

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-3 Basic Skill: Adviser

“Should I marry this person?” “Should I move away from my family?” “How can I manage my difficult child?” These are the kinds of questions people ask. There are several ways you may be asked to help someone in distress. The first is as an adviser for someone seeking help on a certain problem. The adviser role is very specific and limited.

You may be a pastor, adviser, or just a concerned follower of Christ. We have all given advice and witnessed the love of Christ to others. Ask yourself, “Am I a counselor, friend, or a partner to people in a difficult place? You could be all of these things and more. This lesson will explore the task of an adviser. Your next lesson will discuss the role of a counselor and demonstrate how to be successful in the methods used.

This story occurred during the time when Xerxes was king of Persia, about 450 years before the birth of Christ. The land of King Xerxes stretched “from India to Cush [Ethiopia].” The ‘people of God’ living there were also known as Jews. As you listen to this story you will get an idea of how counseling and giving advice differ, yet in some ways they can overlap.

In the third year of the reign of King Xerxes, he gave a feast to celebrate the success of his kingdom. He requested his wife, Queen Vashti, to appear and show off her beauty at that celebration. The king became very angry when she refused to come. Now it was the king’s practice to ask for advice in matters of law and fairness. He asked his advisers “According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?” They advised him to send out a royal decree that the crown would be taken from the present queen and given to another. The king took their advice and would select a replacement for the queen, from the beautiful young virgins of his kingdom (Est 1:1-2:4).

A Jewish man, Mordecai, was raising his cousin, Esther, after the death of her parents. Esther was taken to the palace, prepared, and presented to the king with the other virgins. King Xerxes favored her and chose her to take the place of Queen Vashti.

Now one of the king’s nobles, Haman, had been honored by the king above all the others in his court. Haman expected and was given respect by all the people of the kingdom except Mordecai, Esther's protector. Being a good Jew, Mordecai chose not to kneel before Haman. As a result, Haman became extremely angry. He asked the king to declare that Mordecai and all his people, the Jews, be killed. On a certain day that year, the Persians were to kill the people who worshiped Jehovah.

Even as queen, Esther could enter the king’s presence only when he requested her appearance. Mordecai sent word to her about the decree, and she feared for her life. Mordecai advised her that should this order be carried out by the king, they would find and kill her as well. He also told her, “Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (Est 4:14).

Sometime before Esther appeared before the king, he had been reading events of his kingdom’s history. In one entry he noticed that a plot to kill him had been discovered. His guards had been alerted by one Mordecai and the king’s life had been spared. King Xerxes asked what reward had been given to this man. When he was told none had been given, Xerxes called the noble he honored above all others, Haman. “What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?” he asked Haman.

Haman advised the king, giving a list of things that should be done for such a man. A very exceptional reward and honor should be given that man. Haman thought he was the one the king was speaking about. The king responded and told Haman to do just those things for the man Mordecai, for saving the king's life. Haman was then even more furious with this Jew.

Later Esther informed the king that Haman had had him sign an edict to have all her people, the Jews, killed. Haman had planned to have Mordecai impaled on a pole. She told the king that she too was Jewish and would be killed. Outraged, Xerxes declared Haman would suffer the death he had planned for Mordecai (Est 7:3-10). He reversed the original edict Haman had made him sign.

The story shows us an important leader of a large kingdom relied on advisers to help him govern. The king asked for advice on how to respond to his wife's refusal to tend to her duty as queen. He sought help on how to replace the queen. When he wanted to reward someone who had saved his life, he asked Haman for suggestions. Mordecai asked for help from his cousin Esther when he heard of the decree against him and his people. Haman, because of his anger, did not follow the advice of his advisers or his wife.

An adviser is someone who will provide an opinion to help a person make an honest decision. Usually an adviser is someone who is well known for their advice. An adviser usually knows enough about the situation to be able to give a clear suggestion on how to handle it. The advice given is to benefit the person seeking help in making a decision. It comes in the form of a recommendation, not a specific instruction. Advice should never be given that benefits the adviser in any way. In government these men and women are called experts, lawyers, or assistants. A person may seek the advice from several different people before they make a decision. Haman's advice was self-serving because he thought the king was getting ready to reward him. This means he was more concerned about himself—what he could gain—than how he could benefit the one seeking his advice.

A good adviser is someone who, knowing the person in need, can see into the future. They often can see the steps that should be taken to solve a problem. When Joseph saw the future famine coming to Egypt, he gave the king a plan to save the people from starvation. Godly advisers seek God's wisdom and share it with those in need. Then people see God's love more clearly and his plan for their lives.

It was this king's practice to ask for advice about matters of law and fairness. He called them wise men, because they understood what was going on. King Xerxes had seven such advisers. He chose those he trusted. Sometimes a person will not seek advice because they may believe there is no one they can trust with their issue. The importance of advisers is spoken of in these scriptures: "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Prov 15:22), and "For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers" (Prov 11:14).

This lesson is **important** because it teaches that a godly adviser, who is trustworthy, can help people find solutions to their problems.

The **main truth** of this story is that with good advisers, people can succeed in life. Such advisers should always seek the good of the person in need, not themselves. Lives may be saved, and people will see God's love for them.

To review this lesson, answer these questions:

1. What makes a good adviser? [Pause]
A. If you said, “A good adviser is someone who understands the situation, is honest, and is not self-serving,” you are correct.
2. Why would a person not seek advice? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “They may believe there is no one they can trust with their issue,” you answered correctly.
3. What is one truth about wise advice that is evident from Esther’s story? [Pause]
A. If you responded, “One truth from Esther’s story is that wise advice can sometimes change or even save lives,” you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story of Queen Esther several times, until you can tell it in your own words. Then discuss with a friend when you each received wise advice and what the outcome was. Memorize the verse, “Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).