



Wisdom Worksheet: Leading the Passive Resistive through Listening (James 1:19)

The Problem: Desire for Contentment apart from Christ

The Style: Leading with the spirit

The fourth difficult person is the people-oriented passive resistive. He is passive (inactive), and resistive (immovable). The fact that he is people-oriented, means that he can be averse to task and be nice about it. Consequently, his passive resistance makes him indirect in his difficult behavior—on the surface we might not immediately recognize his negative conflict.

He primarily focuses on his desire for *contentment* which literally means “held together.” This is directly correlated to his spirit, his window to the mystical world which allows him to keep it together amidst immediate conflict in the physical realm. Unfortunately, this is divorced from and at the expense of those around him. In his difficult behavior, he attempts to satisfy his desire for contentment apart from Christ. The relaxed, passive resistive stubbornly attempts to hold himself together in order to satisfy his desire for contentment. The passive resistive portrays at least four difficult characteristics: (1) avoiding conflict at all costs, (2) lack of initiative—searching for the easy routine, (3) slowness (to change, to process, and to commit), and (4) stubborn pride—internally demanding respect and honor.

Avoiding conflict at all costs

The passive resistive avoids conflict at all costs. Conflict is two objects attempting to occupy the same space at the same time. The one thing that the passive



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resistive will do quickly is run from conflict. However, this perpetuates negative conflict due to his unwillingness to address any perceived tension. King Solomon referred to the passive resistive as a *sluggard*, “*The sluggard says, “There is a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets!”*” (Prov. 26:13). The passive resistive sees potential conflict as a lion roaming loose in the streets ready to devour him.

Lack of initiative

The passive resistive lacks initiative. He wants life to be easy, or free from conflict; therefore, he starts few new tasks. Sometimes, he even resists beginning a new day. Solomon gave us clear imagery, “*As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed*” (Prov. 26:14). The door turning on its hinges represents the oftentimes, negative routine of the passive resistive who might see himself as being in a groove when really he is in a rut.

Slowness

The passive resistive is slow—slow to change, slow to process, and slow to commit. That’s why some Bible translations substitute *slothful* for *sluggard*. A *sloth* is a lazy, furry animal about the size of a common housecat found in South America and the West Indies. His name stems from his slow motion, often hanging upside-down in the tree for hours. Solomon pegged the slowness of the passive resistive, “*The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth*” (Prov. 26:15).

Stubborn Pride



Internally, the passive resistive demands respect and honor because he proudly sees himself as wise. Solomon said, “*The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who answer discreetly*” (Prov. 26: 16). The king also declared, “*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for fool than for him*” (Prov. 26:12). The Hebrew word for *fool* in this verse is *kesil*, meaning stupid—one who repeats the same gullible behavior.

The Solution: Leading through Listening

In order to lead the passive resistive, we must listen to his heart—his will, mind, emotions, and spirit. These four chambers of the heart can be discovered by learning his choices, thoughts, feelings, and even his prayers. Proverbs gives us four patterns in order to listen and lead. *Connect with his heart like a Lego* (Prov. 20:5). *Deflect his difficult behavior like a shield* (Prov. 17:9). *Reflect his heart like a mirror* (Prov. 27:19). *Direct him toward wisdom like a highway sign* (Prov. 24:11-12).

Wisdom works when we *connect, deflect, reflect, and direct* the passive resistive through four wise practices: (1) be *peaceful*, (2) be *patient*, (3) reveal a *painless* first step, and (4) humbly and positively *provoke* him toward wisdom.

Connect with his heart like a Lego: *Be Peaceful* (Prov. 12:20; 16:7; Rom. 12:18)

First, we need to be *peaceful*. Stirring up anger and anxiety increases the amount of conflict perceived by the passive resistive and shuts down the joy of any forward movement. Proverbs records, “*There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil, but joy*



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for those who promote peace” (Prov. 12:20). We need to be gentle in our communication, modeling harmony, or the passive resistive will not even hear us.

Solomon said, “*When a man’s ways are pleasing to the Lord, even his enemies live at peace with him*” (Prov. 16:7).

Peaceful communication features a passion for reconciliation. This allows us to connect with the heart of the passive resistive who desires contentment. That desire for contentment is actually satisfied in peace. The Apostle Paul said, “*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone*” (Rom. 12:18). He reiterated Scripture’s consistent theme that Jesus Christ is the peace of God (Eph. 2:14). Only He can satisfy the desire for contentment through reconciliation of our relationship with God as well as our relationship with others.

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

When you encounter a passive resistive, first connect with his heart’s desire for contentment, and be peaceful. Communicate gently by softening your tone of voice and choice of words. Speak in a tone of reconciliation. Rephrase loud, combative statements like “Why won’t you support this project?” with soft, peaceful ones, “Do you have any questions or insights about our small steps toward improvement?”

Deflect his difficult behavior like a Shield: *Be Patient* (Prov. 25:15; 14:29; 15:18; 19:11; 1 Thess. 5:14)

Second, we must *be patient*. Wise King Solomon witnessed the power of patience, “*Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a*



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bone” (Prov. 25:15). Leading the passive resistive person requires patience which allows us to deflect his resistance to taking initiative. To be patient is to be: (1) understanding (Prov. 14:29), (2) calm (Prov. 15:18), and (3) one who overlooks an offense (Prov. 19:11). If we aren’t patient, enduring the passive resistive person’s slothful responses, we will never effectively communicate wisdom. This means time. Paul said that we should be patient with everyone, including the passive resistive (1 Thess. 5:14).

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

After connecting with the passive resistive person’s heart by being peaceful, next deflect his passive resistance through patience. Be understanding, be calm, and overlook his offense. Give him time.

Reflect his heart like a Mirror: *Reveal a Painless First Step* (Prov. 1:32-33; 14:15; 6:6-8)

Third, we need to *reveal a painless first step*. This first step must be easy with little perceived conflict (Prov. 1:32-33). Remember, a passive resistive person dislikes change. He often considers it evil, so change must be presented in simple, bite-sized portions. In an unthreatening fashion, this reflects our understanding of the desire for contentment resident in his heart. Step-by-step, we work through his indecision stemming from his slowness to process and reluctance to commit. Solomon said that a prudent man gives thought to his *steps* (Prov. 14:15), and that a sluggard can learn from an ant who stores its food in summer and gathers it at harvest—*one step at a time* (Prov. 6:6-8).



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Pause and Let Wisdom Work

Connect with the heart of the passive resistive, and be peaceful. Deflect his difficult behavior, and be patient. Reflect his heart, and reveal a painless first step. Make it practical by taking the end goal and breaking it into small steps. Reveal only one painless step at a time or the passive resistive will perceive too much conflict and not act at all.

Direct him toward wisdom like a Highway Sign: *Humbly and Positively*
Provoke him toward Wisdom (Prov. 11:2; 13:10; Heb. 10:24)

Fourth, we must *humbly and positively provoke* the passive resistive toward wisdom. This means that we express the positive benefits of change revealed in that painless first step. The passive resistive harbors a stubborn pride, a hidden will of iron that demands respect and honor. Humility is the only concept that can soften pride because it does not rob the passive resistive of his will. Solomon said, “*When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom*” (Prov. 11:2). Whereas pride is a hard heart, humility is a soft heart—one that will lead the passive resistive toward wisdom. Humbly demonstrating the positive outcomes of the painless first step lessens the passive resistive person’s barrier to change. The writer of Hebrews penned, “*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works*” (Heb. 10:24 KJV).

Pause and Let Wisdom Work



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Connect with the heart of the passive resistive and be peaceful. Deflect his difficult behavior and be patient. Reflect his heart, and reveal a painless first step. Finally, direct him toward wisdom by humbly and positively provoking him toward the intersection of God's heart and street smarts. Model a soft heart while communicating the positive outcomes of the painless first step.

Summary

Wisdom allows us to navigate through conflict toward community. When we listen to the passive resistive, we connect with his heart, deflect his passive resistance, reflect his heart in an unthreatening manner, and direct him toward wisdom. In order to lead the passive resistive through conflict to community, we must: (1) *be peaceful*, (2) *be patient*, (3) *reveal a painless first step*, and (4) *humbly and positively provoke him toward wisdom*.