

## THE BEST WISDOM QUESTION EVER

---

Series: The Best Question Ever

June 14, 2015

Adam Mosley

Wisdom, Decisions, Counsel

Proverbs 1:5, 12:15, 19:20, 11:14, 15:22

Have you ever been faced with a choice between two really good things? Like, two opportunities that both seem incredible, but you can only choose one. Or worse, have you ever had to choose between two horrible things - the lesser of two evils? Or how about this: have you ever had to make a decision on something that you really knew nothing about - something that was far outside of your area of expertise?

This happens to me all the time as a pastor. You know, one of the things I love about my vocation is that it's so varied. Part of my job is very people-oriented - sometimes like a counselor, sometimes like a coach. Other things are very business-oriented or administrative. Sometimes I get to be creative and dream about things. Other times, I'm required to be pragmatic and solve problems. It's a multifaceted and fascinating job. But because of all these different responsibilities, it happens pretty often that I'm being asked to make a decision on something when I really have no clue what I'm talking about!

Back in the early 2000s, when I was serving on the pastoral staff of a very large church, one of my responsibilities was to oversee a student conference that we held each year for about 800 students. And I loved it! But I remember one day, during the planning of the event, we started talking about transportation logistics. Understand, where we were, not much is within walking distance, so we had to arrange for 800 students to be taken to different parts of town by bus. And someone looked at me and said, "OK, we have projects in 47 locations all over town, and 22 busses to transport kids. We have 80 teams of around 10 kids each, plus adults. We need to decide how we're going to allocate projects, teams, and transportation."

As I sat there with a blank stare on my face, all those old word problems from school flooded my mind. You know the ones? "There are two trains. The first one leaves the station traveling 100km per hour..." That's what I felt like. Here I was supposed to make a decision on something and I was barely registering all the information, let alone formulating a decision.

Then my friend Kande spoke up. She said, "Oh, we've done this all before. My team will work out the logistics and I'll bring a plan to the next meeting for review." To which I, as the esteemed leader of the group said, "Yes, Kande, that will be great. We'll wait on your team's recommendations." (Whew!)

Today, as we conclude our series, I want to take a look at how we make decisions when we don't know the answer to *The Best Question Ever* - when we need a little more wisdom than we have at our disposal. Today, I want to talk about *The Best Wisdom Question Ever*. But first, let me pray that God will open our eyes, ears, and hearts to what he has for us this morning.

## **Prayer**

Over the past several weeks, we've been talking about the decisions we make and how we come to those decisions. And we're jumping off of a book called *The Best Question Ever*, written by a guy named Andy Stanley. And what Andy Stanley says in his book is that we can make good decisions that take us from where we are to where we want to be simply by asking this one question:

### **What is the wise thing to do?**

And so, we've talked about the decisions we make with our time - what is a wise way to invest my time. We've talked about decisions about money - what is the wise thing to do with my money and how can I wisely manage my finances. And, you know, sometimes just asking that question will point us in the right direction. Sometimes the answer is super obvious!

Like, "Should I buy this car that costs more money than I make in a year?" The answer to, "What is the wise thing to do?" is pretty obvious there. "Should I get involved in a relationship with this person who isn't my spouse." Wisdom is pretty self-evident.

But there are times in our lives where, either because the choices seem pretty equal or because we simply aren't equipped to answer the question, the decision-making process hits a snag. We ask ourselves, "What is the wise thing to do?" and then we go, "I have no idea."

Andy Stanley says he learned a lot in seminary, but nobody ever taught him about working with government representatives on property easements. Right? Nobody ever taught me in school about dealing with Kenyan Immigration. There are things we just don't know - times when we can't figure out what the wise thing is, let alone actually do it.

So, what do we do in those moments? Where do we look to for the answer to the best question ever when it isn't so obvious? Are there baby steps we can take to ultimately uncover wisdom in those moments? What choices *can* we make on our way to making the *big* decision at hand?

First off, we have to choose: Will I be humble or arrogant. Some of us are just arrogant, aren't we? We sort of look at a situation and say, "I can figure this out." But the fact is none of us can figure it all out. We all have things we don't know. We have areas of expertise and areas where we lack expertise. We all have blind spots.

I was thinking about this the other day as I was backing out of a parking space in town. And for those of you who have ever backed out of a space into traffic in town, you probably know what happened. As I started to back out, I looked in my mirror and saw a friendly face looking back at me, directing me as to whether I could back up or not. He was watching traffic and giving me the standard hand signals for go, stop, and turn.

Now, I'm a big burly American guy in a big white beast of a truck. I can back my own self out of a parking spot, right? I don't need any help. But this guy was helping anyway. And as I backed up and started to turn my wheel, just wishing this guy would get out of the way so I could go faster, I heard him knock on the back of the truck.

I'll be honest, I was starting to get fed up with this guy. What did he want? Was he looking for a few shillings for his unneeded assistance. I was pretty annoyed. I looked at him in the mirror as if to say, "What?" He pointed on the ground to a shiny object just a few inches from my front tire. As I had turned to get out of the spot, my front right tire had made a path toward a good sized piece of very sharp metal. If I had continued to back up without assistance from my new friend, I would have put a 4 inch gash in my tire, and would have been lugging out the hi-lift in the afternoon sun.

Needless to say, my arrogant attitude toward this guy dissipated. I was grateful. In that moment, I realized that I had some blind spots, and that this guy was looking out for me. By heeding his warning, I was spared some hard work.

Look, we all have blind spots in our lives. We all have times when we just need a little help... even if we don't know it. And sometimes, we even need help in areas of our core competency - stuff we're really good at. Think about world class athletes. My favorite Premier League team is Chelsea - the champions! And Chelsea has some of the best footballers in the world. But when Chelsea wins or loses, who does everybody want to talk to? They want to talk to Jose Mourinho - the manager of the team.

Here's a guy who gets paid big money and who has attained a lot of fame for coaching these elite athletes. He takes guys who are some of the best in the world at their sport, and he helps them. He brings them together as a team. He strategizes and gameplans. He has a whole staff of other coaches who do the same.

And on the surface, you look and go, "Wait, why would the best striker in the game take advice from somebody who is twice his age and who was never nearly as good at playing

the game as he is?” It’s because these coaches offer something else, don’t they? They offer a different perspective. Coaches are students of the game, even if they were never the best athletes. They can stand back and watch a guy play and they can find areas in need of improvement.

And the reason young, highly talented, highly paid athletes will take advice from these coaches is because they’ve come to realize, over the course of their careers, that coaches make players better. If world class athletes need coaches, wouldn’t you think the same would be true of you and me? Wouldn’t you think that maybe, regardless of how smart you are or how talented you are, that maybe you might be better if you were surrounded by some good coaches?

It’s no coincidence that the people who seem to always make the right moves in their careers, their relationships, their finances, and other areas of life are the ones who regularly seek out the input of others. But that requires humility. It requires us to admit that we don’t know everything.

There’s a guy in the bible named Solomon. Solomon was the son of a very famous king named David. And after David died and Solomon became king at a young age, he asked God for wisdom. And God gave it to him. The biblical authors call Solomon the wisest man to ever live.

And Solomon used to write down these wise sayings, and we can read a lot of them in the book of our bible called Proverbs. These are little nuggets of wisdom written by a really wise guy. And do you know what we read in Proverbs is one of the keys to wisdom? Let’s take a look:

*A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.*

*Proverbs 1: 5*

*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.*

*Proverbs 12:15*

*Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days.*

*Proverbs 19: 20*

*Where there is no guidance, the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory.*

*Proverbs 11: 14*

*Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed.*

*Proverbs 15: 22*

Do you get the picture? Do you hear the theme? The wisest guy in the world says that sometimes the wisest thing to do is to listen to other people - to seek out counsel. Sometimes, the answer to the question, "What is the wise thing to do?" is this: The wise thing to do is to find someone wise and ask them.

Sometimes that's it! When it came to bussing 800 teenagers all over town, the wise thing for me to do was to listen to my co-worker Kande. She had the knowledge, abilities, and expertise that I didn't have. It's not that I couldn't have come up with some sort of solution to the problem, but the *wise* thing to do was to listen to Kande.

There's a word for this - one we don't like very much: submission. A footballer submits to his or her coach because he knows they have wisdom that will make for better football players. Even though I was leading the team that was organizing the conference, I submitted to Kande's wisdom when working out bus logistics. Submission, you see, is not blind obedience. Submission says, "I defer to you in this area, because I trust the decision that you will make more than I trust my own decision."

The Apostle Paul, in the book of Ephesians says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." He doesn't say, "Submit to Christ," though we should do that, too. He says, "Submit to one another." How do we submit to one another in the way we sometimes think of submission? Like, if submission was, "I give you 100% control of my life," then it would be impossible for two people to submit to each other, right? Like, "I'll do whatever you say." "No, I'll do whatever *you* say." We would never get anywhere, right?

But that's not what submission means. Submission means that I look at your strengths and expertise and areas of wisdom and I say, "You know, I think you'll do better at making this decision than I will. What do you think I should do?" We have to choose to be humble rather than arrogant - to seek counsel from others and in some cases, to submit to the wisdom of people who are better equipped to make that decision.

Then, after we've made that decision, based on the wise input of others, we have to choose to live with that decision. And you know, that can be a really uncomfortable thing sometimes. In the moment, you might say, "Yes, I will submit to that wisdom and I will make this decision that you are telling me is the wise one." But what happens a few months down the road when things aren't turning out the way you hoped? Maybe you begin to second-guess.

I don't just do this with wise advice from people. I do this with wise advice from God. In the moment, I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God has given me a direction, and I make the decision confidently. But then things don't always go the way I thought they were going to, and sometimes I look back and go, "Well...maybe God actually wasn't as clear as I thought."

And in those times, my wife is typically the wise voice of reason for me. She's like, "You've got to be kidding me! Not only did you hear clearly from God, but I heard clearly from God, our friends and mentors confirmed this, God used certain events to confirm this." Have you ever had those kinds of conversations?

Once you've received wise counsel, whether from God or from wise people around you - once you've made the decision - then you have to decide whether you're going to live in faith, walking out that decision, or whether you're going to slide back to a place of comfort. Will I live in faith or comfort?

That's what it is, right? When we live our lives without any input from others - when we just kind of do whatever seems right to us, we're basically living within our comfort zone. We aren't being challenged or questioned. We aren't being pushed and encouraged to become better versions of ourselves. We're just kind of coasting.

This week, I had a conference call with a group I call the SAGE Team. This is a group of really smart people with a broad variety of skills, perspectives, backgrounds, and expertise who I've pulled together simply to bounce ideas off of - to seek their wisdom. And I talked with this group on Wednesday night for an hour and a half. We talked about how the church is going, about what decisions, challenges, and opportunities we're facing in the short-term, and about the long-term vision and how to walk that out.

When I hung up the phone on that call, I felt wiser. I felt smarter. I felt like I had more clarity. I felt emboldened to go further in the work I feel like God has called me to. That's what happens when you allow people to speak into your life. You get out of that place of comfort and move into a place of progress, of challenge. You become a better version of yourself.

Jesus loved to call out greater things in people. To challenge them to leave lives of comfort in favor of lives of faith. There was one guy named Zaccheus - a corrupt government official - who Jesus saw in a tree one day and said, "Hey, I want to come to your house today." Jesus called out something in Zaccheus that day.

Then there was Simon, a guy who Jesus called to leadership. He even told him he was going to change his name. He wasn't going to be called Simon any more. He was going to be called Peter - the rock.

James and John were fishermen who Jesus told, "You know, fishing is good and all, but I see something greater in you. How about joining me, and we'll fish for people - we'll try to positively impact the lives of other human beings." He saw in them the ability to do that, and he called it out.

But all these people had to make a decision to live a life of faith. It takes a lot of faith to leave behind a stable job - a promising career - and follow Jesus into whatever adventures he has for you. You have to leave comfort behind. Sometimes, you have to leave behind the things you're really good at, and start doing things you don't know how to do. And when that happens, then you're *really* reliant on the wisdom of others and the wisdom of God.

But that's a life of faith.

Lastly, you have to decide: Will I be a learner or a loner. One of the most common stories I hear here in Nakuru is, "I trusted this person, this leader, this friend, and I got burned." Yes, that happens. And sometimes when that happens, we're tempted to simply stop trusting all together and go it alone. We say, "You know what, I'll do this by myself, because I can't trust anyone else."

Let me tell you a secret. Just because one person isn't trustworthy doesn't mean all people aren't trustworthy. Just because there are bad leaders, that doesn't mean there aren't also great leaders. In fact, just because a person may be untrustworthy doesn't mean there is nothing you can learn from that person.

In the bible, there's a story of a guy named Joseph who had a really rough life - bullied by his brothers, sold as a slave, falsely accused and put in prison - but through it all, Joseph submitted himself to those in authority over him, learned what he could from them, and took the best of that wisdom with him wherever he went.

Ultimately, Joseph would become second in command in Egypt - effectively ruling over much of the known world at the time. That doesn't happen when you decide to be a loner - suspicious of everyone else. That happens when you decide to be a learner, and to take advantage of the opportunities placed before you to learn from wise people.

So, do this: Consider your life today. Consider the biggest decision you are currently facing. What is the wise thing to do? Sometimes the wise thing is to seek advice from wise people. Do you have those people around you?

I would encourage you in this: try to find some wise people right here in the church. Find people who are good at and experienced in the stuff you aren't. Invest in relationship with those people. At the same time, be willing to enter into relationships with people who look to you for wisdom. We can all become better followers of Jesus and better human beings if we'll do like Paul says and submit to one another - tapping into the wisdom, strength, skills, and experience of this church community.

But you know, it's not my job to build relationship for you. Take initiative. Find somebody here who you think might be wise in some areas you aren't wise in, and invite them for a



meal, get to know them, let them get to know you. I've learned more, over the course of my life, from people very different from me than I have over the people I would naturally gravitate toward. People twice my age, people from a very different culture, people with whom I disagree. In this church, we have people from birth to 80+ years old. We have single people, married people, divorced people, people with kids, without kids, and somewhere in between. We have empty nesters. We have people who have been in church their whole lives and some who haven't ever been in church before. We have people who are experts in business and people who are experts in parenting and people who are experts in farming. We have people who have run large organizations, entrepreneurs who have started businesses. We have people who have been doing Jesus stuff since long before I was born. We have this collective wisdom here that is available to be tapped into. Take the initiative to reach out to somebody.

Solomon says in Proverbs 4:7:

*The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom.  
Proverbs 4:7*

Consistently seek out the wisdom of others, and you will grow wise yourself. What is the wise thing to do? Who is the wise person to talk to? Are you willing to humble yourself, to live a life of faith, and to be a life-long learner, or will you be an arrogant, comfortable loner? Let's pray.

## **Prayer**

### **1. Singing**

We're going to sing some songs together that help us reflect on some of these things.

While that singing is taking place, you will also have the opportunity for prayer.

### **2. Prayer**

If you need prayer for anything at all, we have people here who are eager to do that.

Also, while that is going on, you'll have a chance to take communion

### **3. Communion**

Communion is a symbolic act, instituted by Jesus as a way for us to remember the way he willingly died for us. The unleavened bread serves as a symbol of Jesus' body broken on the cross. The wine or juice symbolize his blood that was spilled for us.



We have people ready to serve you communion. Juice is on your left, wine is on your right. Feel free to partake of either, as it fits with your tradition. Just break off a piece of the bread, dip it in the cup, and eat.

We offer communion each week for *anyone* who wants to take it. There's no membership requirement or hoops to jump through. You are guests at this symbolic table of Jesus, so please feel free to partake.

#### **4. Giving**

Lastly, during this time, you will have an opportunity to give financially to the work of this church. If you're a guest with us today, we don't expect you to give anything. However, for those who consider this your church home, and for those who believe in what we're trying to do here, this is our chance to give back to God a portion of what he has given us, and to support the work he has called this church to in Nakuru.

There is a tall box at the back with a slot in it. You can place your gifts in that box at any time as we are singing together.

So those are the four ways to respond: Singing, Prayer, Communion, and Giving. All will be happening simultaneously. There's no order you have to do them in. You don't have to do them all. You don't have to do any of them. This is your time to respond in whatever way you desire.

At the end of that time, I'll pray a prayer of blessing over you before you go.

#### **Closing Prayer**