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Wisdom Worksheet: 12 Words to the Wise

Discipline (*musar*) (Prov. 1:2, 3; 12:1; 1:7; 5:23)

Introduction

The first pearl in memory's strand of wise conflict management is *discipline*. *Discipline* and *disciple* share the same root word, meaning *learner*. In order to be wise disciples, we must surrender ourselves—including our conflict—to God, similar to an athlete surrendering his will to a coach. His wisdom empowers us to experience *discipline*. Proverbs is written for us to attain and acquire *discipline* for wise conflict management, “*for attaining wisdom and discipline*” (Prov. 1:2); “*for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life*” (Prov. 1:3). Solomon claimed that we should actually love *discipline*, “*Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid*” (Prov. 12:1). *Knowledge* is experiential intimacy with God. In his theme verse of Proverbs, Solomon warned that only a fool would despise *discipline* (Prov. 1:7).

Whether we are leading our children, our teams, or our employees in the marketplace, *discipline* is paramount. *Discipline* means that our job is to get ourselves out of a job. When we make disciples, we know we have achieved success when those being coached are making disciples who are making disciples. The key to this multiplication is *discipline*. Without it, we remain un-teachable, untrained, untested, and untransformed. Racecar drivers are among the most disciplined athletes in all of sports. Using an oval racecourse illustration, we see that Solomon's track of *discipline* has four turns: **(1) teach, (2) train, (3) test, and (4) transform**. Each turn must be navigated or



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discipline does not make a full lap of wise conflict management, and the result is relational wreckage (Prov. 5:23).

(1) Teach (Prov. 15:33; 1:8; 16:20, 21; 19:20)

Turn one is *teach*. This is defined as “*I do. You watch.*” Something is inspired, modeled, and explained; and that something is retained. King Solomon believed that humility toward God was the first step of being teachable, “*The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor*” (Prov. 15:33). *Teaches* is translated from the same Hebrew root word for *discipline*. Solomon communicated both the value and transferability of teaching, “*Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction, and do not forsake your mother’s teaching*” (Prov. 1:8). *Instruction* is also translated from the same Hebrew root word for *discipline*. Solomon taught that we prosper from instruction, especially when we learn to trust God in the process, “*Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD*” (Prov. 16:20). He continued, describing how the right word spoken at the right time with the right tone of voice advances the teaching process, “*The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction*” (Prov. 16:21). The key blessing of instruction is that it makes us wise, “*Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise*” (Prov. 19:20). If we cease being teachable, then we will be led away from intimacy with God only discovered through being His disciple, “*Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge*” (Prov. 19:27).



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Jesus navigated turn one of *discipline* by teaching His disciples. He inspired, modeled, and explained His disciplines to the band of followers by living out wisdom in their midst. We should do the same with our children, employees, and teams.

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

Teach. Teach your children, your employees, and your teams first by being teachable. Navigate turn one in Solomon's track of *discipline* by implementing, "*I do. You watch.*" Inspire, model, and explain the *discipline* you would like to instill in your disciples. Select the right words at the right time with the right tone of voice.

(2) Train (Prov. 22:6; 6:20-23; 24:30-34)

Turn two is *train*. This can be stated as, "*I do. You help.*" Training equips disciples with the tools to be successful. It assimilates what is inspired, modeled, and explained into transferrable skills, one step at a time. In essence, training represents an apprentice program. Solomon offered the lasting benefit of establishing training early in the *discipline* process, "*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it*" (Prov. 22:6). He described a 24/7 training process in terms of *discipline* (Prov. 6:20-23). Contrastingly, Israel's King painted a bleak picture of those who lack training (Prov. 24:30-34).

Jesus trained his disciples by allowing them to help Him live out His disciplines. They assimilated His training into a transferrable message that changed the world. We must provide opportunities for our children, employees, and teams to help us.

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Train. Navigate turn two of Solomon's track of *discipline*, "I do. You help." Initiate an apprentice program with your children, your teams, and your employees. Allow them to help you in the chosen *discipline* in order for them to assimilate what is inspired, modeled, and explained into transferrable skills, one step at a time. In coaching, develop drills to *train* the desired skill set.

(3) Test (Prov. 8:10; Prov. 17:3; 27:21; 1 Peter 1:6-7)

Turn three is *test*. Translated, this is "You do. I help." Solomon implied that *discipline* is a precious choice, "Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold" (Prov. 8:10). Continuing with the precious metal imagery, Solomon observed, "The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart" (Prov. 17:3; 27:21). God *tests* us in order to refine us. A refiner introduces heat to metal with the objective to draw the impurities to the surface of the crucible or furnace. The deepest impurities rise last, only after the most intense heat. *Conflict* is the heat that reveals our impurities, or our mixed devotions of the heart. Through the heat of conflict, God gives us opportunities to fail in conflict management. This testing makes us stronger and wiser by bringing our impurities, or mixed devotions, to the surface. *Discipline* is God's tool used to fashion us into His disciples, revealing His character in us as He brings wisdom to our lives.

An indicator of our level of *discipline* is evidenced in how we respond to praise. Building on the refinement illustration Solomon taught, "The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the praise he receives" (Prov. 27:21). We must be



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Careful to give credit to God and others when we are praised, resisting the temptation to advance our selfish desires.

Jesus tested His disciples for the *discipline* that He had taught and trained by giving them a controlled environment to apply what they had learned. The intensity of experience packaged with the opportunity to fail brought the impurities of His disciples to the surface, much like heat that refines precious metals draws imperfections to the top. Peter, Jesus' disciple, saw the value of this process, "*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed*" (1 Peter 1:6-7). Testing our children, employees, and teams by giving them opportunities to fail helps us discover the areas that need corrected.

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Test. Ask God to *test* your heart for impurities, or mixed devotions. When they arise, ask Him to remove them. In the same way, navigate your children, employees, and teams through turn three of Solomon's track of *discipline*, "*You do. I help.*" Just as in sports the best test is a scrimmage, so we must hand them the wheel. Provide them opportunities to fail. Do not panic when the impurities rise to the surface. Rather, rejoice using it as an opportunity to get yourself out of a job by instilling *discipline*.

(4) Transform (Correct) (Prov. 29:19; 19:18; 29:17; 23:13-14; 22:15; 13:24; 3:11-12; 13:18; 12:1; 15:32; 15:5; 10:17)



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Turn four is *transform*, or correct, the impurities that rise to the top during the testing process. This results in “*You do. I watch.*” In the fashioning of metal, the refiner removes the impurities that float to the surface and continues the process in order to make the metal pure. The refiner knows that he has achieved purity when he sees his reflection in the metal. Christ knows that we are His pure disciples when He sees His reflection in us. This is most notable when we are making disciples who make disciples through Solomon’s track of *discipline*. Our job is to get ourselves out of a job. Navigating through turn four reveals Christ the Refiner in us.

Solomon noted that correction is ineffective by using words alone, “*A servant cannot be corrected by mere words; though he understands, he will not respond*” (Prov. 29:19). At least three general approaches to correction exist: (1) *positive reinforcement*, (2) *negative reinforcement*, and (3) *punishment*. *Positive reinforcement* offers a reward for the desired behavior. Solomon said that *discipline* offers hope (Prov. 19:18). *Negative reinforcement* removes an existing benefit for behavior contrary to what is desired. This *discipline* offers peace in the relationship and brings delight to our souls (Prov. 29:17). *Punishment* brings consequences for repeated undesirable behavior. Solomon upheld punishment when disciplining children in order to save them from greater peril (Prov. 23:13-14). In essence the King of Israel advocated the axiom, “Short term consequences are better than a long term crisis.” Punishment drives out the folly that is resident in the heart of a child (Prov. 22:15). Solomon advocated that punishment for children flowed from love; whereas, withholding it is actually hate (Prov. 13:24). God *disciplines* those He loves, “*My son, do not despise the LORD’S discipline and do*



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not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in” (Prov. 3:11-12). These loving disciplinary actions lead to the benefit of the yielding person who is corrected, *“He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honored”* (Prov. 13:18).

Remember that Solomon said that we should love *discipline*; however, he also communicated clearly regarding the opposite, *“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid”* (Prov. 12:1). He went on to say that that the stupid person who ignores correction actually despises himself while the person who heeds correction gains understanding (Prov. 15:32). He said that only a fool spurns his father’s *discipline*; whereas, one who responds affirmatively to correction shows prudence (Prov. 15:5). Solomon explained that the response of a person to transforming *discipline* affects others, *“He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray”* (Prov. 10:17). How one responds to correction shapes our families, our companies, and our teams.

Jesus corrected His disciples when they were missing the mark. He removed the impurities that floated to the surface after they had been given the opportunity to fail. *Discipline* is 3 to 1 formative to reformative. According to Jesus’ disciple Peter, transforming correction is positively received when it is preceded by teaching, training, and testing. Too often, we omit one or more of the four turns. Correcting misbehavior after first teaching, training, and testing is priceless for children, employees, and teams to instill *discipline*.

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Transform. Get yourself out of a job by, “*You do. I watch.*” Review your correcting process. Do you *transform* only after you *teach, train, and test*? Ask God if you have been harsh or lenient. Examine how you can best *transform* your children, employees, or teams through a wise combination of positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, or punishment all preceded by teaching, training, and testing. All the while, *transform* with a heart of love in order to provide and protect those involved so that Christ the Refiner is seen in them.

Conclusion

Navigate all four turns in Solomon’s track of *discipline*, and we record a full lap as we *teach, train, test, and transform*. This creates positive and wise conflict management. Miss a turn, and we hit the wall of God’s parameters, wrecking our relationships. As we navigate the race of life, we must fix our eyes on Christ (Heb. 12:1-2). At the same time, we must inhale and exhale the Word of God, our Divinely inspired instrument for all four turns (2 Tim. 3:16). When we *teach, train, test, and transform* disciples, we will not be the ones nestled in the drivers’ seats, rather it will be Christ in us navigating the four turns of *discipline*.