

44--- Are You Listening?

In our previous session “Perform Regular Maintenance” we laid out the need for daily quiet time, weekly small group fellowship and weekly worship services. I hope you have established this pattern of regular maintenance in your life. Once you have the three spiritual support activities in place then there is a second step--- listening. The Lord speaks to me in many ways--- through the Holy Spirit, through people He puts in my life and through “collisions” that He creates.

The plan for my life was established long before I was created. That plan is only revealed when I listen. God does not send emails but he does send messengers. I have been blessed with a cadre of solid men and women who speak truth to me. They have been given permission by me to point out my “blind spots” --- the areas of my life and behavior that is just out of my view but if not addressed can lead to disaster. My top messenger is my wife. She knows me better than anyone on earth. She supports me as I minister to others. She also keeps me centered. When I overextend myself she helps to keep me providing the self-care I need to minister to others. That self-care includes down time to renew and refresh. It is easy to fall into the trap of not taking care of yourself. She encourages me to take a night off to just “veg out”. For me that may be watching my favorite team on TV while doing a crossword puzzle. It gives my mind a break. It renews and refreshes me.

My wife is a safeguard that is built into the plan for my life. I have found that listening to my safeguard is wise and prudent. The Lord has also provided a group of men who have invested in me. They know me well. I can be transparent with them. There are no secrets between us because only when we know what is truly happening in each other’s lives can we speak truth. I listen to these men because I know they want the best for me. They have a track record of providing wise counsel. My third source of wise counsel is my Tuesday night small group. These men have become close over the past seven years. We all know the praises and struggles of our brothers. We pray daily for each other. These men have pointed out times when my financial stewardship needed attention. They have encouraged me

during times of job loss and family tragedies. We are truly a “band of brothers”!

Wise counsel is only helpful when I heed the wisdom. Listening is the key to putting wise counsel into practice. If I ignore good counsel, my counselors are tenacious. They continue to nudge me until I listen and act. If I am lazy and slow to act they encourage me and remind me of the accountability we have to each other. If I get stuck they rally around me and lift me out of the ditch. I have learned that listening to wise counsel leads to joy and peace. Failing to listen leads to misery and chaos. I have chosen to listen. What about you?

Do you have a “band of brothers”? Do you have two or three men who can speak truth and you’ll listen. If you are married have you given your wife the grace to speak truth to you without retribution?

Having these three support networks is the key to receiving wise counsel but only if you listen and implement that wise counsel will you find peace and joy in your life.

Verses:

Proverbs 25:12 “Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear. “

Proverbs 15:22 “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. “

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. “

Personal Reflection: Do you have your support groups in place? Are you seeking wise counsel and following it?

Group Discussion: How can we speak truth into each other’s lives? How can we encourage each other to seek and follow wise counsel?