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Wisdom Worksheet: 12 Words to the Wise

Wise Behavior (sakal) (Prov. 1:3; 3:1-4)

Introduction

In conflict management, is your behavior wise or foolish? A key indicator of the answer to this question lies in how we utilize the Bible when two objects attempt to occupy the same space at the same time in our lives. Proverbs demonstrates a direct correlation between *wise behavior* in conflict management and our *assimilation of the Word of God*.

The second strand of three pearls in Solomon's *12 words to the wise* is the strand of *mystery* that features three gems targeted toward effective communication during interpersonal conflict: (1) *wise behavior*, (2) *understanding*, and (3) *riddles*. One of the main purposes of Proverbs is to give the reader instruction in *wise behavior* (Prov. 1:3 NASB). The *mystery* of *wise behavior* perpetuates effective communication into the power of persuasion. Solomon pleaded, "*My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man*" (Prov. 3:1-4). "*A good name*" is translated from the same root as the Hebrew word for *wise behavior (sakal)*. When we learn wisdom, it sinks deep into our hearts becoming evident in our actions. This leads to *wise behavior* both vertically from God's perspective and horizontally from man's point of view.



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A medieval illustration of *wise behavior* was William Wallace, born in Scotland in 1267. The king of Scotland had died without an heir appointed to the throne. King Edward the Longshanks of England seized the opportunity to pillage Scotland, claiming it as his own. During the raids, Wallace's wife was murdered. What followed is now legend as one man armed only with *wise behavior* took on an entire country. Whereas foolish behavior trusts in one's own words which tend to be unconvincing, nonsensical, fearful, and lacking credibility, *wise behavior* acts oppositely by trusting in the Word of God. Proverbs tells us that *wise behavior* has four characteristics. First, *wise behavior* is *convincing*. Second, *wise behavior* includes *common sense*. Third, *wise behavior* is *courageous*. Fourth, *wise behavior* is *credible*. William Wallace's life was characterized and known by these four traits.

(1) Convincing (Prov. 16:23; 16:20; 15:24; 25:11)

First, *wise behavior* is *convincing*. This persuasiveness comes from our speech. To be *convincing* with our words, we must first have wisdom in our hearts. Solomon taught, "*The heart of the wise instructs his mouth, And adds persuasiveness to his lips*" (Prov. 16:23 NASB). Proverbs precedes this verse with, "*He who gives attention to the word will find good, And blessed is he who trusts in the LORD*" (Prov. 16:20). "*Attention*" is translated from the same Hebrew word as *wise behavior*. When we give attention to the word, or instruction, we begin to become convincing. Our most powerful source of instruction is the Word of God. The more we get into it, the more it gets into us. Solomon said that the path of life for *wise behavior* leads upward (Prov. 15:24). The Word of God transports us in the direction of the Almighty. This journey upward



transforms us inward. God’s renovation of our hearts revolutionizes our words to be convincing. Solomon illustrated the value of the right word spoken at the right time, “*A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver*” (Prov. 25:11; cf. 15:23). Referencing the power of God’s Word in ours, Jesus closed a parable quoting Abraham, “*If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced*” (Lk. 16:31).

William Wallace employed his own chaplain in order to get the Word into his heart. This contributed to him being *convincing*. *Wise behavior* begins with getting the Word into our hearts so that it persuasively flows into our speech.

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

Be convincing. Take a journey upward in order to change inward. Memorize a verse or passage from Proverbs. Allow *wise behavior* to sink into your heart with the power of the Word.

(2) Common Sense (Prov. 10:5; 10:19; 23:9; 19:11; 19:14)

Second, *wise behavior* includes *common sense*. Solomon said that the fool lacks it (Eccl. 10:3). To have *common sense*, we must *apply* the verse or passage that we memorize. *Apply* means “to make sticky.” *Wise behavior* makes the Word sticky to our lives. The result is *common sense*.

Wise behavior applies the Word of God to our work. Solomon wrote, “*He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son*” (Prov. 10:5). “*Wise*” stems from the same Hebrew word translated as *wise behavior*. Working smart is *common sense*.



Wise behavior applies the Word of God to our restraint of words. Solomon said, “*When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise*” (Prov. 10:19). Holding our tongue is *common sense*.

Wise behavior applies the Word of God to our choice of audience for communication. *Solomon’s Thirty Sayings of the Wise* records, “*Do not speak to a fool, for he will scorn the wisdom of your words*” (Prov. 23:9). Avoiding conversation with a fool is *common sense*.

Wise behavior applies the Word of God to our perspective. Solomon weighed in, “*A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense*” (Prov. 19:11). Overlooking an offense is *common sense*.

Wise behavior applies the Word of God to our pursuit of intimate relationships. Solomon went on to say, “*Houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the LORD*” (Prov. 19:14). “*Prudent*” is translated from the Hebrew word for *wise behavior*. Listening to a wife whose behavior is wise is *common sense*.

William Wallace was able to rally the common men of Scotland with *common sense*. He applied to his life the Word that was communicated to him by his chaplain.

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

Be filled with common sense. Look at your calendar with your memorized words of wisdom in mind. Ask God how you can apply the *wise behavior* to your everyday life. Inspire common people with God’s *common sense*.

(3) Courageous (Prov. 21:11; 21:12)



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Third, *wise behavior* is *courageous*. To be *courageous*, we must be willing to share our experience of the Word with another person. When imprisoned, Paul applauded the wisdom of his fellow believers “*to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly*” (Phil. 1:14). Being *courageous* means fearlessly sharing our experience of the Word applied to our lives with *both* the foolish and the wise. Solomon said, “*When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; when a wise man is instructed, he gets knowledge*” (Prov. 21:11). *Wise behavior* includes courage to bring consequences to a mocker who scoffs at God. This fosters *wise behavior* in the simple fool who is watching. Conversely, when we are *courageous* enough to teach a wise person from our experience of applying the Word, he will grow in his intimacy with God—the source of our *courage*. God exercises *wise behavior* to courageously root out the wicked. Solomon continued, “*The Righteous One takes note of the house of the wicked and brings the wicked to ruin*” (Prov. 21:12). “*Takes note*” is translated from the root for *wise behavior*. “*Righteous One*” can also be translated “*righteous man.*” It is the indwelling Spirit of God Who empowers us with courage to implement the same *wise behavior* discerning when to remove a wicked person from an organization.

William Wallace *courageously* shared with others the Word that he had been taught by his chaplain and had applied to his life. He persuaded his reluctant nobleman friend, Robert the Bruce, with the words, “Men don’t follow titles. They follow courage.”

Pause and Let Wisdom Work



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Be courageous. Share with someone your experience of applying the selected verse or passage to your life. That person will be honored that you are *courageous* enough to share your experience with God's wisdom.

(4) Credible (Prov. 12:8; 3:4; 14:35; 17:2; 21:16; 13:15)

Finally, *wise behavior* is *credible*. To be *credible*, we must give credit to God for our experience of getting into the Word, applying it to our lives, and being courageous enough to share that experience with another person. *Credible* and *credit* both come from the same Latin word, *credere*, meaning "to believe, or to trust." We are only worthy of trust when we trust in the Source of our *wise behavior*. Wisdom comes from the Lord, so we are *credible* when we give *credit* to Whom it is due. Solomon said, "*A man is praised according to his wisdom, but men with warped minds are despised*" (Prov. 12:8). "*Wisdom*" is translated from the Hebrew word for *wise behavior* which Solomon noted as *praised*, or *credible*. The opposite of being praised according to one's wisdom is being despised due to one's warped mind. *Warped mind* means "bent, or twisted." It distorts reality and takes credit from God. As previously mentioned, *wise behavior* makes us *credible* both with God and man, "*Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man*" (Prov. 3:4).

Credibility affects leadership. A leader finds credibility in a person with *wise behavior*, but he discovers none in a shameful person. Solomon shared this feeling from experience, "*A king delights in a wise servant, but a shameful servant incurs his wrath*" (Prov. 14:35). At the same time, the credibility of the person with *wise behavior* propels him to leadership. Solomon said, "*A wise servant will rule over a disgraceful son, and*



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will share the inheritance as one of the brothers” (Prov. 17:2). Both “shameful” and “disgraceful” are translated from the same Hebrew word, bosh. Solomon equated acting shamefully with straying from wise behavior, “A man who strays from the path of understanding comes to rest in the company of the dead” (Prov. 21:16).

“Understanding” is translated from the Hebrew word sakal, or wise behavior. Solomon noted not only the credibility of one with understanding, or wise behavior, but also the lack of credibility of a person without it, “Good understanding wins favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard” (Prov. 13:15). David gave credit to God for his experience with the wise behavior found in His Word, “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple” (Ps. 19:7).

William Wallace was *credible*. Wallace had been betrayed by his friend Robert the Bruce who had chosen the wealth and title of fighting for England over the credibility of defending Scotland. In his pursuit of Scotland’s liberation, Wallace met up with England’s most formidable, masked opponent on the battlefield only to learn the identity was none other than Robert the Bruce. Wallace had the credibility to spare his friend’s life. This haunted Robert the Bruce until he repented and later led Scotland to *freedom*, the last word prayerfully screamed by William Wallace as he died for the cause.

Pause and Let Wisdom Work

Be credible. When people ask more about your experience with memorizing, applying, and sharing the Word of God, be sure to give credit to Him.

Conclusion



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Like William Wallace's affect on his friend-turned-enemy-turned-disciple, Robert the Bruce, we can pray that our friends will also be drawn to repentance toward God through our *wise behavior* consisting of: *convincing words*, *common sense*, *courage*, and *credibility*. As powerfully as William Wallace depicted *wise behavior*, he paled in comparison to Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24). His life, death, and resurrection demonstrated God's ultimate design for *wise behavior*. Jesus was *convincing*. He knew the Word. Jesus was filled with *common sense*. He applied the Word. Jesus was *courageous*. He shared the Word. Jesus was *credible*. He died for the Word, giving all credit to the Father. Jesus Christ was and is indeed the Word of God. Thus, it is Christ in us Who is *convincing*, filled with *common sense*, *courageous*, and *credible*.