

The Heights Baptist Church * Sermon Series: N/A

*** Topic: Accountability * 1 Kings 12:1-24 * 6/21/26 ***

INTRODUCTION

What do you think is more important; what you believe, or who you spend the most time with?

This is a trick question, as both are very important. The Bible tells us, He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.

When have you made a hasty decision that you later regretted? How could the decision have been different if you had taken more time to consider your options?

All of us have made some bad decisions at one time or another. With help from God and one another, we can grow in our ability to choose well. As believers we should seek to make decisions that honor God. The key to making good decisions is listening to God.

UNDERSTANDING

Note to study leader: We are completing a two-week break in the sermon series on doctrine at The Heights. This week's Lifegroup lesson is a stand-alone lesson from the book of Proverbs related to the importance of accountability partners and godly counsel. Today's lesson could be titled, "Friends, Counselors, and Accountability Partners".

UNDERSTANDING

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do the following verses have to say about the importance of choosing the right friends?

- **Proverbs 13:20:** Walk with wise people, and you grow wise. Walk with fools, and you'll suffer harm.
- **Proverbs 14:9:** Fools mock at doing the right thing (e.g. making amends for sin), but goodwill is found among the upright.
- **Proverbs 15:2:** The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.
- **Proverbs 17:12:** Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool bent on folly.
- **Proverbs 22:24-25:** Don't make friends with a hot-tempered man, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.
- **1 Corinthians 15:33:** Bad company corrupts good character.
- **Hebrews 3:13:** Encourage one another daily, so that we don't become hardened by sin.
- **Hebrews 10:24-25:** Good Christian friends can encourage us and spur us on to living the life God calls us to live.

How would you summarize what these proverbs tell us about the importance of selecting the right kinds of friends?

Good Christian friends make for a great environment in which to grow in Christ.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do the following verses have to say about the importance of seeking godly counsel?

- **Proverbs 10:21:** The lips of the righteous nourish many.
- **Proverbs 11:14:** For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.
- **Proverbs 12:5:** The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful.
- **Proverbs 12:15:** The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.
- **Proverbs 13:10:** Wisdom is found in those who take advice.
- **Proverbs 15:22:** Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.
- **Proverbs 24:6:** Surely you need guidance to wage war, and victory is won through many advisers.
- **Proverbs 27:9:** The pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice

How would you summarize what these proverbs tell us about the importance of seeking godly counsel?

Mature Christians tend to have a biblical worldview. And they have been through different experiences than we have. So, they may be able to offer us a fresh perspective on difficult issues we may be facing.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do the following verses have to say about the importance of having an accountability partner?

- **Proverbs 17:17:** A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.
- **Proverbs 18:24:** A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.
- **Proverbs 27:17:** As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.
- **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10:** Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.
- **James 5:16:** Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other, so you may be healed.

How would you summarize what these proverbs tell us about the importance of selecting the right kinds of friends?

“Not everybody needs to know what’s going on in my life, but somebody does.” Pastor Shay Osborne, The Heights Baptist Church, July 13th, 2025

Note 1 to study leader: *Unless your accountability partner is your spouse, they should be the same gender as you are. This practice will avoid temptations that may arise from having such an open relationship with someone of the opposite sex.*

Note 2 to study leader: *One way our accountability partner can help us is through a tool such as “Covenant Eyes”. This is an app that can be installed on our electronic devices that sends an email with our internet search history to a trusted accountability partner.*

A CASE STUDY: REHOBOAM

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 KINGS 12:1-6

When King Solomon died, his son Rehoboam ascended to the throne (1 Kings 11:43) at the age of 41. Rehoboam had the opportunity to reverse some of his father’s social policies, particularly the burdensome demands for provisions and forced labor required to maintain his court (1 Kings 4:27; 9:22-23). The people of Israel drafted Jeroboam to go before Rehoboam, asking him to lighten the people’s burden.

Do you think asking the new king for a lighter load was reasonable or unreasonable? Why or why not?

What apparently wise actions did Rehoboam initially take prior to giving the people his answer?

He didn't make a hasty decision, and he sought wise counsel.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 KINGS 12:7-11

What did these advisors suggest the new king recommend? Was this good advice in your opinion? Why or why not?

How might following the counsel of the elders have made Rehoboam a better king and strengthened his kingdom?

Why do you suppose the king rejected the advice of his father's servants in this matter? Why do you think he listened to his peers rather than to the elders?

We don't know for sure, but one possibility is the initial counselors didn't give him the answer he was looking for.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 KINGS 12:12-19

What was the result of Rehoboam following the bad advice of his peers?

Israel rebelled against him.

APPLICATION

Note to study leader: The following question incorporates the "LIFE" acronym (from our "Starting Point" classes) into the lesson. A summary of this acronym is included in the first portion of the Commentary section of this lesson. Include a brief description of "LIFE" as part of this application. Today's application is based on the "I" in the "LIFE" acronym.

Am I adequately grounded in Christian fellowship with mature Christians who can help me grow in Christ? Are there any close relationships I am in that are pulling me away from Christ?

The "I" in our "LIFE" acronym stands for Intentional friend: I am purposefully cultivating relationships within my church family? How am I being honest, real, and vulnerable within the relationships I am building

What can do differently when making difficult or important decisions to help me choose the best action?

Do I have a Christian friend whom I can confide in to help me in my walk with Christ?

PRAYER

Pray that God would surround us with godly Christians who would encourage us in our walk with Christ. Pray we would not be hasty in making decisions and would seek wise counsel when making difficult or important decisions. Help us find reliable accountability partners to help us walk uprightly with God.

COMMENTARY

Information on “The LIFE of a Disciple” Acronym (There may be a poster in your classroom to use as a teaching aid)

This acronym is part of our “Starting Point” training programs. The letters in LIFE stand for the following:

Loving neighbor: I am motivated to show God’s love and compassion to others where I live, work, and play.

Intentional friend: I am purposefully cultivating relationships within my church family.

Faithful follower: I am sensitive to the moving of the Holy Spirit in regular times of prayer, worship, and Bible study.

Engaged disciple-maker: I am regularly looking to invest in others to help them take their next step in following Jesus.

1 Kings 12:1-24

12:1-3 After Solomon died, his son and successor Rehoboam traveled to Shechem for a coronation (see 12:2). Located in the heart of territory given to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, Shechem was an important religious and political site. More significantly, Jeroboam was on friendly ground there. He returned from Egypt and joined with the whole assembly of Israel to request an interview with the new king. Jeroboam probably was the spokesman for the group.

12:4. “Your father made our yoke harsh.” This is where we learn the verdict on Solomon’s reign from the perspective of the population of Israel. Solomon had led the nation into economic prosperity and international prestige; but he had done so at the expense of the people. For all his successes, Solomon was not loved by the people as a whole. They bore the heavy burden of the king’s materialistic excess and spiritual compromises.

“Lighten your father’s harsh service and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.” The people had suffered for years under Solomon’s forced labor policies and high taxation. Perhaps implied in their request was a subtle warning that if Rehoboam decided to refuse the request, he would have a disgruntled citizenry on his hands.

12:5. Rehoboam’s first response was to delay his answer. He told the people to go home for three days and then return. Although Rehoboam had no doubt been trained in the ways of kingdom administration, he was faced with a question that he probably had not anticipated. Were the people sincere in their promise to serve him? Was their request a veiled demand designed to provoke a rash response? Whatever lay behind Rehoboam’s suggested “cooling off” period, doing so gave the king additional time to consider his decision. He would have been wise to use the time to seek the Lord’s will through prayer and prophetic counsel.

12:6. The term “elders” literally means “old men.” However, it had come to refer also to an official group of lay leaders anointed with the Holy Spirit to help guide God’s people and to share the burden of decision-making (see Num. 11:16-17). King Rehoboam consulted with the elders. These men had observed both the good and the bad of Solomon’s policies. They knew the inner workings of royal government, but they also were “of the people.”

12:7. The elders framed their counsel into an “if-then” scenario with two “ifs.” The first “if” advised Rehoboam to think about the God-given role of Israelite kings: “if you will be a servant to these people and serve them. Notice the language of servant leadership. They knew that Solomon had begun his reign by praying to God for wisdom to judge the people rightly. In later years, however, Solomon had oppressed the people in order to provide for his lavish lifestyle. The elders advised Rehoboam to take a lesson from his father’s initial leadership style.

In the second “if,” the elders recommended kindness over harshness: “if you respond to them by speaking kind words.” The people had suffered enough of harsh treatment from their king. Kind words would bring freedom, rejoicing, and loyalty. Rehoboam needed only to review his grandfather’s annals to see how David had used kind actions to cement his rule over the northern tribes (see 2 Sam. 2:5-7; 5:1-3). The elders counseled that fulfilling these two “ifs” would net a good result: “they [the people] will be your servants forever.” In effect, the elders guaranteed that the people would keep their promise. Servant leadership would be met with devoted followship.

12:8. Even before hearing from a second group of advisers, Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders. This action suggests that the king was just looking for people who would tell him what he wanted to hear rather than what he needed to hear. Rehoboam then called together a group of young men who had grown up with him and served him. How young were these men? We’re told in 14:21 that Rehoboam was 41 years old when he became king. So these advisers weren’t teenagers. Nevertheless, they were younger than the elders and, more importantly, less experienced in leadership. They were members of Rehoboam’s royal entourage, used to being served by others even as they carried out the king’s wishes.

12:16. When Rehoboam announced his decision on the third day, the people reacted decisively. “What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. Israel, return to your tents; David, now look after your own house! These expressions communicate a rejection of Rehoboam’s kingship and a political separation between the northern tribes (Israel) and the dominant southern tribe of Judah, referred to here by its namesake (David). The phrase to your tents was a form of dismissal. It meant the die was cast. The nation was divided into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.”

12:17. Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites living in the cities of Judah. He had rejected the elders’ sage advice. He refused to consider the likelihood that the young men’s counsel would ignite a revolt by the people. With one extremely poor decision Rehoboam tore apart in a matter of days what David and Solomon had worked 80 years to build.

12:18. Rehoboam made a futile, ill-conceived attempt to contain the damage by dispatching Adoram, the head of forced labor. Whatever the king’s plan was in this action, his agent was perceived by the people as a threat. The angry northern tribesmen sent a message of their own, a violent one. They stoned Adoram. So much for diplomacy!

King Rehoboam managed to get into the chariot and flee to Jerusalem. If Rehoboam thought harsher policies would instill greater respect and service from his citizens, he now should have realized his policies had failed. His decision had resulted in a disaster.

12:22. But a revelation from God came to Shemaiah, the man of God. God intervened to give Rehoboam a chance to avoid making a disastrous decision even worse. Little is known about Shemaiah [shih MAY uh]. We learn in 2 Chronicles 12:15 that a scroll known as the “Events of Shemaiah the Prophet” may have been one of the biblical writer’s sources.

12:23-24. Shemaiah was dispatched to instruct the king and his army “not to march up and fight against ... the Israelites.” This wasn’t counsel from an advisory board of elders or from friends the king grew up with. This was what the Lord says. The Lord denied Rehoboam’s military option as a solution to the rebellion and revealed that, in fact, the division of the nation was His will.

They listened to what the Lord said and went back as He had told them. In this instance, Rehoboam demonstrated the wisdom of listening to God’s guidance about a decision. The prophetic message probably wasn’t what the king wanted to hear, but he needed to hear and obey it.