

“WISE AS SERPENTS”

Matt 10:16

Over the years I have watched people struggle unnecessarily or cause themselves and others problems because they lacked the ability to maneuver in human relationships/evangelism/follow-up or ministry. Jesus instruction: BE wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

I. THE REALITY OF OPPOSITION

A. Jesus is preparing his workers for their mission

1. He gives the understanding of opposition: People will resist you/fight against you
 - a. **V16** *Sheep in the midst of wolves*...they will try and consume you/your mission
 1. Demonic opposition moving through people/motivating or energizing people

B. The great need is for wisdom!!

1. **V16** Behold! Pay special attention to...Use your head/common sense/wisdom

a. **Col. 4:5** *"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time The Message, "Use your heads as you live and work among outsiders. Don't miss a trick. Make the most of every opportunity. "*

1. Wisdom makes life easier: Lack of wisdom makes life harder

2. Some questions of wisdom:

a. *What are you trying to achieve?* b. *What motivates this person?* c. *Is this the correct time?*

C. Jesus is dealing with an incorrect or unwise approach to life

1. There is only 1 way to deal with situations: Fight!! Straight ahead/right & wrong
 - a. Samaritans: let's call down fire!
 - b. Malchus: Chop his ear off!
2. This kind of person usually struggles in life
 - a. They cause unnecessary offense
 - b. They lose opportunities
 - c. They damage people by their approach

1. *Malchus' ear chopped off: Now he can't hear Jesus*

II. STRATEGIES OF WISDOM

A. Jesus gives an overall strategy of wisdom: **V16** *wise as serpents and harmless as doves*

1. **Harmless as doves:** Try to appear inoffensive

- a. Outreaches: You don't give the entire Gospel message when you're trying to open a door

1. *We want to tell people they're going to fry in hell if they don't repent vs. trying to help the community...*

a. *Lack of wisdom: We have to tell the truth, brother...and only be able to reach 2 people vs. hundreds/thousands*

2. *Rehab outreach: Testifying/blasting rehabs with managers/people in charge there; Closed doors*

2. **Wise as serpents:** Knowing how to maneuver

- a. A snake knows how to pick it's fights: Sometimes it would rather avoid trouble than strike

1. *What motivates this person? Ego? Money? Pressure from others/higher-ups?*

- b. Try and maneuver/get around this person/problem or issue **for the greater good!!**

1. *Police/officials are pressured/ego-driven: Respond with respect and try to avoid them...No problem/thanks for telling*

a. *Pastoring – Code enforcement officer: We avoided/maneuvered for years before we had to fight!*

- c. This is true in dealing with new converts: You have to have the wisdom to maneuver

1. A timing issue: They might not be ready for it yet!

a. **1 Corinthians 3:2** *I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it...*

b. *So maneuver: MH what about booze? When God wants you to give it up, He'll tell you...*

B. These are heart issues

1. Wise: Not usual word (Sophos) but phronimos: To rein in or to curb

a. We must rein in our egos so we can rein in our mouths!

III. THE GREATEST NEED

A. The greatest need in life is wisdom

1. There are a multitude of areas that we all lack wisdom

a. Because we have been foolish b. Because we face situations we have no experience with

c. Because it requires sensitivity: Now? What to say? It must be sensed or felt sometimes

2. The answer is to ask God for wisdom & seek wisdom

a. **James 1:5** *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

b. **Proverbs 2:1-4** *My child, listen to what I say and remember what I command you. Listen carefully to wisdom; set your mind on understanding. Cry out for wisdom, and beg for understanding. Search for it like silver, and hunt for it like hidden treasure.*