**When Wrong Advice Is Heeded**May 29. 2016
Roswell AM

S-! “*One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray*” (Pro. 12:26, ESV)

**Introduction**

Bad advice does nothing good -- that's why Solomon wrote here in Proverbs 12:26 that a righteous man is cautious in friendship -- you're careful in who your friends are and you're careful in what they tell you because the way of the wicked will lead you astray. One translation says, "*the godly give good advice to their friends; the wicked lead them astray"* (RSV). If there is one maxim I have discovered in my life to be absolutely true, it is this:  Your friends know what you should be doing, and they don't hesitate to let you know their opinions. This is especially true with our school age folks – all the way through college. Just think about it -- everywhere you look today, you see people trying to give advice -- if not in person, then through social media, Facebook and twitter and even through bumper stickers and t-shirts -- everybody wants to tell you what to do. They will tell you what to eat, drink, how to be happy, who to vote for, etc. Too many take the wrong advice from newspaper advice columns, TV personalities, social services, psychologists, and many other sources that are not offering good, godly advice. Without question, they heed the advice given and never consider what the Lord would have them do. Most often that advice turns out to do more harm than good.

When we seek counsel we often feel obliged to use the advice. For many we are pressured by the advice by our peers. S-2 Peer pressure is defined as “The power or capacity to *cause an effect* by one that is your equal or belongs to the same group in society.” By that definition, you are sitting with your peers this AM this morning. For many of our teenagers they will be in an atmosphere starting this afternoon where they will be positively impacted by their peers. As surely as “*evil companion ruins good morals*” so will good companion encourage godly living (1 Cor. 15:33, ESV). Solomon advises us that “*two are better than one*,” (Ecc 4:9-12) showing the value of good companionship. Peer pressure, you see, can be good or bad. But all of us are pressured to do things. We all have peers – people we see everyday who are involved somehow in our lives. And we all feel pressure to conform from time to time. Really, age has nothing to do with it. We are surrounded by people who make a difference in our lives. Some influence for good, others for the worse.

Before you say that you are never pressured by your peers, consider this: have you ever or bought something advised by a friend (shoes, clothing, tools, electronics, a new book, etc.)? If you have then you have been impacted by a peer and have listened to their counsel. Have you ever been a part of a selection process in an activity where two captains began choosing their team one by one? How did that make you feel? Why are you doing this thing, or that? Does being cool fascinate you? Have you ever been a part of something for the mere reason that you do not want to be left out? Are you afraid of being ridiculed? Ostracized? Lose popularity? Are you afraid you will be cut off by the majority? What is your motivation for doing what you do? The buzz words for young people are the words “awesome” and “dude.” If you really want to be cool put the two words together – “Awesome … dude.” Why use these terms as we do? Because they are hip words. The truth is trying to please the world is impossible. Somebody will always have some reason for putting you down. If you are smart, they will call you a know-it-all, if you are good looking, someone will say you are conceited, if you are thin or heavy, somebody will have a name to call you, if you are poor or rich, you will be called names by somebody, and if you call yourself a Christian, you can be sure some will make fun of you for that as well. Peter tells us not to think it strange when that happens (1 Pet. 4:12).

Some time ago I read the following from a James Dobson book called ***Hide or Seek*** :

S-2B I knew a blind fifteen-year-old girl who refused to admit she had a handicap. She would not accept

 the help of a special teacher provided by the school. And her parents could not even get her to use a

 white cane. To thump along the corridor of the school marked her as different from her peers and she

 couldn’t tolerate that distinction. I watched one day as she walked to her next class with her head

 erect as though she knew where she was going. Before I could stop her, she walked straight into a post.

 **Even this experience was insufficient to use the device which other teenagers did not need**.

 **S-3** I worked with the parents of a second grade boy having a hearing problem. He simply would not let

 them put a hearing aid in his ear. He would rather be deaf than different. **Truly, conformity is a powerful**

 **drive in children of all ages.**

 In summary, it is important for your pre-teenager to know about group pressure before it reaches its

 peak. Someday he may be sitting in a car with four friends who decide to shoot heroin. Your preparation

 is no guarantee that he will have the courage to stand alone at that critical moment, but his knowledge

 of peer influence could provide the independence to do what is right. --- James Dobson, *Hide or Seek*

I want to impress on each of us, especially the young people, to be careful that we are not pressured by our peers to do the wrong thing. Remember that just because you are hanging with Christians does not guarantee righteous discretion. Further, and this is the main point this morning, I want to encourage our young people to learn that when we need to get advice we should be very careful about where we go to get it. It is true that “*wise counsel*” needs to be heeded even when we don’t ask for it (Pro. 12:1). But we also need to be careful who we listen to. Remember it was only Joshua and Caleb who saw the promise land as a result of there not being pressured by the majority and because they ignored their advice (Nu. 14:1-4). I am praying that we can be like Joshua and Caleb and have what Moses records in the Psalms as “*having as heart of wisdom*” (90:12).

The Bible repeatedly warns believers to be careful of the company they keep.  The wrong influences often point a Christian in the wrong direction and quite often hurt a Christian’s testimony and closeness with the Lord. What we learn, or are told, by the wrong pressures can direct us into making wrong decisions that we may regret. Here are some of the many Biblical instances where a child of God was negatively affected by choosing the wrong associates and listening to their counsel: **S-4**

1. Adam did what his wife told him to do, rather than obey God’s commandment, and it cost him and every person since, death and the heartaches of sin (Gen. 3).
2. Aaron succumbed to the pressure from the people around him, and made an idol.  Because of that sin, many people died (Exodus 12).
3. Aaron and Miriam talked together against God’s man, Moses.  God punished Miriam with leprosy (Numbers 12).
4. Ten spies did not have their faith in God, as did Joshua and Caleb, and thus aroused fear among their people (Numbers 14).
5. Dinah visited worldly girls and a terrible thing happened to her (raped) (Gen. 34:1-2).
6. Samson picked the wrong girlfriend and ended up losing his strength, eyesight, and life (Judges 16).
7. Saul lost his position as king when he chose to do as the people wanted, rather than to obey the Lord’s commandments to destroy the Amalekites and their belongings (I Samuel 15).
8. Simon Peter’s exposure to those that were not believers pressured him into denying the Lord three times (John 18).
9. Lying, along with her husband, Ananias, also cost Sapphira her life (Acts 5).

For the purpose of today’s lesson let’s look closer at one example of an individual who was pressure by friends to do the wrong thing, listening to their unwise counsel when wise counsel was available. Let's turn over to the Old Testament book of 1 Kings 12:1-15 and let's look at the story of Rehoboam -- a young man who is the poster child for what happens when you take bad advice by friends who pressure you. While you are turning there, let me give you the background for this passage which takes place during the time referred to as the **United Kingdom** of Israel. We will see the divided kingdom begin in this chapter (12:16 ff.).

* As you remember David had been anointed king by God and has united the twelve tribes of Israel into a strong and powerful nation.
* After his death, his son Solomon continued to reign over the twelve tribes from Jerusalem, as the sole king of the nation of Israel, however, Solomon was not a man of the people as David was and although he had prayed to God for wisdom and was known as the wisest man who ever lived, his reign did not necessarily reflect this wisdom.
* Solomon loved extravagance in all things -- he had 700 wives and 300 concubines, many of these women from foreign lands with foreign gods -- and their influence on Solomon led him to neglect the worship of the one true God (1 Ki. 11:1-8).
* That takes us to 1 Kings 12 as Jereboam comes to Rehoboam’s royal christening as king of Israel. Jereboam had been a respected servant of Solomon who had charge of Solomon’s slaves (1 Ki. 11:26-28).

**S-5 1 Kings 12:1-5** READ from PP
* Jereboam was the de facto leader of the people in the north -- he had been exiled from Israel by Solomon because he apparently had tried to take control of the northern tribes from the kingdom.
* If you recall God had sent a prophet to Jereboam to proclaim that God was going to punish Solomon for his sins by splitting the kingdom into two areas and that Jereboam was going to be the king of the northern area (1 Ki. 11:29-31). Note: Jereboam had apparently decided to make the prophecy come true in his own timing rather than wait on God, so Solomon exiled him from the country (to Egypt).
* Now that Solomon has died and Rehoboam has taken his place, Jereboam returns from Egypt to address the grievances of the northern tribes to the new king. Jereboam asks Rehoboam to give them a break -- to lessen the taxes -- to take away the demand for harsh labor – if he will, he promises they will serve him and support his kingdom in exchange.
* So Rehoboam, upon hearing the request, does a wise thing -- he doesn't make a decision on the spot, but instead takes three days to make a decision. This is good advice for us to follow in our own lives -- when we have a decision to make, it's always wise to take a moment to think it through before acting -- to just pause and consider all the options and all the consequences of our actions before we act.
* So Rehoboam has done two smart things so far as king -- ***first*,** he reached out to the northern tribes by being crowned in Shechem -- and ***secondly***, he waited to make a decision that could impact his kingdom until he had time to think about it.

**S-6 1 Kings 12:6-7** READ from PP.

* Rehoboam does another smart thing -- when faced with this enormous problem, he goes to someone else for counsel -- it's never a bad idea to ask others for their advice -- the question is:  who do we ask?
* In this case Rehoboam goes to the elders who had advised King Solomon during his reign -- these are men of experience who had served in the kingdom and who were well aware of the issues with the northern tribes -- they understood the situation -- and they were able to speak from a place of wisdom and knowledge -- they had seen the way Solomon handled the north -- and they knew what would work and what wouldn't work.
* So these seasoned men/elders advise Rehoboam to heed the request of the northern kingdom -- to repair the damage his father Solomon had caused by taking the position of a servant -- by doing the opposite of what Solomon had done -- instead of serving self, they advised Rehoboam to serve others -- to put the people's needs and concerns first -- and to lessen their taxes and their burden of servitude.
* Apparently Rehoboam didn't like their advice. Why? They didn’t tell him what he wanted to hear. So Rehoboam throws out their advice seeking counsel from those who would tell him what he wanted to hear.

**S-7 1 Kings 12:8-11** READ from PP

* When Rehoboam didn't get the answer he wanted from the elders, he turned to his own friends and asked them what they thought.
* Remember that Rehoboam grew up in the lap of luxury. He and his friends were accustomed to a wealthy and privileged lifestyle. They didn't have the experience and the wisdom of the elders. They didn't understand the plight of the people in the northern tribes. All they heard was a request to give them less money and less service -- and not a one of them wanted to do with less than what they currently had.
* in fact, they said, let's ask for more -- tell them you're going to demand more money and more service and you're going to even be harder on them than Solomon was

**S-8 1 Kings 12:12-15** READ from PP

* So Rehoboam does just that -- he rejects the counsel of the elders and does what his friends tell him to do and it turns out just like you'd expect -- the people are distraught and they aren't going to stand for it any longer.
* This passage goes on to say that the northern tribe rebelled against Rehoboam and refused him as their king -- they install Jereboam as their king and form the northern kingdom, known in the Bible as Israel
* Rehoboam retreats to Jerusalem to rule the southern two tribes of Judah and Benjamin with his friends that gave the bad advice

**S-9 Application (Body**) - What can we learn about with regard to taking and giving advice from this passage?

1) **We need to carefully consider who to go to for advice** – Careful is the operative word. We need to surround
 ourselves with good and godly people if we want to act that way in our own lives. Our counsel should come from God
 fearing people.
 a. Rehoboam's friends were self-serving and self-seeking -- they were immature and they didn't pause to consider
 the suffering of those around them. They were inexperienced.
 b. All they were concerned with was their own wealth and their own pleasure -- don't seek advice from people like
 this.
 c. Instead, seek advice from mature and wise people -- from mature and godly people -- seek advice from people
 who have experienced similar issues in their lives -- and listen to their counsel before you act.
2) **We need to recognize that good advice is true advice**.
 a. It may not be advice we want to hear but will it help me be a better servant?

 b. Most people go to others just wanting them to affirm what they already want to do -- they don't want to hear the
 truth -- they just want you to tell them, "Go for it." Be careful of this.
 c. Decisions have consequences – sometimes they will divide a kingdom; ruin a friendship or bankrupt you. Worse
 yet, it could cost you your soul (or others) because you heeded bad advice.
 d. Ask yourself, is the advice being given going to magnify Christ? Even if it increases my servitude? As Paul says,
 …“*but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or
 by death”* (Phil. 1:20, KJV). The ESV says, “*honor Christ in my body*” and the NASV says “*exalted in my body*.”
 Does the advice, if heeded, magnify, exalt and honor Christ?
 e. And is it true? Not just what I want to hear.
3) **We need to weigh any advice we receive against the word of God**.
 a. We need to base all our decisions on God's moral principles that we see in the Bible (Ja. 1:25).
 b. Never accept advice that goes against God's moral principles.
 c. Never accept advice that tells you to do something contrary to God's word.
 d. Integrity should be the cornerstone of all we do in our lives. “*What saith the Lord*?“ This should always be the
 emphasis/standard. **Wise counselors will always defer to God’s counsel, not man’s wisdom**. That’s’ the kind of
 counsel that Solomon speaks of in Pro. 12:1
 e. God's principle for leadership in the Bible is clear -- **He calls for servant leadership** -- **not exalted leadership** -- but
 Rehoboam didn't want to hear that from his father's advisors -- he wanted to be served, rather than serve -- and
 that’s the advice he hears from his friends – In the doing he does not follow God's principles and it divides his
 kingdom as a result.

4) **We need to seek advice from those who have our best interests in mind** – Ross’s rule: "if someone I trust tells me
 something, and I know it's for my benefit, I just trust it…I've found one of the best filters you can use to trust
 someone is when there's nothing for them to gain from their advice. No sweat to them if I take the advice; it won’t
 impact them one way or another.

      a. Rehoboam's friends had something to gain from their advice -- they were going to get to keep their extravagant
 lifestyle -- that should be a warning sign to us when others give us advice.
 b. Always seek advice that serves your best interests rather than the interests of the person you're asking.
5) **Good advice addresses the problem**
 a. Good advice addresses our needs and gives us steps to take to fix it.

     b. In this case, the issue was how to repair the break between the northern and southern tribes -- the advice given by
 the elders would have resolved this issue and mended broken relationships.
 c. Now, it would have taken some sacrifice on the part of Rehoboam and he chose to take advice that ended up
 making a bad situation even worse.
 d. If someone tells you to do something that doesn't help the situation, don't do it -- action for the sake of action is
 not always the right course.

**S-10 Conclusion**

The take-home message is this – “*Lean not on your own understanding, but trust in the Lord with all your heart*” (Pro. 3:5). That means if you are faced with a situation where counseling is required it should come from people who know the Book, who love it and live it, and who put their trust in God’s word. It means that you should take the advice of these kind of people who love you and are concerned for your well-being; when they warn you to stay away from a person or group of people, when they warn you against taking a financial risk, when they advise you to be careful with your modesty; when they offer advice with your parenting skills. “*iron sharpens iron*” (Pro. 27:17). Conversely, you need to avoid counseling from immature people, and that includes immature Christians. Do not misunderstand me, not all counsel from your friends is stupid. I am aware of that. But the emphasis here is to go to people who have experience and wisdom – who have navigated life successfully and – who have walked with God for a long time and who know God's word. They have hearts of wisdom (Psa. 90:12) and are magnifiers of Christ. Find folks like that and yes we need to listen to their advice, see if it lines up with Scripture, make necessary adjustments and then go for it!