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## ***Wisdom Worksheet: 12 Words to the Wise***

### ***Riddles (chiydah), Be a Person who ASKS (Prov. 1:6; 26:4-5)***

#### **Introduction**

Do you ever struggle with engaging a challenging person during interpersonal conflict? Do you feel like your hard-hearted counterpart does not listen to your statements? In conflict—when two objects attempt to occupy the same space at the same time—are you training to be a person who *ASKS*?

Unfortunately, when we encounter difficult people and the heat gets turned up, we often become known as a person who *tells*. We make stern statements that increase resistance. We present our view of the truth much like an attorney trying his case in front of a jury. We focus only on our own perspectives. Finally, as Christians, we either pompously use the Bible as a sledgehammer to pound our challengers over their heads, or we ignore the truth of Scripture altogether, further perpetuating pretense in the conflict.

When we bring *riddles* to wise conflict management, we experience the power of four communication components evidenced in the life of Christ (Luke 20:1-47; cf. Matt. 21:23-27; 22:1-40). Proverbs includes *riddles* as its purpose in the third and final pearl of *mystery's* strand, “*for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise*” (Prov. 1:6). Wise conflict management includes understanding *riddles*, including proverbs and parables as well as sayings of the wise, in order to use their four components to communicate with others. When modeled by Jesus, this process revealed a mystery that occurred inside the heart of anyone He encountered—including the most difficult of people. Two thousand years later, the same holds true for us when we avoid



the pitfall of arguing with a fool. Solomon warned, “*Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes*” (Prov. 26:4-5). We endure our difficult challengers by training to be a person who *ASKS*.

**(1) Ask Questions (Luke 20:1-8; Matt. 21:23-27; 22:41-46; Prov. 18:17)**

First, *ask* questions that engage the heart. Don't questions generate answers and statements produce resistance? Amidst the pressure of interpersonal conflict, we are tempted to fire argumentative statements toward our challengers. Consequently, we experience resistance in return. When presented with debate, Jesus asked questions (Luke 20:1-8; Matt. 21:23-27). The chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders were challenging Jesus' authority to teach and preach. The religious leaders were often earning money, favors, and status from their efforts. As a result, they were threatened by God in the flesh walking the earth and even cleansing the temple from unscrupulous profit mongers (Luke 21:45-46). When Jesus responded to their challenge with a question, He turned the focus from the surface of the conflict back to the hearts of His challengers who chose to engage the question in an attempt to answer it (Luke 20:1-8).

A question is one of humility's most powerful tools used to engage a hard heart. Generally, this engagement process travels from the *three resources of life* at the surface of the conflict: (1) *time*, (2) *talent*, and (3) *treasure* through the *four primary desires* which are typically dissatisfied: (1) *significance*, (2) *contentment*, (3) *control*, and (4) *security* to the *four chambers of the heart*: (1) *will*, (2) *intellect*, (3) *spirit*, and (4) *emotions*. When we ask questions rather than make statements, we shift the focus of the



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difficult person from the two surface objects attempting to occupy the same place at the same time (usually some combination of time, talent, or treasure) to the four chambers of his heart where he chooses, thinks, prays, and feels. This includes a journey through his desires—the heartbeat that connects his heart with his ways, or his three resources of life. The art of the question provides a disarming environment and process that helps a difficult person feel less threatened which usually results in an engagement of his heart in order to attempt to answer the inquiry. Solomon articulated the power of a question to generate answers, “*The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him*” (Prov. 18:17).

*Pause and Let Wisdom Work*

*Ask questions that engage the heart.* Rather than fall into the temptation to make harsh or stern statements that produce resistance during conflict, ask sincere questions that provide an environment and process for your challenger to peer inward and generate answers.

**(2) Share a Story (Luke 20:9-19; Matt. 22:1-14; Matt. 13:10-17)**

Second, *share a story* that turns the listener’s ears into eyes. Allow your hard-hearted counterpart the opportunity to *discover* the truth you are communicating as you resist the temptation to hard-heartedly *present* that same truth. It might be a story that explains why you choose, think, pray, or feel a particular way. Jesus shared a story with his challengers in order to help them see His heart, their own hearts, and the hearts of others (Luke 20:9-19; Matt. 22:1-14). Jesus told stories to keep people open to His



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message by turning their ears into eyes, noting that truth discovered is more powerful than truth merely presented (Matt. 13:10-17).

Nothing connects with the heart like a story. Many times during interpersonal conflict with a hard-hearted person, we merely present truth rather than share a story that allows him to discover truth. A story softens the listener's heart toward truth by providing him with an experience in which he often participates, seeing himself in the drama choosing, thinking, praying, or feeling as the scenes unfold. A story also provides images that transform the listener's ears into eyes, helping him peer inward. These factors help the listener both remember and continue to engage with the story at the heart level as he discovers its meaning.

*Pause and Let Wisdom Work*

*Share a story that turns the person's ears into eyes.* When experiencing interpersonal conflict, use stories to communicate how you choose, think, pray, or feel. Allow your hard-hearted counterpart the opportunity to discover the truth you are communicating as you resist the temptation to hard-heartedly present that same truth.

**(3) Key on his Perspective with a Puzzle (Luke 20:20-26; Matt. 22:15-22)**

Third, *key* on the other person's perspective with a puzzle, or a thought-provoking question that engages his mind and exposes his heart. Many of us experience conflict without giving thought to the other person's perspective. Instead, we focus only on our own, selfish viewpoints. Jesus looked at the hearts of His detractors—*spies* sent by the teachers of the law and the chief priests. The undercover agents had pretended to be honest using flattery to trap the Son of Man with a question so that they could hand Him



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over to the power and authority of the governor. However, nestled in their pockets was a denarius, a coin worth about a day's wages that featured the image of the emperor Tiberius and an inscription boasting his deity, "Tiberius Caesar, Augustus, son of the divine Augustus." Both the image and the statement would have been repulsive to authentic Jews. After gaining their perspective, Jesus not only exposed the coin, but also their hearts, through the shrewd use of a puzzle, or a thought-provoking question (Luke 20:20-26; Matt. 22:15-22).

Gaining our difficult person's perspective allows us to see as he sees, rather than focusing purely on our own perceptions through our pride's clouded vision. Whereas, we might not be as shrewd as Jesus was in gaining internal perspective of hard-hearted challengers during interpersonal conflict; we must remember that as believers we have His Spirit dwelling in us. We can humbly ask Him for insight into our challenger's heart as we seek Christ for a thought-provoking question, or puzzle, that will help uncover the heart and desires of that person.

*Pause and Let Wisdom Work*

*Key on his perspective with a puzzle, or thought-provoking question, that engages his mind and exposes his heart.* First, ask the Holy Spirit for insight into the perspective of your challenger's heart and his subsequent desires. Second, ask the Holy Spirit for a thought-provoking question that will help uncover his hardness of heart.

**(4) Speak Scripture (Luke 20:27-39; Matt. 22:23-33, 34-40; Heb. 4:12)**

Fourth, *speak Scripture*, humbly applying it to your role in the conflict. When the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, challenged Jesus, He used the



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authority of Scripture to bring truth to the conflict (Luke 20:27-39; Matt. 22:23-33, 34-40). The *truth* of Scripture helps us avoid *pretense* in conflict. The writer of Hebrews said, “*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart*” (Heb. 4:12). In the spirit of training to be a person who *ASKS*, we must remember to speak Scripture with humility, applying it to our role in the conflict. It might sound something like this, “You know, I’ve been reading Proverbs and attempting to apply it to my own life. Proverbs 18:13 says that a fool answers before listening, and I don’t want to do that.”

*Pause and Let Wisdom Work*

*Speak Scripture humbly.* Apply the truth of the Bible to your role in the conflict, rather than using it to pound your challenger. This will help you avoid the perpetuation of pretense.

### **Conclusion**

When encountering a challenging person during interpersonal conflict, train to be a person who *ASKS*, rather than a person who *tells*. Bring *riddles*, wisdom’s final pearl in the strand of *mystery*, to wise conflict management and experience the power of four communication components evidenced in the life of Christ.

First, *ask* questions that engage the heart. Don’t questions generate answers and statements produce resistance? Second, *share a story* that turns the listener’s ears into eyes. Allow your hard-hearted counterpart the opportunity to *discover* the truth you are communicating as you resist the temptation to hard-heartedly *present* that same truth.



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Third, rather than focusing on merely your own perspective, *key* on the other person's perspective with a puzzle, or a thought-provoking question, that engages his mind and exposes his heart. Ask the Holy Spirit for insight into the perspective of your challenger's heart and his subsequent desires. Next, ask the Holy Spirit for a thought-provoking question that will help uncover your challenger's hardness of heart. Fourth, *speak Scripture*, humbly applying its truth to your role in the conflict, rather than using it to pound your challenger, thus, advancing pretense. It will not be you, but Christ in you, Who brings understanding of proverbs and parables, along with the sayings and riddles of the wise to your conflict management.