

Wise Advice

James 1:19-20

I. Introduction: I

1. **2** There is plenty of good advice to be found for the one willing to hear it.
 - A. Unfortunately, many people are not open to good advice.
 - B. As John Steinbeck said, “No one wants advice—only corroboration.”
 - C. In other words, most of us have made up our minds and we really don’t want any information that will contradict with our preconceptions. We only want our preconceptions validated.
 - D. This is a very unscriptural attitude:
 - Prov. 4:13:** “Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her, for she is your life.”
 - Prov. 8:33:** “Hear instruction and be wise, And do not disdain it.”
 - Prov. 12:1:** “Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, But he who hates correction is stupid.”
 - Prov. 1:8-9:** “My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother; 9 For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, And chains about your neck.”
 - Prov. 1:7:** “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
 - Prov. 15:32-33:** “He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding. 33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility.”
 - E. When we reject good advice we are acting like a fool: **Prov. 23:9:** “Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, For he will despise the wisdom of your words.”
2. ****** But, there are few words of advice, more succinct, wise, and valuable than those found in **Jas. 1:19-20** and which are most worthy of our consideration: “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”
3. **3** Let’s examine some “Wise Advice” from James.

II. Discussion:

I. **4** Swift To Hear:

- A. Some will not hear; they just refuse to listen.
 - (1) Jesus urged us “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matt. 13:9).
 - (2) Jesus warned of those who will not listen: “Therefore I speak to them in parables because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” (Matt. 13:13)
- B. What are we to listen to?
 - (1) God’s Word
 - (a) **Prov. 28:9:** “One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.”
 - (b) **Jas. 1:21-25:** “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty

and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

- (c) ****** We have such short attention spans in this day and age (i.e., iPad, iPhones, sound-bites, etc.). We must constantly examine ourselves to insure we maintain:
- (i) A receptive mind,
 - (ii) A teachable mind,
 - (iii) An attentive mind (e.g., sermons, Bible class, singing, Lord’s Supper, personal Bible study)(**Prov. 1:5**: “A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,”; **8:33-34a**: “Hear instruction and be wise, And do not disdain it. 34 Blessed is the man who listens to me,”).
- (2) ****** One Another
- (a) For encouragement: **1 Thess. 5:11**: “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”; **Prov. 12:25**: “Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up.” (NLT)
- (i) Listening is one of the highest compliments we can pay to anyone!
 - (ii) The best conversationalist is the good listener.
 - (iii) Many people fail to make a favorable impression because they simply fail to listen.
 - (iv) Example: The phone company had a most cantankerous customer. He cursed and raved and threatened to pull the phone out of the wall. He refused to pay charges, he wrote letters to the newspapers complaining to the phone company, he filed complaints with the Public Service Commission and filed lawsuits. Finally, the phone company sent in their best representative. The rep went and listened to the man pour out his complaints and said “yes” and sympathized. The customer raved on and the rep listened, for three hours. The rep went back and listened some more. The rep visited the irate customer four times and listened. The rep even joined a committee in support of phone customers the complainer was planning to start. After a few visits of listening, the customer dropped all his complaints and paid his bill.
- (b) For correction
- (i) **Prov. 12:15**: “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.”
 - (ii) **Prov. 13:1**: “A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.”
 - (iii) **Prov. 13:8**: “The ransom of a man’s life is his riches, but the poor does not hear rebuke.”
 - (iv) **Prov. 15:31**: “The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise.”
 - (v) **Prov. 15:32**: “He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.”
 - (iv) **Psa. 141:5**: “Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; Let my head not refuse it.”
- (c) For advice
- (i) The wise: **Prov. 22:17**: “Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge.”; **Prov. 19:20**: “Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days.”
 - (ii) Parents: **Prov. 23:22**: “Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.”

2. **5** Slow To Speak

A. When not to speak:

- (1) When you have nothing to say.
 - (a) We have two ears and one mouth, which should remind us to listen twice as much as we speak.
 - (b) “Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt.” — Abraham Lincoln
 - (c) **Prov. 10:19:** *“In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.”*
- (2) When you have nothing good to say.
 - (a) **Prov. 17:27:** *“He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.”*
 - (b) **Jas. 1:26:** *“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.”*
- (3) When you are angry.
 - (a) It takes the character of self-control to keep your mouth shut.
 - (b) **Eccl. 5:2:** *“Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore, let your words be few.”*
- (4) When you are going to be contentious.
 - (a) “Lend every man thine ears, but few thy tongue.” —Shakespeare (*Hamlet*)
 - (b) **Prov. 19:1:** *“Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one who is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.”*
 - (i) The best way to win an argument is to avoid it like rattlesnakes and grizzly bears, why?
 - (ii) Because if you lose an argument, you lose it. If you win an argument, you lose it.
 - (iii) Triumph over someone, shoot their argument full of holes and prove them wrong. What then? You feel fine. But what about them? If you have made them feel inferior and hurt their pride, they will resent you.
 - (iv) “A man persuaded against his will, is of the same opinion still.” —Dale Carnegie
 - (v) I heard of a fellow who was a truck salesman, an unsuccessful truck salesman. He won lots of arguments with customers but he did not sell many trucks. The problem was not teaching him to talk, but teaching him how to refrain from talking. When he finally learned that lesson he became the star salesman.
 - (vi) “If you argue and rankle and contradict, you may achieve a victory sometimes; but it will be an empty victory because you will never get your opponent’s good will.” — Benjamin Franklin
 - (vii) “Here lies the body of William Jay,
Who died maintaining his right of way
He was right, dead right, as he sped along,
But he’s just as dead as if he were wrong.”
- (5) Remember when you are going to cut down another: God place our ears out in the open, but placed our tongue behind our teeth (**Jas. 3:2-12**).

B. ****** Think before we speak:

- (1) **Prov. 18:13:** *“He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.”*

- (2) **Prov. 29:11**: *“A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.”*
- (3) **Prov. 15:28**: *“The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.”*
- (4) **Prov. 16:23**: *“The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips.”*

3. **6 Slow To Wrath**: there are different kinds of wrath, some good, some bad.

(Pro)

- A. Righteous Wrath: Love of Right—*“And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts. He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.”* (Mk. 3:5)
- B. Foolish Wrath: Lack of Self-Control
 - (1) No self-control: *“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city”* (Prov. 16:32).
 - (a) Example: One who gets mad at an inanimate object that will not work, cursing and throwing a fit.
 - (b) Example: Getting mad at others over little things that really, in the long run, don’t matter.
 - (2) Foolish: *“Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools”* (Eccl. 7:9).
 - (3) No Understanding (think!): *“Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.”* (Prov. 4:26-27).
 - (4) *“Temper is a valuable thing, don’t lose it.”*
- C. Sinful Wrath: Lack of Righteousness
 - (1) Unrighteousness: *“for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”* (Jas. 1:20)
 - (2) Dangerous: *“But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.”* (Matt. 5:22)
 - (3) Must Be Put Away: *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”* (Eph. 4:31)
 - (4) **Col. 3:8**: *“But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.”*
- D. ****** Three points to consider about anger:
 - (1) *“Why are you angry?”* (Gen. 4:6)
 - (2) *“Is it right for you to be angry?”* (Jonah 4:4)
 - (3) *“Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,”* (Eph. 4:26)

III. **Conclusion: 7**

- 1. All of us here today need to heed James’ advice.
- 2. *“No one wants advice—only corroboration.”* —John Steinbeck
- 3. ******His advice is not just for a few, he says, *“So then, my beloved brethren, let **every man** be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath ; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”* (Jas. 1:19-20)
- 4. Invitation

Adapted from a sermon (“Wise Advice”) by Wayne Greeson in *Sowing the Seed* 3, pp. 7-10.