prepare us to receive counsel. First, make a careful observation. Take the needed time to learn how things are being done. That’s what Jethro did. When you’re satisfied that you’ve seen enough, you can move to the second directive, give a comprehensive exhortation. Or,

more simply, give advice that addresses each part of the situation. Jethro outlined the steps of action Moses could take to remedy the problem.

And finally, Moses was willing to design a complete implementation of Jethro's advice. He was secure enough in his leadership position that he didn't feel threatened by Jethro's advice. Instead, he saw the wisdom of what was suggested and implemented the suggestions that were given to him.

Are you a wise person? One way you can tell if you're a wise person is by how well you accept advice.

Thanks, J. Mark, for this teaching, and thank you for being here for this teaching from God's Word. It is amazing how timeless the Bible is. We believe this book is the best foundation to live by. For all the hard questions in life, the Bible has the best answers—not the easy answers, but certainly the best ones. And He, Jesus, promises to be with us; what a comforting promise.

If you have any questions or if you'd like a copy of today's teaching, here are a few ways you can contact us. The best way is via email. Our email is hope@heraldsofhope.org. If you don't have email, you could write to us. Our address is: Hope for Today, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania 15533. Or you can connect with us on our website. Our website is *heraldsofhope.org*. On our website, you will find other teaching similar to this and more helpful resources; please look around while you are there. If you go to the connect tab, you can message us directly. Again, the website is *heraldsofhope.org*.

Thank you so much for being with us. We look forward to next week and hope you will join us for more lessons from Exodus. I will leave you with the comforting promise Jesus left to all His disciples in the last verse of Matthew, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."