

Where to Find Good Counsel

Timothy Williams

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Proverbs 15:22-33

22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. 23 A person finds joy in giving an apt reply— and how good is a timely word! 24 The path of life leads upward for the prudent to keep them from going down to the realm of the dead. 25 The LORD tears down the house of the proud, but he sets the widow's boundary stones in place. 26 The LORD detests the thoughts of the wicked, but gracious words are pure in his sight. 27 The greedy bring ruin to their households, but the one who hates bribes will live. 28 The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil. 29 The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous. 30 Light in a messenger's eyes brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones. 31 Whoever heeds life-giving correction will be at home among the wise. 32 Those who disregard discipline despise themselves, but the one who heeds correction gains understanding. 33 Wisdom's instruction is to fear the LORD, and humility comes before honor.

Where do you find good counsel? This is an important question. I have heard it said that we need to hire a minister to provide the congregation with counseling. Many ministers provide good Christian counsel, but is that where we should go? Is that the only source or even the first source of good counsel? If not the minister, to whom should we go?

Coun·sel Verb,

- **give advice** to (someone). "he was counseled by his supporters to return to Germany"
- **recommend (a course of action)**. "the athlete's coach counseled caution"
synonyms: advise, recommend, direct, advocate, encourage, urge, warn, caution; guide, give guidance, "he counseled the team to withdraw from the deal",
- give professional psychological help and advice to (someone). "he was being counseled for depression",

First, let me state the obvious: EVERY Christian needs counsel and counseling:

Proverbs 19:20

Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.

Advice, direction, encouragement, caution, guidance, good counsel is important for everyone. We all need to listen to the input of others. We all need confidants. Talking – and listening – to someone else can help us see things in a new light.

Where do we find good counseling?

Sources of Good Counseling

There are 5 sources of good counsel:

- God,
- Self,
- Intimate Relationships,
- The Body of Christ,
- Professional Counselors,

God

First and foremost, we need direction from God Himself. He is our Creator, our Lord. We love and serve – and therefore should listen – to Him.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

God wants to provide us counsel:

Proverbs 8:32-34

Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it. Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.

We serve our Creator and He appointed the Christ, Jesus, the Son of God as our savior. Although He is the son of God, He still understands all that we are going through so He is the perfect (pun intended) one to lean on and one with whom we can share our struggles.

Hebrews 4:15-16

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

For good counsel, you must have two-way communication. With God, we pray and lay our burdens upon him, but we must turn to His Word and LISTEN. 2 Tim 3:16-17 tells us the value of scripture, but Hebrews 4:12 tells us just how life changing and important the Word can be to each of us:

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

By submissively giving our own will up to God, His Word will greatly affect our lives and provide important guidance. God and His Word must always be first when we seek counsel.

Self – Self evaluation

Next, we must honestly evaluate ourselves. We are the captain of our own ship. We will stand before God alone to answer for ourselves. We each must give ourselves honest clear counsel.

Galatians 6:3-5

If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load.

Intimate Relationships

After God and self-evaluation, we each should seek counsel from those who know us best. Those with which we have the most intimate relationships, provided they have the proper Christian outlook, can understand us best and therefore provide the best advice.

Parents

Listen to the counsel of your parents no matter your age! No one know us as well as those who raised us.

Proverbs 6:20

My son, keep your father's command and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

Proverbs 15:5

A fool spurns a parent's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.

Spouse

If you are married, no one should be able to provide better advice than the one who has chosen to become one with you and whom you have chosen to become one with. Grow together toward God and listen to each other.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: 10 If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

Family

Other members of your family may be good sources of advice. There is wisdom in multiple sources of counsel. Go to your aunts, uncles, grandparents, and when you are older possibly your own children. These are the ones that know and love you.

Close friends

Your friends who are closest, who know you best, who care about you most, should also be the ones upon whom you can rely for clear counsel. If you wouldn't go to your friends for advice, re-evaluate your choice of friends!

Proverbs 27:9

Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice.

The Body of Christ

Hopefully many of your intimate relationships, at the very least some of them, should be members of the body of Christ. But even beyond your closest relationships you can, and should, seek advice among your Christian family.

James 5:16

16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Those who have conquered

As you grow and build relationships in the body, seek out those Christians that have dealt with and overcome the same issues you struggle with. We all have struggles, we all have areas of weakness. Therefore, we all have the ability to help those less mature. No one can help the alcoholic quite like the who has struggled with and overcome alcoholism.

You can also look for those who have a strength opposite your weakness who may be able to give you good advice. Again, seek out multiple members of the body with whom you can share your true self and your deepest struggles.

Mature Christians

As you look to others in the church for advice seek out those who are mature, probably in age, but it should be someone who is mature in their Christian walk. Those who have walked the road before you can help you. Those who are mature as Christians should be able to help with your weaknesses and should be able to provide prayerful, scriptural advice.

In any congregation, you should be able to look to the eldership and find someone mature with whom you can connect. Look to the eldership and talk to one or more of them. As elders you will have their confidence and can trust them.

In all of the above, look to as many as you can for counsel. There is wisdom in numbers. Even the most mature and wisest Christians are human and not perfect. Anyone could make a mistake in advice. Always trust God and his Word, and that Word says you should seek multiple counselors:

Proverbs 15:22

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Any combination of the people mentioned above and especially a group from as many categories as possible would be wise. There are also sources of group advice available through small group studies, Bible classes, a special requested small group, class, prayer group, and the eldership as a group.

It is my firm belief that God works in an eldership so that the group of men working together as God designed provide far more than the sum of the parts. God works through the Body and through the eldership. The eldership here is always available for counsel of any kind and for prayer; you only need to ask. If you have any needs please talk to any one of the elders and a meeting can be arranged.

Professional & specialist counselors

Last, there is an appropriate place in our Christian walk for professional counselors. There are some things that need the expertise of a trained counselor or mental health professional. There is mental illness, eating disorders, addictions, clinical depression, and other serious issues that would best be taken to a professional. That does not mean you can't still get spiritual advice from your eldership and other Christians, but when listening to that advice, consider carefully if the advice includes seeking professional help.

My advice to you today is to be wise and seek counsel in your Christian walk in the 5 sources of good counsel listed above:

- God,
- Self,
- Intimate Relationships,
- The Body of Christ,
- Professional Counselors when necessary,

Be a Good Counselor

If we are all looking for good counsel from multiple sources within the body, then it should be obvious that all Christians need to strive in their lives – at whatever level of maturity they may be – to BE a good counselor. There is always someone that could benefit from your unique view and position in the body. We all need to help each other.

Hebrews 3:13

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

For those of us who may be called upon to advise others, we need to consider the importance of what we say, what we do, and how we communicate. Here are a few verses all Christians should take to heart when encouraging, advising, or correcting others:

Galatians 6:1-2

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Eph 4:2-3

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

2 Timothy 4:2

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

Rom 14:10-13

10 You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'" 12 So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. 13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

I John 3:16

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Also read all 89 "One Another" passages in the Bible for guidance on counseling.

It is important that we all follow these scriptures when advising or correcting others: Be gentle and be careful! Carry each other's burdens. Be COMPLETELY humble and gentle, be patient. Bear with each other in love. Make an EFFORT to keep the unity of the spirit. Correct, rebuke, and encourage with GREAT patience and CAREFUL instruction. LOVE! Lay down your lives for each other!!

We are unstoppable as a body if we follow this. We can handle anything in anyone's life. God is amazing, God knows what we can and should do. We only have to be unified in love and grasp that victory.

Conclusion.

I know that someone here is hurting. Many are struggling with something in their lives. Some may not know what to do or where to turn. First, you need Christ. If you haven't given yourself to Him and put Him on in baptism, come and talk to one of the elders in the back.

If you are a Christian, you may not feel worthy, you may feel alone, you may feel like no one can understand. God can. Christ can. We can. I can. I'm a sinner, too.

Please. Talk to someone. You are every bit as worthy as any one here for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Seek help, seek advice. You are not facing anything that someone else hasn't faced.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

You and I, and all of us, can walk this road together. All of us broken, imperfect, struggling people can have victory by helping each other and not giving up.

Please, we can help. Talk to anyone here you feel comfortable with right after we are done or come to the back as we stand and sing and talk to one of the elders.

Praise be to God that we all can have victory in Jesus.

Seek good counsel, be a good counselor, and if needed, please come to the back as we stand and sing.