

7. Not all advice is good advice

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Have you ever taken advice from a well-meaning friend or family member and you followed through with it, then only to realize that it was not good advice? We all have. Now, have you ever given advice to someone whom you know and care about that turned out to be not a good one? We probably have done that, too. Not all advice is good advice.

During the Clinton Administration time, one particular energy company in Houston, Texas was showing a lot of promises in its financial report with healthy profits. So you started to invest your 401K and other investments to this company because everyone at your workplace, even your stockbroker was telling you how great this company was and you should jump in the band wagon. So you did. And it was bad advice. Actually, it turned out to be a nightmare.

Yes, I am talking about Enron Corporation that became famous with the Enron scandal, revealed in October 2001, eventually led to the bankruptcy of the company.

Its shareholders lost nearly \$11 billion when Enron's stock price, which hit a high of US \$90 per share in mid-2000, plummeted to less than \$1 by the end of November 2001. Enron's \$63.4 billion in assets made it the largest corporate bankruptcy in U.S. history until WorldCom's bankruptcy the following year.

Those who give bad advices often think that they were giving good ones to help others. It went down the same way in the Book of Job. The greater portion of the Book, 35 chapters to be exact, contains speeches from men who thought they were offering Job wise advice. They sincerely believed that they were helping their suffering friend.

Not only were they wrong, but also their unkind and thoughtless words became emotional spears to inflict more wounds in Job's heart than ever before.

Let's hear what the Lord is going to teach us through this very important and practical Book.

A. ELIPHAZ REBUKE ON JOB

Job 4:1-8 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: 2 "If one attempts a word with you, will you become weary? But who can withhold himself from speaking? 3 Surely you have instructed many, And you have strengthened weak hands. 4 Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, And you have strengthened the feeble knees; 5 But now it comes upon you, and you are weary; It touches you, and you are troubled. 6 Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope? 7 "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? 8 Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same.

The silent companionship and comfort initially offered by his friends must have brought Job great relief and encouragement. But once the three men opened their mouths to offer Job some "spiritual" advices, their compassionate ministry abruptly ended.

However, Eliphaz's first approach seems to start out positive enough, even gentle; but it was only honey to prepare Job for the bitterness to follow.

Never underestimate the power of words to encourage people in the battles of life. The right words, spoken at the right time, and with the right motive, can make a tremendous difference in the lives of others.

Your words can strengthen those who are weak and encourage those who are defeated. But your words can also mercilessly pound those who are already broken and only add to their burdens, so be careful what you say and how you say it.

Eliphaz didn't stop at v4. He went on and on.

The moment we find ourselves in trouble of any kind – sick in the hospital, bereaved by a family or friend's death, filed a bankruptcy, dismissed from a job or dumped from a relationship, depressed or bewildered – some people start showing up and telling us exactly what is wrong with us and what we must do to get better.

Unwillingly, sufferers attract fixers. At first we are impressed that they bother themselves to come to us, but soon we realize that they have an answer for everything, including the things we didn't even ask! How did they get to be such experts in living?

More often than not, these people use the Word of God too frequently and loosely, out of context. They are full of unwanted spiritual diagnosis and prescription. It all sounds so hopeful. But then we begin to wonder, "Why is it that for all their apparent compassion we feel worse instead of better after what they've said?"

Many of the answers that Job's so-called friends gave him are technically true. But it is the "technical" part that ruined them. They were answers without personal relationship, intellect without intimacy.

V7 is the basic premise of all three friends: Do what is right, and things will go well for you; do what is wrong, and God will send judgment in this world.

Most people will agree that ultimately God blesses the righteous, His own people, and judges the wicked; but that is not the question discussed by Job's friend. Besides, the Lord doesn't settle every score on earth. It is far better for us to be settled by the Lord here on earth than the eternity. Because there is no "Undo" button there.

I find two serious, serious faults with their logic, even though it is in a way true:

1) The most innocent and perfect Man was tortured and killed on the cross.

The only sinless Man in mankind, Jesus received all of our punishment.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

These three friends might say, "Well, that's different. He became our atoning sacrifice for all of us."

2) The Lord God Himself said that Job was righteous.

Job 1:8 Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

The Word of Faith Movement Bible teachers also say that the reason Job got punished was because of the hidden sins in his life. Obviously they chose to ignore this portion.

B. DON'T COUNT ON VISIONS AND DREAMS TOO MUCH

Job 4:12-13 "Now a word was secretly brought to me, And my ear received a whisper of it. 13 In disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, When deep sleep falls on men,

Eliphaz was not finished yet. He went on to reenforce his argument with his visions and words in his dreams. We know that the Lord declared Job to be righteous, but according to Eliphaz's dreams and visions, God told him that Job was guilty.

Ladies and gentlemen, please do not rely on your dreams and visions. Too much spicy burritos and buffalo wings will bring a lot of weird visions and dreams at night.

C. DON'T COUNT ON YOUR PERSONALIZED OBSERVATION, EITHER

Job 5:1-7 "Call out now; Is there anyone who will answer you? And to which of the holy ones will you turn? 2 For wrath kills a foolish man, And envy slays a simple one. 3 I have seen the foolish taking root, But suddenly I cursed his dwelling place. 4 His sons are far from safety, They are crushed in the gate, And there is no deliverer. 5 Because the hungry eat up his harvest, Taking it even from the thorns, And a snare snatches their substance. 6 For affliction does not come from the dust, Nor does trouble spring from the ground; 7 Yet man is born to trouble, As the sparks fly upward.

In chapter 5, Eliphaz talked about his observation of life. The problem with arguing from observation is that our observations are severely limited. Furthermore, we can't see the human heart as God can and determine who is righteous in His sight.

In addition to that, our personalized observation can be completely skewed depending on our point of view and what benefits we can get out of the situation. No one can say that one's observation is completely objective.

A good example? The so-called fair and balanced journalists around the world. The majority of them have such ungodly secular mindsets that they would paint any biblical truth with their twisted version of brushes, even though they claim to be objective.

They would ignore or delete the whole truth or even the portion of the truth to accommodate their ungodly and politically correct agendas.

We must put all of our thoughts and other people's advices against the Word of God.
1 Thessalonians 5:21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

D. THE LESSONS WE MUST LEARN FROM ELIPHAZ'S POOR ADVICE

1) Assumptions reduce understanding and insight.

Instead of responding to Job's suffering with comfort and compassion, Eliphaz started preaching a wrong theology. He assumed that Job had committed sin, and that God had sent trouble upon Job as direct punishment for that sin.

In many cases, assumption comes from not listening to the sufferers like Job. If Eliphaz listened to Job's heart rather than his words, he would have not assumed that Job was guilty of something shameful.

Remember what I said in my previous teaching? Most of us aren't hard of hearing; we're hard of listening.

Many of you know me as 'JK'. My full name is "Joonho Kim." I realized that many Americans chose to butcher my name so badly that I decided to use the initials of my name – JK. How can you mess up the simple two letter name, right? Do you know what some people call me? "Jake". Because they don't listen. I know some of you are wondering the meaning of "Joonho". How do I know the definition of that name? What do I look like? A Korean? No, I am from, where? Southern Sweden.

We must be careful not to assume about others' painful situations, and encourage rather than blame them. Much of the suffering in life happens simply as a result of the Fall of Adam when sin entered the world through him, not because of the sufferer's own sin, like an unexpected loss of job, accidents or illnesses.

Even when we do reap the consequences of our poor choices and sinful actions, positive words encourage life much more powerfully than shame and blame.

2) Shame blocks grace and hinders relief and recovery.

What's the difference between guilt and shame?

Shame or condemnation is often confused with guilt. But they're not the same. God created conscience within us so that when we do something wrong we experience a sense of guilt.

Guilt is like a spiritual nerve-response to sin, an emotion in response to wrong behavior. In that sense, guilt is a healthy thing. Because guilt comes as a result of something we do, we can and need to do something about it.

Shame or condemnation, on the other hand, is the belief or mindset that something is wrong with you. It's not that you feel bad about your behavior, it's that you sense or believe you are deficient, defective or worthless as a human being.

Shame or condemnation is not from God; it's from satan. When we are down with our own sins, he kicks sand of shame on our faces. But our Heavenly Father never shames us. Instead, He convicts us; when we repent, He forgives and redeems us as His children, whom He loves.

The devil, however, uses shame or condemnation to make us feel unworthy to come to the Lord. He wants to drain our joy and peace in Christ and poison our relationships with those we love.

Through shame or condemnation, he wants to make sure that we don't accept God's forgiveness, move past our mistakes and sins, and actively pursue God's will for our lives.

Shame or condemnation based counsel like that offered by Job's friends loads us down with disgrace rather than lightening our burden with grace of God. Shame or condemnation pushes us further into the downward spiral of our pain.

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

3) Pride eclipses mercy and compassion.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar pridefully thought they had all the answers to Job's problems. Instead of offering listening ears and compassionate hearts, they heaped

condemnation and blame on Job. Instead of mercifully caring for their suffering friend, they tried to “fix” him. They couldn’t bear to admit that they didn’t understand the mysteries of God’s ways. As a result, they multiplied Job’s pain instead of soothing it.

4) We do not heal a broken heart with logic; we heal a broken heart with love of God.

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

When we must speak the truth to the hurting; but be sure to speak the truth in His love. If we do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus through His love, we will be surprised that how many people are encouraged by our words and actions.