

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Seeking Godly Counsel

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Kings 12:1-15 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Psalm 32:8 | Proverbs 3:5-6

► SUMMARY

Life is really just one continuous series of decisions, but we are not left to figure all this out by ourselves.

God has given us directions for wise decision-making and promises of His divine guidance if we'll listen to Him. The Lord also provides other people who can help us when we don't know what to do. But we must be cautious because not all advice is beneficial. Our goal should always be to seek godly counsel that will aid us in discovering God's will.

► SERMON POINTS

In 1 Kings, chapter 12, young King Rehoboam needed wise counsel. Shortly he became king, the people of Israel came to him asking that he lighten the hard service and heavy yoke that his father, Solomon, had placed on them. The elders who had served his father gave him the following advice: "If you will be a servant to this people today and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever" (v. 7).

But Rehoboam also went to the young men who grew up with him and served him. They advised him to increase the people's labor and taxes and assert his power over them. Foolishly, he forsook the recommendations of the elders and followed the young men's advice to speak harshly to the people.

Rehoboam and the nation of Israel paid a high price because he listened to the wrong counselors. Although our wrong choices may not have such disastrous consequences as his did, we'd do well to learn from his folly by being very

careful whom we choose for our counselors. The goal in seeking wise counsel is to find someone who will tell us the truth based on what God says in His Word.

How do we detect bad counsel?

- **Unwise counselors make little or no mention of God or His Word.** Their advice will be based on what they think, not what God thinks.
- **There will be an absence of prayer.** It's not considered very important.
- **They may display a subtle defensiveness about using Scripture for guidance.** Preferring to rely on their own senses, they see it as unnecessary.
- **They may suggest actions that are not scriptural.** Their advice may sound and feel right, but it actually violates what God says in His Word.
- **Unwise counselors may be very critical of Christian leaders or godly people.** They warn against listening to them, asserting that only their way is right.
- **They suggest reading material that ignores God's Word.** There are thousands of counselors in our culture, and many of them rely on resources that have nothing to do with the truths of Scripture. Therefore, we must be careful to recognize and reject materials that do not present God's views.
- **Sometimes counselors give advice according to what they think we want to hear.** But a wise counselor considers what God says first and foremost.
- **An advisor may seek to control the one counseled.** We must be cautious about letting someone try to control our activities and relationships with their advice.
- **Some counselors may seek to create a sense of dependency on them.** But we are called to trust in the

Lord, heed His Word, and follow His leadership. If we trust Him for our salvation, surely we can trust Him for guidance. The wisest counsel we could possibly find is in God's Word. We should invest our time in learning Scripture and seeking help from those who know it well and can guide us to the right passages.

- **Avoid counselors with an ungodly lifestyle.** This applies to both professionals and friends. If someone is not living rightly, it's doubtful that they will be able to give godly advice. If we want to know what God desires, we must go to His Word or to someone who knows it well and lives in obedience to it.
- **Some advisors may want to give us an out.** But escaping our problems and pain might not be what God desires. He may want us to walk through them to teach us valuable lessons we'd learn no other way. Instead of looking for a way out, we should become so centered on God's Word and devoted to His will, that we want whatever He desires for us, even if it's painful. Sometimes the answer we seek is not found in running to someone else for guidance, but in letting our knees drop eighteen inches to the floor to ask God what He would have us do.
- **Some counselors are seeking our approval.** This is a problem that happens when friends try to please us by telling us what they think we want to hear.
- **A check in our spirit reveals unsound counsel.** When we walk in the Spirit, He gives us inner warnings (checks) if we're heading in the wrong direction, thinking the wrong way, or making a wrong decision. If this happens while we're confiding in someone, we should stop, knowing it's a warning from the Spirit.
- **Some people counsel in a way that is profitable for themselves.** But the best counselors are those who truly care for us and seek to do what's best for us without regard for what they get from it.
- **Sometimes a counselor may become inappropriately involved with the counselee.** This can even happen in a church or with a pastor. There must be appropriate barriers in counseling.

- **An advisor may project his own hurts and disappointments on the person he counsels.** Our problems may bring the counselor's hidden issues to the forefront.
- **A counselor may unload on the person seeking help.** Soon the session becomes about his problems instead of our problems.
- **We should not go to an unbeliever for godly counsel.** Someone who doesn't know God or believe in His Word will never be able to give godly advice.

What are the consequences of going to an ungodly counselor?

- We might make the wrong decision.
- We might be deceived.
- We could be controlled by the counselor.
- It may cost us financially.
- It could separate friends.
- It may injure our marriage.
- We could turn away from trusting God and turn to trusting a person.
- We might be encouraged to make decisions that violate God's Word.
- We may be led astray and lead someone else astray also.

► RESPONSE

- When you talk to someone about your problems, what are you truly seeking? Support? Sympathy? Agreement? Direction? God's viewpoint?
- What criteria do you use for choosing a counselor? How important is it to you that the advice is shaped by the Word of God?
- When trouble strikes, do you know where to find God's answer in His Word? What can you do now to ensure that you will be familiar enough with Scripture to know what He desires?

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