

# **Get Smart: A Study in Proverbs**

## **Growth Group Leader's Supplement**

### **Study 9: Smoothing the Way**

#### Growth Point Insights

Questions are always guidelines. Never feel obligated to cover every one. Always put a stress on participation. If someone has a different question, by all means pursue it.

#### **Devotional Seed:**

The devotional seed is intended to stimulate conversation as an introduction to the discussion.

How do you distinguish between good conflict and harmful conflict?

Good conflict teaches us and sharpens us (Prov 27:17) while harmful conflict is conflict out of control or not brought in the spirit of help and love.

#### **Deeper Roots**

1. What is a mocker? What is the best way to deal with one?

To mock something is to ridicule or defy. It is to be rude and show scorn. Mockers are therefore rebellious and insulting. According to Proverbs 22:10, one should have nothing to do with such a person. Such people create conflict.

Proverbs 9:7-9 suggests that it is not even worth rebuking such a person. This suggests that there are some people who are beyond correction except through punishment (Proverbs 19:25) proverbs seems to use the title mocker for someone who does not respond to correction.

2. According to Proverbs, how should we respond to criticism?

There are several proverbs about the wisdom of receiving criticism. Perhaps review these from the notes and talk about how failure to receive criticism may be a lost opportunity to be sharpened and taught.

3. How should we respond to misguided criticism?

Obviously not every rebuke will be given gently or even be correct. If we are to be wise, however, we must still respond positively to such rebukes. We must always be willing to search for the truth in what a person says. If they are totally misguided, you will still gain nothing from getting angry or depressed.

Often we do not see the situation clearly and what may at first seem misguided, could in fact teach us an important lesson.

Perhaps you can also talk about how we must not gain our self respect from what others think about us. We must find our confidence in God, who loves us even though we are not perfect (Rom 5:8) As we gain confidence in God, we will be more capable of receiving criticism.

#### 4. How does one know when it is best to drop an issue and when it is better to confront it?

Sometimes it has to do with who you are dealing with. If a person is foolish, proud or a mocker then confronting the situation will only lead to further conflict. If the person is wise then a confrontation will be a good solution.

Clearly if the matter does not directly involve us or a person over whom we have responsibility or authority, we should not meddle. (26:17)

One can also judge the seriousness of the issue. If it is a silly disagreement over facts or a miscommunication, it could be easily dropped. If the issue is more serious or the offense is reoccurring, then it would be more important to bring up the matter with the other person.

#### 5. What tactics should we use to resolve conflict and calm quarrels?

Pastor Dave mentioned, gentleness, patience, carefulness and trust in God.

Proverbs 15:1 and 30:33 show us the importance on using gentle words and not using language that would stir things up.

We have also seen the validity in dropping a matter and looking over an offense. This should encourage us to make sure that if we bring up a matter that it is not just trivial. We must pick our battles wisely.

There is also the importance of good timing. And Patience 14:29, 15:18

Carefulness Proverbs 21:3

Trust in God - Proverbs 16:7

## 6. What is the meaning of Proverbs 27:5?

This is probably more a verse about the need to show love. Nobody likes open rebuke, but withheld love is more damaging. Rather than dealing with conflict, let us show love.

This verse may also show us that open rebuke can be a good thing if it corrects us.

## 7. What does Matthew 18:15-20 teach about responding to conflict?

The most important thing is to see the progression. Not involving others until you try to resolve it first.

It certainly shows us that it is appropriate to confront those who offend us.

Perhaps review whether this is always required and look to the proverbs which say that sometimes it is better to overlook the offence.

When we cannot let it go, we should follow this passage

### **Bearing Fruit**

These questions are designed to be a little more personal and application oriented. Use these questions to focus more on sharing. It helps if as a leader, you are willing to share your life with the group.

### **Branching Out**

Each month your group will be asked to focus some time on outreach and service. Plan to spend some time planning and thinking about how your group can reach out together. We will use this space to help your group integrate with the larger outreach efforts of the church.

On Dec 10-12 we will have a Christmas outreach dinner called Together for Christmas. It will be a nice meal, conversation around the table along with a fun program filled with humor and interaction. It will be a great opportunity to invite guests. We need to help our groups get excited about inviting people. Create a list of possible invitees and pray for opportunity to invite and positive response. It is important now to talk about finding opportunities to make invitations. Let's work together as groups to make this a success.

Leaders we need to set the example and also specifically ask if people are making invites.