

## ***LISTEN!***

Joe Slater

**“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise”** (Proverbs 12:15).

My parents had a funny little plaque hanging on a wall in our house. It pictured a grumpy-looking face with this inscription: “My mind is made up. Don’t confuse me with facts!”

Doesn’t everyone do what they have made up their mind is right? If they didn’t think it was right, they wouldn’t do it! But Solomon said that even a fool’s way is right in his own eyes. That doesn’t mean we’re always wrong, but we’re not always right either. If we’re wise, we’ll pay heed to counsel.

In another proverb Solomon wrote, *“Plans are established by counsel; by wise counsel wage war”* (20:18). No king, president, or general worth his salt engages in a war without seeking sound advice from wise counselors. The same point is clarified in 24:6 – *“For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.”*

We see the wisdom of seeking counsel in a military context; can we not see it as well in day-to-day life as a soldier of Christ? Of course our most trusted counsel is from the Lord. He is our *“wonderful counselor”* (Isaiah 9:6), and His inspired word is the *“counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27).

But Solomon’s point was not limited to counsel from God and His word. Brothers and sisters who know the Lord, know and respect His word, and have experienced the ups and downs of life can provide us with valuable advice if we will only ask and then listen.

No matter how intelligent you are, you don’t know it all! Seek wise counsel. Ask for it. And listen!

## ***Shattered***

*“The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit”* (Psa .34:18). *“He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds”* (Psa. 147:3).

A few lines from Linda Ronstadt's song "Shattered," read:

"Like a windowpane

Broken by a storm

Each tiny piece of me lies alone

And scattered far beyond repair."

A hurricane kills 30 people and a nation goes into mourning, but a Tsunami takes over a thousand lives, in a faraway land, and that same nation hardly even notices. But a sparrow falls to the ground and our Lord takes it to heart. When Jonah showed an indifference for the people of Nineveh, God asked him *“Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?”* (Jonah 4:11).

Jesus, asleep in the boat during a violent storm in the midst of the sea was awakened by the apostles who cried out, *“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”* (Mark 4:38). Jesus calmed that storm. Jesus cares.

Life can hit us hard, so hard that we feel like shattered glass. At times we may feel life will never be the same, and like Job, we just feel like dying. We may not contemplate ending our lives, but we feel we would be better off dead.

We live in a fallen world and *“time and chance”* happen to us all (Eccl. 9:11). Job was deeply confused by all that happened to him. He lost his flocks and herds, and in one moment a happy family was destroyed. All ten children died. A horrible skin disease much like leprosy followed this. He was neither the first nor the last to be overwhelmed that “bad things happen to good people.” It just doesn’t seem fair.

When we are born into this world, we are faced with a sinful, fallen world with dangers and disease all around us. We have a loving Lord who wants us to use our days to prepare for a better world where all pain, suffering, death and loss will never be experienced ever again.

After painting a picture of the harsh reality of life in her song, “Someone Somewhere Tonight,” Kellie Pickler sings, “But someone somewhere tonight just found their own wings found some beauty, found some truth, found some meaning In spite of it all.”

That truth, my friends, is found in Jesus.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)

## **Servant Leadership (#2)**

(Refer back to last week’s article for part #1)

Here are three practical ways to exercise servant leadership:

**1) Doing before telling.** Peter says, *“being examples to the flock.”* Leaders should not require of their followers anything they would not do themselves. Congregations rarely rise above their leadership. Benevolent, compassionate leaders make for a benevolent, compassionate church. Evangelistic leaders will lead evangelistic congregations. Jesus exemplified servant leadership when He, their Master and Lord, washed His disciples’ feet and said, *“For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you”* (John 13:14-15). Leaders, what kind of people do you want your congregants to be? Be that kind of person.

**2) Requesting, not ordering.** A good example is Paul addressing Philemon: *“Though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you”* (v. 8). Also addressing churches: *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God . . .”* (Romans 12:1). *“I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .”* (1 Corinthians 1:10). Supervised people will respond well to “would you, please . . .” and, when completed, “Thank you.”

**3) People before policy.** Human needs do not come before God’s law, but they come before people’s interpretations and applications of it. Jesus said, *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”* The Pharisees, by their definitions and additions, turned the Sabbath from a blessed day of rest into a burden for man to figure out. Jesus restored the Sabbath’s purpose, a blessing to man.

--Cecil May, Jr. (via *Preacher Talk*)