

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Theme: Godly Advice

Getting Advice

Bill Brinkworth

Sometimes I am surprised where some people get their “wisdom.” I remember asking a young lady, “Why would you go to your peers and ask them about dating?”

I turned to the person giving the advice, “Have you ever dated?”

“No,” the adviser replied. “My parents won’t let me yet.”

Back to the person asking the advice, I commented, “So, she has no experience in the area you are asking about, yet you would have made life-changing decisions based on what she suggested you do.”

She shrugged, “Probably.”

“Wouldn’t it be wiser if you went to a person with experience in the area you need help?” All I got that time was a nod. “And who could you go to that has that experience and is personally interested in helping you with no strings attached?”

She thought about it and replied, “Well, my parents.”

It makes more sense to go to someone who has been through the trials you face when getting advice. As the teenager in the above account, there is an entire world going to the inexperienced or poor examples for advice.

Seeking wisdom from poor sources is not limited to young folks. Adults are far guiltier. There are people following marriage advice from television-celebrity psychologists, whose own marriages are on the rocks. Other celebrities give out advice, who on the same show they are giving counsel, have the psychologists trying to help them with their problems. People unquestionably follow their suggestions.

Many go to friends, television celebrities, newspaper columnists, psychologists, and even fortune-tellers for answers. The people that are relied on for truth and wisdom often have lives as confused as those seeking guidance and who are also without solutions to life's problems.

It is wiser to have one that made the right choices and decisions in the past to help guide the way, not one that is still stumbling to find the right solutions themselves. For Christians, we have a good reliable, always right source for advice. Our never wrong, raised-a-million-zillion-children counsel can come from God. Through prayer and the scriptures, He can direct our paths in the right way. His directions are never wrong.

He loves us so much, and because He knows we will face many difficulties through our lifetime, He left a guidebook

to help us through our lives. This map-through-life is the Bible. One entire book is even dedicated to sound advice. It is the book of Proverbs.

Throughout the Bible's pages, one will find advice on who and who not to marry, how to get friends, how to know for sure that your eternal future will be in Heaven, how to handle anger, how to be successful, and much, much more. If the Word of God were read and followed, psychologists, high school counselors, marriage counselors, and many other advisers would be looking for work.

The only way this wisdom can be extracted, however, is by reading it yourself! To whet your appetite for reading the Word of God, here is some of the Bible's advice:

- Advice on who to marry and who to befriend: *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” II Corinthians 6:14*
- Advice on getting friends: *“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Proverbs 18:24*
- Advice on how to get to Heaven: *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” John 3:3*
- Advice on getting the right advice: *“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” Proverbs 24:6*

- Advice about listening to advice: *“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.” Proverbs 12:15*
- Advice on how to handle a hostile person: *“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” Proverbs 15:1*
- Advice on keeping out of trouble: *“Abstain from all appearance of evil.” I Thessalonians 5:22*

Unlike fortune-tellers, television hosts, marriage counselors, and even parents, God’s advice is never wrong. Obeying God’s guidance will always guarantee counsel that is best for us. We may not always like what we read, but Father knows best. He has led many before us through the same trials and tribulations we may be facing. All the Christian needs to get His direction is to read it for themselves in the Word of God and then follow it.

Advice on Handling People Problems

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“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” Matthew 18:15-17

Everybody has had a problem with somebody sometime. What does the Bible say to do when you are offended? It does not suggest starting a smear campaign and tell everybody your side of the situation to get them on “your side.” That usually gets a bunch of people bitter at the other person. When you do that and convincingly get that person to think you are right and the other wrong, you are bringing the innocent listener “shame and folly” (Proverbs 18:13) for making them judge a situation without hearing the other side.

The Bible also does not say, when another has offended you, to hold it all in. That often results in one having a severe case of “bitterness” against that person. Waiting around for him to come to you and getting it right is also not on the Bible’s recommended list of ways to handle problems.

It does say, if one is a Christian, to go to the other person. Many times, that person may not even know they have offended you. Going to the person one-on-one will often solve the problem. When you go to that person, you may discover:

- He did not mean it the way you understood it.
- That you heard it wrong!
- An alternative way of looking at a matter.
- That you were 100% wrong!

I have often been embarrassed when I talked with a person and found that my being upset was not justified. It takes courage to face a person when they have offended you, and they may not always accept your confronting them. That is

why the next step to get the problem solved is found in Matthew 18:17-18.

There may be a time to settle the differences between you and another person, you may have to bring an unbiased person with you to be a witness in further communications with the one that offended you. Rarely, it may even be necessary to take the matter in front of the church if the Christian is a member of your church.

People shudder at the Bible's way of handling a problem. Most do not address the situation correctly. It may be one reason there are many disgruntled people in churches. It is also why many "... soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:19) and why there are so many trying to live with bitterness.

Follow God's advice in solving a problem between one another. Our heavenly Father knows best; He has raised billions of children!

"Sin hurts! Once burned, twice learned — hopefully!"

— Author Unknown

Advice on Handling Difficulties

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James, who some believe to be the brother of Jesus, gives practical advice in this writing. One of the most helpful and oft-experienced situations for all people, including believers, is discussed here. The "good" side of going through difficulties is examined in James 1:2-6.

Here James identifies the difficulties, trials, and enticements all face as “divers temptations.” Although most initially shudder at even the thought of going through different problems, James exposes what can positively be gained by going through our individual “valleys.” Instead of agreeing how terrible it is to have problems, James encourages Christians to “... count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;” (James 1:2).

How could anyone be joyful when facing joblessness, heartaches, financial problems, family problems, or the thousands of difficulties we all face in our lifetime? James tells us we can be “joyful” because:

- The trying of our faith during the hard times builds our patience (James 1:3). Since there usually is not much we can do but wait until the trial passes, we learn to wait patiently and trust the Lord during those hard times.
- The practical lessons on patience we learn build a good Christian into a “tested” believer. Most of us have some person in our life that we have observed as more spiritual than ourselves. We are often amazed at how calm and patient they are when they face difficulties. They did not wake up one morning and decide to be patient for the rest of their lives. They got that way because they went through hard times, got close to God, and saw that His help sufficed to deliver and guide them. The next time they faced an unfavorable situation, they

remembered all He had done in the past and did not get frazzled. Their learned patience (James 1:4) built their character and trust in the Lord.

- When we go through a “temptation,” we go to the Lord in prayer more than we ever have before. In doing so, we get closer to the Lord, see how he supplies wisdom as to how to handle our trial (James 1:5), and have the potential to have our faith increased.

Trials and tribulations are not something anyone desires to go through, but after going through many of them and drawing close to God during those times, we can learn that they are not so bad. The valley of “temptation” can be joyous, as our God guides us through the treacherous pathways.

“...for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

Nehemiah 8:10