

***LIFE-SUSTAINING COUNSEL***  
***ACTS 15:22-29***

Woodland Park Church of Christ

2 June 2019

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# BACKDROP

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- ✘ Recall in chapter 14, Paul and Barnabas completed Paul's first missionary by going back through the more challenging and difficult sites (Lystra, Iconium & Antioch). **Acts 14:21**
- ✘ They "*strengthen[ed] the souls of the disciples*" and "*exhort[ed] them to continue in the faith.*" **Acts 14:22**
- ✘ "*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.*" **Acts 14:22**
- ✘ Paul and Barnabas render a report to Antioch of their travels (all that God had done with them & God's opening the door of faith to the Gentiles). **Acts 14:27**

- ✘ Some men from Judea descended on Antioch preaching that brethren had to be circumcised according to the custom of Moses to be saved. **Acts 15:1**
- ✘ Paul and Barnabas oppose them (“no small dissension and dispute”). **Acts 15:2**
- ✘ The church at Antioch sends Paul, Barnabas and certain others to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles and elders and get an answer to this question that was threatening to divide the church. **Acts 15:2**
- ✘ Not surprisingly, some converted Pharisees in Jerusalem rose up and said the Gentiles had to be circumcised and commanded to keep the law of Moses. **Acts 15:5**

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**Decision has been made; Paul and  
company ready to return to  
Antioch with this critical  
determination!**

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*Where there is no counsel, the people  
fall; but in the multitude of  
counselors there is safety.*

**Proverbs 11:14**

*The way of a fool is right in his own  
eyes, but **he who heeds counsel is  
wise.** Proverbs 12:15*

# GOOD COUNSEL THAT OFTEN GOES UNHEEDED

- ✘ Walk with the Lord, and allow God to direct your steps;
- ✘ Study hard and make the best grades possible.
- ✘ Save sex for marriage.
- ✘ Marry in the church.
- ✘ Avoid bad (corrupt) company like the plague.
- ✘ Do not take on too much debt.
- ✘ Eat right and exercise regularly.

# 1. DON'T BE A KNOW-IT-ALL (ACTS 15:1-4)

- ✘ After the dissension with Judean brothers, brothers at Antioch felt that Paul and Barnabas should go to Jerusalem to get guidance from other apostles.
- ✘ Paul willingly accepted the counsel.
- ✘ Note, Paul was the apostle to the uncircumcised (Gentiles), while Peter was apostle to the circumcised (Jews). See Galatians 2:7-8
- ✘ Paul did not allow pride to stand in the way - there was something much more important than personal standing at stake. See Proverbs 16:18

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- ✘ Remaining coachable is a key to long-term success , as “[T]eachability Expands Your Talent.” John Maxwell’s *Talent Is Never Enough*
  - ✘ We should prefer having half the questions over having all the answers.
  - ✘ After 40 years of being in the Lord’s church, I still enjoy Bible class!
  - ✘ We will never know it all – but we should strive to learn all we can!
  - ✘ Commit to being a lifelong learner.



## 2. KNOW WHERE TO SEEK ADVICE & COUNSEL (ACTS 15:2)

- ✘ It is plain that everyone is not positioned to give good counsel.
- ✘ Church at Antioch to be commended for seeking appropriate counsel (sound advice) on how to handle this pressing issue.
- ✘ The apostles had walked with the Lord and had been granted the keys of the kingdom. If anyone knew or should have the real truth, it would have been Peter (Simon) and his apostolic compadres! See Matthew 16:18-19

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Leads me to question and wonder,  
what do we do or to whom do we turn  
when pressed with a critical concern  
to which we have no ready response?

- ✘ Dr. Phil
- ✘ Friends / Associates
- ✘ Oprah
- ✘ Parents
- ✘ God (through His holy writ / prayer)

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✘ Rehoboam provides a cautionary tale regarding the perils of following unsound advice. **See I Kings 12:1-17**

✘ **Never get advice from anyone who knows as little as you.**

✘ *. . . And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.* **Matthew 15:14**

# PARENTS: SHOULD BE POSITIONED TO PROVIDE GODLY ADVICE

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- ✦ Notice the beginning of Solomon's wisdom –
  - + *My son, hear the instruction of your father and do not forsake the law of your mother . . . Proverbs 1:8*
  - + *My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you; Proverbs 2:1*
  - + *My son, do forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; Proverbs 3:1*
  - + *Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; Proverbs 4:1*

### 3. SOUND COUNSEL IS WORTHLESS IF NOT HEEDED (ACTS 15:30-34)

- ✘ Notice the reaction when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch with the letter from Jerusalem.
  - + They rejoiced over the encouragement; Judas and Silas (being prophets) strengthened and encouraged the congregation too. **Acts 15:31-32**
- ✘ Silas even stayed in Antioch and would accompany Paul on his second missionary campaign.
- ✘ The potential devastation caused by a split in the church in its infancy (a precarious time) had been averted!

# CONTRAST THIS WITH ISRAEL'S PLIGHT

*. . . “The land we passed through is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us . . . Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them and the LORD is with us.” And all the congregation said to stone them with stones . . .*

**. Numbers 14:9-10**

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- ✘ Consequently, God is displeased with Israel's persistent lack of faith and relentless complaining. **See Numbers 14:11-12**
    - + Death sentence to the rebels (Num.14:36-37);
    - + Those at least 20 years of age would perish in the wilderness (**Numbers 14:28-29**);
    - + Rest of congregation would wander in the wilderness 40 years (**Numbers 14:31-34**).

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**In how many years long  
wildernesses do we find ourselves  
wandering because we reject good  
counsel and sound advice?!**



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✘ *“If, my child, you stop listening to discipline, you will wander away from words of knowledge.”*

Proverbs 19:27 CEB

✘ *“Therefore whoever **hears these sayings of Mine, and does them**, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; **and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.**”*

Matthew 7:24-25

# LORD'S INVITATION EXTENDED TO ALL

## ✘ Be added to the Lord's body

Hear the gospel (**Acts 15:7**)

Believe (**Acts 15:7; Hebrews 11:6**)

Repent (**Acts 2:38**)

Confess (**Acts 8:37**)

Be baptized for the remission of sin  
(**Acts 2:38, 8:38**) or

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- ✘ Be reconciled to the Lord (I John 1:9);
  - ✘ Desire prayer (James 5:16).