

Proverbs Week #106 (11:14)

“Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory.”

Proverbs 11:14

David was Solomon’s father. David grew up as a shepherd and watched over his father’s flocks. They lived in a little town called Bethlehem. He was the youngest in his family and God chose him to be king of Israel. Samuel came to his father’s house and wanted to see all the sons of Jesse. David was anointed as king. David ruled over Israel for 40 years. He had many counselors who advised him.

During David’s life he fought many wars and God granted him great success. He was so successful before he became king that King Saul became jealous (1 Sam 18:8). The people sang songs about David and his mighty deeds. “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.”

Throughout David’s life there were people who gave him counsel. Ahithophel was known as one of David’s counselors. When Absalom conspired to become king in the place of his father David, he sent for Ahithophel for advice. The advice Ahithophel gave didn’t lead to victory for either him or Absalom (partly because other counselors gave different advice and God had other plans). Absalom would end up being hung in a tree and Ahithophel would hang himself in his home.

To Learn Wisdom and Instruction: We need to learn a few things about today’s proverb to understand what God intends for us to know. In the case of Absalom and Ahithophel, we need to understand that it is not just any counsel that is needed but guidance that is in accord with God’s heart.

The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation. Psa 33:10-11

To Discern Wise Counsel: The first chapter of the book of Proverbs teaches us that one of the goals of wisdom is to be able to discern wise counsel from foolish counsel. This skill comes as we seek to understand what God wants and desires. Our proverb today speaks of “the people” and reminds us that learning to be wise comes in connection to relationships, family, and community. We learn to be wise and demonstrate that wisdom (or the lack of wisdom) in the relationships in which God has placed each one of us.

To Receive Moral Instruction in Skillful Living: Knowing God’s heart and the plans of His heart is not just a matter of information. There are no three simple steps to a happy life or ten steps to “victory” that will ever be able to fully communicate the love of God that He desires for each of us to know. We can learn from Him as we learn to listen to Him. What is the best way to listen to God?

When people really know how to do something (like playing an instrument, a sport, or are wise in business) they will often say, “Listen and learn!” They don’t just mean that all we need to do is listen. But if we have truly listened to people who are skilled then our actions will show that we heard them. Sometimes we need to practice the things we learn.

To Impart Shrewdness to the Naïve: The last of the four goals in the introduction of Proverbs speaks of imparting shrewdness to the naïve. It assumes that anyone reading the book understands that one who is unlearned is not yet wise. It doesn’t mean that they cannot become wise, it just means that they must listen, learn, and acquire wisdom.

“The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding.” Prov 4:7

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.” Psa 111:10

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Prov 1:7