Today we continue the sermon series for this Summer, “Life Lessons from Proverbs through Disney’s Magic.” We have been using moments from beloved Disney films to illustrate life lessons from Proverbs, exploring themes like wisdom, justice, friendship, and more. Today, our focus is “Wise Counsel,” and we will be delving into the story of Pocahontas and her quest for guidance in challenging times.

Let’s open with this question: What does the Bible teach about wise counsel? The Bible contains many stories and verses that highlight the importance of wise counsel. Here are a few examples:

Proverbs 12:15: “Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to advice.”

Proverbs 11:14: “Where there is no guidance, a nation falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.”

Proverbs 15:22: “Without counsel, plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed.”

Proverbs 19:20-21: “Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom for the future. The human mind may devise many plans, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.”

These verses suggest that wisdom comes from considering the advice of others rather than relying only on one’s own perspective. They underscore the importance of seeking counsel from various sources for informed decision-making and emphasize that safety and success can often be found in collective wisdom. They teach us that without counsel, our plans may fail. But most importantly, they teach us that wisdom comes from God and that God wants us to be wise and encourage us to listen to advice and instruction from godly people to gain wisdom to align our lives with God’s plans.

These verses highlight some of my life experiences. All of it is true. Like good science, they are tested and proven. As a pastor, I couldn’t do my job well (or at all) if I thought I had all the answers and that my opinion was always right or the best. One thing I have learned to practice over the years is to listen to others. I was not always a good listener, not because I did not want to, but because I did not understand the value of it. The way I learned to listen better and learn from others’ wisdom was by making bad decisions and failing—not intentionally, of course. It was very hurtful and disappointing at the time because I cared about people, but I was not wise enough to care for them well (which goes to show how our best intentions fall short when we choose unwisely). So, I can confidently tell you that the value of listening to and learning from others, especially in seeking wise counsel, is better than anything money can buy.

So, when we talk about wise counsel, we refer to the wisdom we attain through life experiences, listening to others and discernment of God’s will for our lives.

What is your experience with wise counsel? Do you seek it? Do you take it? Perhaps you may regret not listening to people who cared about you and tried to give you wise counsel at some point in your life, and now you wonder if your life could have been different (better).

Well, you may be right, but that is the case for everyone. In my opinion, the best life is not the one we dream of or without incidents and setbacks but the one we make the best of as we move forward. This is true for those who are wise among us. No one finds wisdom by being perfect and not making mistakes. In fact, the process of wisdom is learning from mistakes. So, when we talk about wise counsel, we are talking about the knowledge and experiences of people who struggled in life but learned incredibly valuable and godly lessons that are now a gift to us. Years and years of life experiences are available to those inclined to listen. How amazing that is.

Such was the case for Pocahontas. The movie “Pocahontas” by Disney tells the story of a young Native American woman named Pocahontas and her encounter with English settlers in the 17th century. As the daughter of a tribal chief, Pocahontas finds herself torn between her duty to her people and her newly found and growing love for the English Captain John Smith. As her story unfolds, Pocahontas navigates the conflicts between her tribe and the settlers, ultimately playing a pivotal role in promoting peace and understanding between the two cultures.

Here is a scene at the beginning of the movie when Pocahontas sought the advice of her Grandmother Willow (whose spirit indwelled a tree) to help her understand a dream: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oavSum61gA&feature=share>

Pocahontas was dreaming about a spinning arrow, which she didn’t understand. However, Grandmother Willow advised her to “listen with her heart” to the spirits around her to guide her toward the path leading to peace between her tribe and the English settlers. Through this, we see Pocahontas was wise enough to seek and heed wise counsel when facing challenging decisions or trying to understand complex situations.

What do you do when facing challenging decisions or trying to understand complex situations? Do you seek wise counsel? Do you pray asking God for wisdom? Do you reach out to those with a broader and deeper understanding of life, or just flip a coin?

One of the main reasons we suffer in this life in unnecessary ways, repeating mistakes and ill behaviors from the past, is because we don’t appreciate the gift of wisdom from those who have lived before us. And by the time we realize how right they were, we have already lived half of our lives and are trying to salvage as much as possible.

We can agree that ignoring wise counsel is very costly; it can lead us down a path of disappointment, hurt, and setbacks. For example, when we act impulsively, making decisions based on immediate feelings or desires without considering the long-term consequences, we have to start all over again. Or how about neglecting our health and self-care or disregarding financial advice from those with more experience or knowledge than us because we think we know better but end up digging a hole rather than climbing a ladder? As stated in Proverbs 12:15: “Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to advice.”

So, what is the value or blessing of wise counsel, of listening to and learning from God and godly people? It helps us navigate options, make sound decisions, take the correct course of action, and respond well to situations and relationships.

In more specific ways, seeking wise counsel expands our perspective. It allows us to consider all sides of an issue, illuminating aspects we might have otherwise overlooked. When life presents us with complex scenarios where the “right” choice isn’t immediately clear, wise, godly advice can clear the “blind spots” to make good decisions.

This process is humbling because we have to acknowledge we don’t know everything. But it is also empowering because we maximize our time and energy focusing on making things better rather than dealing with the consequences of poor decisions having to start all over again, and again, and again.

Many of us can relate to this and say: If I had known in my 20s what I know now in my 40s (or whatever number is yours), I could have done much better. Well, that is true for all of us and is a sign of maturity and wisdom. I would be concerned if you are still messing around thinking you are still in your 20s, though.

My friends, bringing God into our decision-making process through prayer always helps us discern what’s best. Reaching out to people asking for their wisdom, as Pocahontas did, will save us a lot of trouble and pain. Seeking wise counsel leads us toward actions that honor God, benefit others, and cultivate our personal growth. Psalm 1:1-3 says that such a person “is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.”

So, here is the invitation and good news: Align your life with God’s will by seeking wise counsel through prayer and listening to godly people. This is what Pocahontas did when she consulted with her Grandmother during times of conflict and uncertainty. And this action gave her the wisdom to act as a peacemaker by aligning her actions with a greater purpose. This approach will help you walk closer to God, make healthy decisions, and give you direction and confidence, knowing you are anchored in faith and wisdom.

But also remember, there may be times when godly advice contradicts our desires or is not “music to our ears” (to that I say: what kind of music do you listen to?). In such times, we must be humble to recognize that we are not always right or have the best ideas. Pocahontas faced such moments, but she chose the path of wisdom.

And the good news is that by applying God’s wisdom, we can truly demonstrate love, patience, courage, honesty, compassion, and kindness, even in challenging circumstances or relationships. This is the stuff of a good and happy life despite the hardships we may experience.

If you are struggling with hard decisions or confusion or just want to know the right course of action for your life, pray and reach out to the wise among you. And, when in doubt, whenever you are about to do something, think, “Would a fool do that?” And if they would, do not do that thing.