
Words of Truth

Are You In A Position To Offer Counsel?

By: Brian A. Yeager

Faithful saints understand the value of sound counsel (Proverbs 11:14, Proverbs 12:15, Proverbs 15:22, Proverbs 19:20, and Proverbs 24:6). Faithful saints also understand that we have a responsibility in helping our brethren as much as we can (Proverbs 27:9 and Galatians 6:1-2; 10). When a brother or sister in Christ is in need of the right words at the right time, it is great to be the one giving them those words (Proverbs 15:23).

Yet, there are other instructions in the Scriptures that must be balanced with what we just considered. We are instructed by our Lord to be swift to hear but slow to speak (James 1:19). We are taught of God to be cautious not to speak too much (Proverbs 10:19, Proverbs 13:3, and Proverbs 17:27-28). Our Lord expects us to consider what we are going to say before we say it (Proverbs 15:28). We also have to remind ourselves that when we give counsel we have to be sure it is not rooted in worldly wisdom (I Corinthians 3:18-19 and James 3:13-18).

Then, there is something that is often abused. In fact, more than all I have written above, this next matter is a frequent transgression. Consider this: *“And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye”* (Luke 6:39-42). Our Lord expects us to be living what we tell others to do. When we speak that which we ourselves are not doing, that is hypocrisy.

Don't Be A Hypocrite

When you look at something going on in someone else's life and you think they need counsel to handle that problem, you have judged the situation/person. That, in itself, is not wrong (John 7:24). The fact is, you have to know what is going on in any situation before you can properly answer it (Proverbs 18:13). The problem comes in when you judge a situation, see a need to offer counsel, and yet are guilty of the same problem you have judged. Notice what Jesus taught about that in very similar wording to what we have already read: *“Judge not,*

*that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? **Thou hypocrite**, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye” (Matthew 7:1-5).*

Before I cover a few things to illustrate the point, let me make a qualification to what I am about to say. There are times wherein mistakes of others are a good teaching point to learn from (I Corinthians 10:1-12). Therefore, there may be a time when a person who has failed at something can offer counsel such as: “I did it that way, but it did not turn out good for me and this is why...”

With the exception of using yourself as an example of what not to do, from a point of failure, you cannot counsel someone in something you are doing wrong. You cannot open up the Scriptures and start teaching what you're not practicing (Romans 2:1-23). Before you advise someone about their priorities and how they spend their time, you have to be sure your priorities are inline (Colossians 3:1-4). Before you advise someone on how to be a husband, wife, father, or mother; make sure you are living up to the proper standard yourself (Proverbs 13:24, Proverbs 31:10-31, Ephesians 5:22-6:4, Colossians 3:18-21, I Timothy 5:8, and I Peter 3:1-7). When you perceive someone to be going through financial struggles, you cannot step in and counsel them unless your investments are Scripturally aligned (Matthew 6:19-34 and I Timothy 6:6-17). In addition to that, the financial counselor better be honestly handling their own matters (Romans 12:17 and I Thessalonians 4:12). These points could go on for hundreds of pages. Whatever the matter is, be sure that you are living your counsel before you give your counsel. Being a hypocrite will greatly decrease your credibility.

It's Also A Matter Of Credibility

Faithful saints are not just instructors by words, but by living the truth as well (Titus 2:1-8). People need to be able to see faithful living in us (Matthew 5:14-16 and Philippians 2:14-16). When people hear us say one thing and then observe something else in our actions, they are right to conclude that we are liars (I John 2:4). If they don't trust us, how would we ever be an example or teacher of the truth to help them be saved? If you are going to be a counselor to others, be sure you're living that counsel so that your credibility is not ruined and your opportunity to share the Gospel with them is not lost.

Conclusion

We have to “practice what we preach” (I Corinthians 9:27 and I Timothy 4:13-16). Before you talk the talk, make sure you are walking the walk. Even the world knows that!