

If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

James 1:5-7

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THE LEADER AS SAGE

ASKING FOR WISDOM

1 KINGS 3:5-28

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." ⁶And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. ¹³I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. ¹⁴If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life."

¹⁵Then Solomon awoke; it had been a dream. He came to Jerusalem where he stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. He offered up burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, and provided a feast for all his servants.

¹⁶Later, two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. ¹⁷The one woman said, "Please, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. ¹⁸Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. We were together; there was no one else with us in the house, only the two of us were in the house. ¹⁹Then this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. ²⁰She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside

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Look for principles of seeking and exhibiting wisdom.

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ASKING FOR WISDOM

me while your servant slept. She laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. ²¹When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, I saw that he was dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, clearly it was not the son I had borne." ²²But the other woman said, "No, the living son is mine, and the dead son is yours." The first said, "No, the dead son is yours, and the living son is mine." So they argued before the king.

²³Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead'; while the other says, 'Not so! Your son is dead, and my son is the living one.'" ²⁴So the king said, "Bring me a sword," and they brought a sword before the king. ²⁵The king said, "Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one, and half to the other." ²⁶But the woman whose son was alive said to the king—because compassion for her son burned within her—"Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!" The other said, "It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it." ²⁷Then the king responded: "Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother." ²⁸All Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.

JAMES 1:5-7

If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. ⁶But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; ^{7,8}for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

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Look for principles of seeking and exhibiting wisdom.

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PERSUASION, INFLUENCE, AND DECISION-MAKING



THE GOAL

Helping people reflect the teachings of Jesus and faith in God in their convictions and priorities, and to reflect their convictions and priorities in their actions and decisions.

SOLOMON AS A WISE INFLUENCE LEADER	WHEN WE ARE INFLUENCE LEADERS
Solomon <input type="text"/> for wisdom.	When we consider entering into people's lives to influence them, we begin with prayer for them and for ourselves, that God would grant us wisdom. We don't need to pray, "If it be your will, O Lord, grant us wisdom." He delights to give wisdom to us.
Solomon <input type="text"/> highly valued and respected <input type="text"/> those he leads.	Our goal is not simply that people DO what we want them to DO, but rather that they make fully-owned choices that draw them closer to God. Even as we endeavor to influence people we honor and respect them.
Solomon viewed himself as a <input type="text"/> to help people toward their <input type="text"/> rather than vice versa.	We are careful not to manipulate people to choose something because that choice will serve or benefit us in some way.
Solomon was willing to be <input type="text"/> along the way.	Our goal is not simply that we tell people the correct choice to make or path to take, but that people come to see how God is working and what he is saying. We'll sacrifice quick clarity for eventual ownership.
Solomon acted in such a way as to get to <input type="text"/> .	Our strategy of influence is not directed toward others' behavior, but towards their convictions and priorities.
Solomon <input type="text"/> for the wisdom he has received.	When we have received wisdom from God, we must acknowledge him as the source and thank him.

Conformity is not the goal.

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VERBAL TOOLS OF INFLUENCE

In general, most people do not know how to ask good questions well. Many people prefer to talk than to listen, and the fact is good listeners are exceedingly rare.

(People will even pay high hourly prices to be listened to well.) Furthermore, when people think about influence, in general it takes the form of advice: "What I think you should do is ..." "What I would do if I were you is ..." Advice may be appropriate in some situations, but it undoubtedly is far overused. Unfortunately, for those who receive it, it is also probably under-valued.

We have many different verbal tools of influence available to us in our friendships, some of which can be very helpful while others detrimental. I think

OPEN: YOU ARE THE EXPERT



CLOSED: I AM THE EXPERT

of them in a continuum flanked by two extremes: closed strategies making the questioner the expert, and open strategies making the responder the expert.

Influence strategies focused on the of the often focus on spelling out approved or correct behavior. This has the advantage of being : the actions desired may be quickly understood.

- Results:**
- confusion
 - lack of ownership
 - feeling manipulated
 - feeling controlled
 - feeling judged

Influence strategies involving focused on and goals (good questions, stories, statements) involve a greater investment of time and listening effort, but the payoff is found when the person being listened to comes to about what appropriate choice would best fulfill their priorities and objectives.

- Results:**
- ownership
 - gratitude

How we use words is crucial.

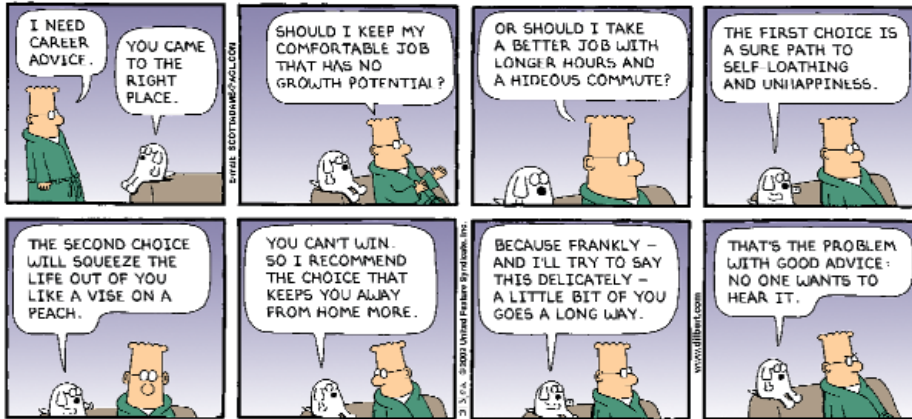
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AN EXAMPLE OF ADVICE

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Advice: over-used but undervalued.

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PERSUASION, INFLUENCE, AND DECISION-MAKING



GOOD QUESTION ASKING

Leadership involves two-way communication. In talking with people, the way we use words is critical. We can encourage or discourage people, open them up or close them to us; we can motivate and inspire or dampen enthusiasm and engender doubts.

We want to learn to ask questions that will involve people in the process. If we only ask Yes/No questions, then our ability to dig deeper is limited by our own familiarity with the situation or the person. Consider a decision-making discussion with someone younger. Our goal as leaders is to bring the best information to bear on any decision, so that the person making the decision can do so with ownership and confidence.

Good questions are tools for learning, not probes for self-incrimination

It is possible to go into a conversation with someone, plan to ask questions, and it still does not go very well. This is why.

BAD QUESTIONS	GOOD QUESTIONS
Yes/No questions: Could, would, should, do, did, will, can	What, where, when, who, how
Content-oriented: directed toward specific information the questioner desires	Process-oriented: directed toward helping the responder move through a thorough process of thinking
Leading or manipulative	Stimulates thinking without hidden agendas
Threatening: out to prove a case	Non-threatening: deeply curious with affection and honor
"Why are you ...?" Implies there are no good reasons	"What are the reasons you are...?" Implies there could be many reasons
Creates or exacerbates defensiveness	Reduces and diffuses defensiveness

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LISTENING SKILLS CASE STUDIES

PRESENTING ISSUE	THINKING ABOUT DROPPING A MINISTRY COMMITMENT.	THINKING ABOUT LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB.	THINKING ABOUT CHANGING LIVING SITUATIONS.
What does the person seek?	Your approval for their decision to drop the commitment they have made for your team.	Your advice about how much longer they should stay in their current, frustrating, stress-producing job.	Your approval for their decision and help at knowing how to tell their roommates.
What concerns do you have?	You fear that their decision to drop their ministry commitment is based in self-protection, risk-avoidance or conflict-avoidance rather than in wisdom.	You know the job is frustrating but are aware of character growth opportunities in it. You aren't sure that they should yet leave their job	You know her roommates have made different lifestyle choices which are hard for your friend. But you know her conflict avoidance and harboring resentments have increased the tension.
Advice you'd just love to give.	Don't drop your ministry commitment! Stop working so much on weekends!	Don't quit your job quite yet. You haven't learned all you can through it and your perseverance will be rewarded.	You shouldn't move out of your apartment until you have reconciled in your relationships. At that point, it may be possible to move on well.
(Bad) Questions you'd be tempted to ask.	How do you think the children will feel? How will your partners feel? What could be a higher priority than serving in this way?	Have you often quit jobs quickly when they become the least bit frustrating? What does it say about you that you don't want to stay in this job?	Do you have a string of broken relationships and unreconciled friendships behind you? Is this your usual way of dealing with relational tension?
Open-ended questions that would actually help them to better understand their own motives and priorities.	What are the commitments in your week you most enjoy? What is satisfying about them? What priorities make this choice look attractive? What priorities would be sacrificed by making this choice? How could these tradeoffs be avoided?	What are some of the things God is teaching you in your current job? How do your current stresses help your dependence on God? Hinder it? What kinds of near-term goals can you work toward that will help you to learn and benefit from your current job? When would be a realistic time frame to consider leaving?	How have your conversations gone regarding your hopes to move out? What are the tension points in your relationships? How do you contribute to those tensions? What could you do to address those tensions? What would repentance look like for you?
Goal for your helpful conversation.	That the person consider priorities, and make a good decision in light of those priorities. This could include dropping the ministry commitment, but for the right reasons.	That the person identify some of the ways God is working in their current job, and how facing and not running away could provoke more growth. Helping him/her to identify signs that it is actually time to move on.	That the person would be eager to seek reconciliation, regardless of the ultimate decision to move out or stay put. That the person would have greater hope that relational breakdowns can be reconciled and conflict isn't fatal to friendship.



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OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS, RISKS



OBJECTIVES: GOALS, PRIORITIES, MOTIVES, WHYS, ENDS

What are the reasons you are doing this? What are your hopes behind this action?

What goals do you have for this period of time?

What results are you looking for?

What is the end toward which we are working?

These things need to be stated, they are often implicit.

A conversational model for decision making and guidance.



ACTIONS: CHOICES, OPTIONS, MEANS, PEOPLE, RESOURCES

What can you do to accomplish these objectives?

How else could you do this?

How does that action fulfill my objectives?

What are the reasons that this action is the best?

If actions are attractive that don't meet the objectives, there must be other objectives that aren't being mentioned. Return to the discussion of objectives.

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RISKS: COSTS, CONSEQUENCES, DISADVANTAGES

Are there hidden costs that affect reaching all the objectives? What can go wrong with this action?

What's the probability of that happening?

If it happens, what are the consequences? How serious are they?

Most decisions are considered as actions. For example: Should I look for a new job? Should we get married? Where should we go on our vacation? Should we barbeque steak tonight, or chicken? Etc. Spend more time on the objectives and the action discussion will be more fun and will go more smoothly.

The leader's contribution: to consider the objectives, help people to own Biblical objectives and priorities, and to help them make THEIR OWN DECISIONS which help them accomplish their own objectives in the best way.



ROLE PLAY IN TWOS

ROLE 1) Consider a real decision you are facing.

ROLE 2) Ask questions of person 1, using OAR and good questions.

Each person make remarks about the process. Rotate roles and repeat the process.



LISTENING SKILLS PERSONAL CASE STUDY



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Presenting Issue (current or common)	
What does the person seek?	
What concerns do you have?	
Advice you'd just love to give.	
(Bad) Questions you'd be tempted to ask.	
Open-ended questions that would actually help them to better understand their own motives and priorities.	
Goal for your helpful conversation.	

Q: What is your date of birth?

A: July 15th

Q: What year?

A: Every year.

Q:The youngest son, the 20-year-old, how old is he?

Q: Were you present when your picture was taken?

Q:Was it you or your younger brother who was killed in the war?

Q:Did he kill you?

Q: How far apart were the vehicles at the time of the collision?

Q:How many times have you committed suicide?

Q: You were there until the time you left, is that true?

Q: She had three children , right?

A: Yes.

Q: How many were boys?

A: None.

Q:Were there any girls?

Q:How was your first marriage terminated?

A: by death.

Q:And by whose death was it terminated?

Q: Can you describe the individual?

A: He was about medium height and had a beard.

Q: Was this a male, or female?

Q: Doctor, how many autopsies have you performed on dead people?

A: All my autopsies are performed on dead people.

Q: Do you recall the time that you examined the body?

A: The autopsy started around 8:30pm .

Q:And Mr. Dennington was dead at the time?

A: No, he was sitting on the table wondering why I was doing an autopsy.

Q:Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?

A: No.

Q: Did you check for blood pressure?

A: No.

Q:Did you check for breathing?

A: No.

Q: So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?

A: No.

Q:How can you be so sure, Doctor?

A: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.

Q:But could the patient have still been alive nevertheless?

A: It's possible that he could have been alive and practicing law somewhere

Actual examples of bad questions.

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depended on God, means, ends, misunderstood, motives, honored God and gave thanks
compliance, identification, internalization



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expertise, influencer, clear
open conversation, priorities, their own clarity



FURTHER RESOURCES

Questions are an integral part of verbal interaction in our society. As with many other kinds of responses, questions have their strengths and their limitations. Comparatively few people in our culture know how to question effectively. We often rely on questions excessively and use them poorly. Questions usually focus on the intent, perspective, and concerns of the listener rather than on the speaker's orientation. When that happens, questions are a barrier to communication.

We distinguish between "closed" questions and "open" questions. Closed questions direct the speaker to give a specific, short response. Open questions, on the other hand, provide space for the speaker to explore his thoughts without being hemmed in too much by the listener's categories... Closed questions are like true/false or multiple choice test questions, while open questions are like essay questions...

When used skillfully and infrequently, open questions may help the listener better understand the speaker without directing the conversation. In the report on their study of open and closed questions, Moreland, Phillips, and Lockhart write:

Crucial to the giving of open-ended questions is the concept of who is to lead the interview. While the interviewer does ask questions while using this skill, his questions are centered around the concerns of the client rather than around concerns of the interviewer for the client. Questions should be designed to help the client clarify his own problems, rather than provide information for the interviewer... If the interviewer relies on closed questions to structure his interview, he usually is forced to concentrate so hard on thinking up the next question that he fails to listen to and attend to the client.

From Robert Bolton, *People Skills*, Simon & Schuster, 1986, pages 44-45.

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