

=THE CHRISTIAN LIFE=
Lesson 18
The Christian and his Advisers

AIM: to teach my pupils to seek advice, to know how to accept advice, and to be responsible advisers themselves.

POINT OF CONTACT: Talk with your pupils about the many small and large decisions that everyone makes daily. These decisions range from choosing the clothes to wear for the day to deciding what kind of work in which to engage for life.

INTRODUCTION: A professional nurse who has worked in a mental institution said that the number of young adults, especially young ladies, that are being admitted with nervous breakdowns has risen sharply over the last few years. The instructors are saying that these young adults were not trained to handle responsibility and to face and make decisions. They are now in a mental ward where they are shut off from their husbands, their wives, their children, their parents, etc. Most of these young people came from homes where they lacked for nothing of a material nature, but they had a spiritual and a mental lack. They lacked inner strength that comes from wisdom concerning the conduct of their own lives, the training of their children's lives, and the helping in the lives of their husbands or their wives.

The Christian must have established in his own mind certain convictions and principles from which he will never stray. He should also be very aware of the fact that he needs to have a personal cabinet of advisers—some advisers to suggest action to take to solve certain problems, other advisers to counsel concerning action upon other issues. However, he should never seek counsel from the ungodly, Psalm 1:1. He should value highly the advice of those who are godly. It is impossible for any person to decide correctly about every choice of life by himself.

I. DESIRE A CABINET.

1. Follow God's instructions.

- 1) If you want to keep your aims or goals from falling short of the mark, you will get advice concerning decisions that need to be made. There is a purpose for making every decision. When the Christian acts upon his decision, he is hoping to fulfill that purpose. The Bible says that if you do not want to have your purposes nullified or broken, you should ask for advice from many counselors, Proverbs 15:22. One person cannot think of or know every aspect of any problem. Without the help of others thinking about the problem, you cannot see the many details involved.
- 2) If you understand life, you will get counsel. Just as a thirsty person shows good sense by going to the fountain and drawing out water so that he might drink, so the person who draws advice from the heart of his counselor shows understanding, Proverbs 20:5.
- 3) If you are wise, you will seek to learn the best courses of action. Of course, you cannot be wise until you have first feared the Lord enough to keep His commandments, Psalm 111:10. Strength to do right and to follow the right courses of action comes from wisdom. There is a way for Christians to increase their store of wisdom: Get wise counsel. Seek much counsel. Don't be a "know-it all." For many years Brother Hyles had this motto: "Every man knows something I do not know. I must seek until I find it; hence, all men are my teachers." You are wise when you obey God and get wise counsel from others, Proverbs 11:14; 24:5, 6.

2. Follow the examples and patterns of successful men in important positions.

- 1) The President of the United States has a cabinet. There is always a great deal of importance attached to the choosing and approving of the men who are to make up the President's cabinet. The job of guiding a great nation is so complex that one man cannot know all that he needs to know in order to execute faithfully his responsibilities. The President meets regularly with advisers, each of whom is an expert in one aspect of our country's life.
- 2) Presidents of companies and corporations have cabinets. The structure of banks, manufacturing companies, and most industries includes a Board of Directors who counsel together in setting policy, directing procedure, etc. These officers call upon their advisers from time to time to ask about their observations concerning business trends, etc. and to seek their advice about present and future actions.

II. CHOOSE YOUR CABINET CAREFULLY. Use great care in appointing your own personal cabinet. The persuasiveness and logic of your advisers must be based upon correct, sound reason. Their advice could be to blessed advantage or to tragic disadvantage.

1. Obedient Christians should be on your cabinet, Isaiah 30:1. Wisdom and true knowledge are not obtained except through knowing, fearing, and obeying the Lord, Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7.
2. Christians who are knowledgeable in various areas of life—some in one area, others in other areas—should be on your cabinet. Choose for your cabinet people who are successful along the lines in which you need advice. Choose some older or some more experienced people as well as some people of your own age or your own level of experience.
 - 1) The pastor should be on your cabinet. In matters of a moral or life-determining nature, the pastor's spoken word as it is given from the pulpit or in private conference should be remembered and heeded. Before a young person graduates from high school, he needs to consult with the pastor. Before couples get married, the pastor should be consulted. There are many other times when members of our church are faced with decisions which are important enough to warrant making an appointment and talking with the pastor; each person must decide this for himself.
 - 2) Christian parents should be on their children's cabinets. In matters of direct instructions and commands, God says that children are to obey their parents. In making decisions, however, Christian children of non-Christian parents should seek advice of Christians.
 - 3) Christian teachers should be on Christians' cabinets. Our Sunday school teachers should be high on the list of cabinet members. Since our Sunday school teachers have to meet rigid requirements in order to teach in our church, it is concluded that they are obedient Christians. They are receiving their wisdom and instruction from the Lord besides the fact that they have walked down the road of life's experiences enough to be possessors of knowledge that would be useful in giving advice.
 - 4) Christian family members should be on Christian's cabinets. Wives should follow their husband's advice; husbands should seek their wives' advice, and brothers and sisters should seek each other's advice whenever appropriate.
 - 5) Christian friends and acquaintances should be on the Christian's cabinet. Perhaps the advice that is needed concerns a business transaction, a legal matter, a physical matter, or a decision about a course of study. Christian businessmen, lawyers, doctors, and teachers should be appointed by the Christian to be members of his cabinet at that time. Perhaps the advice needed concerns decisions regarding taking part in certain extracurricular activities at school or about dress for a certain event. In this case, Christian friends or acquaintances could be consulted about what they think would be good or proper.

III. BE HONEST WITH YOUR ADVISERS.

1. Sincerely seek advice. Would you use the guise of seeking advice as an opportunity to criticize someone? Would you use it as a means to dig out a compliment for yourself? Proverbs 10:18; 11:9. Be honest when you say that you want advice.
2. Tell your advisers all that they need to know in order to advise you wisely. The adviser can judge only on what you tell him; if you hide part of the facts, his advice will at best be incomplete.

IV. LISTEN TO YOUR CABINET.

1. Shed your personal pride and egotism while your counselors are giving you exhortation or advice, Proverbs 11:20; 15:32.
2. Weigh the advice carefully. If it is for good, do it, Proverbs 11:5; 21:16.
3. Make your decision. The final decision is up to you, Proverbs 14:15.

V. BE A GOOD CABINET MEMBER.

1. Be prepared to give good advice. According to your position, age, and experience, someone may ask your advice about something. Be a good Christian, and possess knowledge and wisdom. Psalm 111:10 and James 1:5 show us that there is no excuse for any of us to lack wisdom. Wisdom will then bring knowledge, Proverbs 14:6. Be sure when others seek to draw counsel from your heart, that your “well” is not polluted or dry. The situation of your “well” determines the condition of the “water” which your acquaintance or friend is seeking. What is your situation? Are you close to the Lord through daily Bible reading, prayer, and obedience? Situated here it can be constantly fed with clear, refreshing streams. On the other hand, is it polluted by disobedient behavior? Is it dry from lack of fellowship with the Lord? Proverbs 20:5.
2. Hear good counsel and act upon it yourself, Proverbs 19:20.
3. Give advice only when it is requested. Advice that is given without having been requested is ill-timed and will not be received. A man of understanding will draw it out; a man lacking understanding will not heed it anyway, Proverbs 20:5. Be thinking, however, of good advice which could be given.
4. Be a good listener. Know when to keep still, Proverbs 17:27; 18:13.
5. Speak only helpful words, Proverbs 10:21. Do not criticize or gossip. Do not ramble on other subjects or on philosophies that have nothing to do with the subject at hand. Be sure that you have an excellent spirit, Proverbs 17:28.
6. Do not spread confidential information. Assume that everything spoken to you by the one who has sought advice has been spoken confidentially. If any of the conversation is to be related, let the person who has sought advice relate it, Proverbs 11:13.

CONCLUSION: Remember that any good advice, whether you are receiving or giving it, is a result of wisdom which is given by the Lord. Daniel had great wisdom and understanding, but he knew that he had received it from the Lord, and he gave the Lord credit for it, Daniel 2:1-30, 46-49. The king, the one who had received the advice, glorified God and honored Daniel because of the wisdom which the Lord had given.