

THE FOUR CHAIRS
Teaching on Godly Leadership
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United Pentecostal Church in Pakistan General Conference
March, 2012

James 1:5 *If any of you lack **wisdom**, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.*

WISDOM: Wisdom as it relates to our leadership in the church

The book of Proverbs is one book in the Bible that is totally devoted to wisdom. King Solomon collected 3000 wise sayings from all the cultures of his day. Out of those 3000 wise sayings, he took 513 of the best ones, the most important ones, the greatest principles and he created the book of Proverbs which teaches us how to be wise.

Proverbs 9:10 *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

One of the things that we see in Proverbs is that wisdom is not a matter of the mind, it is a matter of the heart. It is not how much education you have, it is how much you obey the Lord. I believe that education is very valuable. I am grateful for our Bible School, that is very valuable. But it is possible to have a lot of education, and if you do not obey the Lord, you have missed the point of the entire matter.

Proverbs 1:2-3 *To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding: to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity.*

Solomon tells us at the beginning that we need to perceive the words of understanding. But then we need to receive those words. It is not enough to hear the teaching of the Word of God and say I understand that; rather you have to do something about the teaching. You need to perceive it and you need to receive it. This is what James tells us: don't just be a hearer of the Word, be a doer of the Word. And this is the purpose of Proverbs.

Proverbs introduces us to three kinds of people who desperately need wisdom. These four chairs represent the three kinds of people. They sit in these chairs as they live their lives. Solomon tells us that everybody in your leadership will sit in one of these perspectives. You will sit in one of these positions. But out of all of these positions, none will please God for the length of your leadership. There is a fourth chair which we must move into in order to please God. Proverbs teaches us about these kinds of people.

Proverbs 1:22 *How long, you **simple** ones, will you love simplicity? And the **scorners** delight in their scorning, and **fools** hate knowledge?*

So leadership looks like these four chairs:

1. Chair of the simple - this is the chair where **everyone** starts in their leadership
2. Chair of the fool
3. Chair of the scorner
4. Chair of the wise

In your leadership, you need to avoid numbers 2 and 3. It is God's will for you to sit in the chair of the wise. If your leadership comes from the wise chair, you will avoid many problems. You will avoid the tricks of the enemy, and most important, you will please the Lord. This is a very important subject which we will unfold and study. If you will heed the word of God, especially if you are a young leader, this will bless your leadership for the rest of your life.

1. Simple Chair

If you are sitting in the simple chair, it means you are either a young leader, or a leader who is older but you have not developed your leadership. Everyone starts in this chair, no matter how intelligent or anointed you are, or what position you have been given. But you need to get out of this chair as soon as possible. Simple in the scripture means inexperienced. If you are a simple leader, (lacking experience) if God moves you to a new place or a new leadership role in an area, you start again. If you have no experience in pastoring and you become a pastor, then in that area of your life you start in the chair of inexperience. So we will all visit this chair. What is the goal of the simple chair? The goal is to get out of the simple chair as soon as possible.

There is a problem with this chair: it is very comfortable, and if you are a simple leader, you lack experience, and your problem is that you don't know that you lack experience. You think you are the best leader in this room, but actually, you are a simple leader. This is not bad and it is not wrong; it is reality, and the sooner you realize that you are simple, that you are inexperienced, and you submit yourself to those who have experience, the sooner you can get out of the simple chair.

We have some wonderful Bible school students in this meeting and they are an inspiration to me. I can see they love God and are anointed, and that God is going to use every one of them greatly. Because they lack experience in life, they are automatically in the simple chair. So as a young person, their greatest goal is to find a leader who is submitted to God, a leader who is submitted to their leader, a leader who has experience, and submit their life to that leader. For most of you, that would be your pastor. God will always bless you for submitting to your leader. Never forget that!! Young men and women in many countries ask me, what is the most important thing I need to learn in ministry? I always say the same thing: the most important thing you can learn as a young leader is submission - submit yourself to an experienced leader. Do not submit yourself to a leader who will not submit to his leader; they are teaching you the wrong experience.

The goal for every young person and the goal for every leader is to get out of the simple chair as quickly as possible.

No one is willing to admit is that they are inexperienced. By the time you learn you are simple, you won't be as simple anymore, because you will have made lots of mistakes. How much better it is to submit to your leaders and learn from them, the men of God He has put among us, and God will help you get out of the simple chair as quickly as possible.

i) Proverbs 22:3 *A prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.* This tells us how a simple person thinks.

A prudent (wise) man says, danger is coming down the road, I better be careful. But because a simple person has never seen that destruction before, they have never seen the consequences of rebellion, or sin, or not being submitted, the Bible said they pass on, they walk right into the trouble. This is the first thing we learn about the simple chair: an inexperienced person keeps walking into trouble because they don't understand what they are doing.

ii) Proverbs 21:11 - *When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise; and when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.*

You can teach a wise person and they will receive instruction from your teaching. When a wise person hears teaching, they will learn from it. But a simple person actually needs to see someone else being punished or destroyed before they receive wisdom.

iii) Proverbs 7 tells a long story about a young man who is tempted by an immoral woman.

Proverbs 7:6 - 8 *For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and behold among the **simple** ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding . Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house.*

Proverbs 7:21 *With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.*

We can apply this example to many situations: when a wise person speaks to a simple person, often the simple person will not listen, they think they know what is best, and they think the wise person is over-reacting. Please notice what happened to this young man: he was enticed by her fair speech. The problem with simple leaders is that they can be enticed by fair speech. Someone can influence them by the way they talk to them. They can promise them a little reward, some influence or position, speak negatively about another leader, and a simple person is very easily influenced because they sit in the simple chair and it affects everything they think and do. Remember, it's a very dangerous chair to sit in, but everyone sits in this chair at the beginning. Get out of the simple chair as quickly as possible - don't be influenced by the speech of others. If someone is speaking negatively about your leaders or the church, then don't be influenced by that. That's what happens to a simple person. A wise person stands like a rock when criticism is all around them and they say, this is not going to affect me, but a simple person is easily influenced by the speech of others. God is putting a big warning sign here. In the example, the young man thinks it is not going to be dangerous, he thinks he is going to her home for pleasure. But the Bible says he didn't know it would affect the rest of his life. It is so important that you realize that you are affected by what you allow to come into your ears. We need to get out of the simple chair and become a mature leader. A mature leader does not have his opinion changed by a critical person. A mature leader has "radar", a detector, a warning bell in his head. When I see someone who is criticizing leaders, I realize as soon as I get out of their presence, they will criticize me. So what they say is "blah blah blah". I don't listen to them because I don't want that to pollute my thinking. A simple person is influenced by the words they hear and they don't realize those words will affect their leadership for life.

I have come to this country for only a few days but I have been here several times before. I have watched the progress of this work, I have watched the leaders. I have watched you grow. I have seen a new depth in your prayer and your worship. I sense that as a man of God. So I want to help you. The church is always under attack from people who want to criticize it. This

happens everywhere. Those people are too smart to criticize our doctrine and the moving of the spirit. They are too intelligent to criticize God so they sneak up to you and they criticize the only thing that is left: they criticize the leaders. Beware of that spirit. When you criticize the man of God, you are criticizing God who called him. A simple person does not understand that. So get out of the simple chair. I know how churches work. I am sure there are many stressful situations and many problems in the work in Pakistan, and I'm sure mistakes will be made and have been made. I know we are not perfect and I know the devil is constantly attacking us. But there is nothing here that should be criticized. There are hundreds of things that are right. Maybe there are a few problems but many things are right. Don't sit in the simple chair!! Don't listen to that kind of criticism. WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE TO CRITICIZE THE CHURCH OF GOD??? We are in God's church; there is NOTHING to criticize. If you are wise, you will receive this, because a wise person can be instructed from the Word of God. A simple person has to see it all unfold over many years. A simple person will follow somebody who is critical, who has a bad spirit, who has a secret agenda to change things. Only many years later will the simple person look back and say I made a mistake. Now I am not simple but it is too late. A wise person, when they hear the Word of God, they refuse to let other people's words affect them.

If you are a young leader, remember you automatically sit in the simple chair at the beginning. A submitted heart will preserve your ministry, but a disobedient heart will kill you and you will never be what God wanted you to be.

2. The Chair of the Fool

There is another chair that we have to pass. It is the chair of the fool. A person sitting in the simple chair does not know the difference between right and wrong. They don't have enough experience to understand the consequences so they make mistakes over and over again. But now we come to the second chair, the chair of the fool. **Do not ever sit in this chair.** I hope in Pakistan no one would ever sit in this chair. But the sad truth is, good people often end up sitting in the fool's chair. The fool is not like the simple person. A fool knows the difference between right and wrong and they have enough experience, but they don't care. They know it is wrong to be bitter or to be critical, not to submit to leaders, to undermine the leadership in the church. They know it is wrong but they don't care. They are building a kingdom. Not God's kingdom; their kingdom. You are always building a kingdom. Many people say they are building the kingdom of God but if you look closely, you will see they are building their own kingdom. This is a fool. You can say, don't you understand the consequences? Yes, I do. Are you concerned? Yes. But I don't care. If something bad happens, I'll deal with it then. I don't care. The Bible says that person is a fool.

i) Proverbs 10:23 *It is as sport to a fool to do mischief, but a man of understanding has wisdom.*

It's just a game to a fool. They like to cause trouble. They like to create division. They enjoy gossiping and criticizing and they don't realize that God is against them when they do that. Leaders: you can preach this to anyone but it is especially important for us as we lead.

ii) Proverbs 15:2 *The tongue of the wise uses knowledge aright: but the mouth of the fools pours out foolishness.*

You can know a foolish person because their mouth never stops. They always have an opinion, they always think they are right, their way is better. They talk to anyone who will listen. I have a guard in my spirit against that kind of behavior. I don't listen to that. My life is too short: I want to

accomplish something for God. I don't have time to listen to that, it is like garbage to me. God turns His face against the fool. They know what is right and wrong but they don't care. They know what they are doing is damaging the church but they don't care. That is the mark of a fool.

iii) Proverbs 26:11 *As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool returns to his folly.*

A fool makes the same mistake over and over again.

I believe you are mature leaders, so I am going to say something very important. In Canada we have a saying, "he would rather be a big toad in a little puddle than be a little toad in a big puddle". We say that about people who are not content to be part of the body. They are not content to get behind their leader and help push the work of God forward because their ego is too big. They think they are too important. You will see this in immature leaders: rather than be part of a wonderful fellowship that is accomplishing so much, they will leave and set up their own "puddle". They would rather be a big frog in a little puddle, all by themselves, than be a little frog in a big puddle. It happens in every nation and every church. It is always foolish activity. I would rather be in unity with the body and have less position than to have a great position and be apart from the body. A wise person listens to that parable and learns, but a fool says, I don't care, I want to do my own thing. God judges those kind of people.

iv) Proverbs 13:20 *He that walks with wise men shall be wise but the companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

(At this point Brother Woodward asked Brother Danish to sit in the second chair). Here is the problem with fools: I am not sitting in the fool's chair but at this moment, Danish is. If he lets a critical spirit get in his mind, or rebellion in his spirit, if he knows what is right and wrong but he doesn't care, if he knows it is right to forgive but he doesn't care, then he is sitting in the fool's chair, and I have a problem. I don't have to sit in that chair to be hurt by it; I don't have to be a fool to be hurt by a fool. If I am a companion of a fool, I will be destroyed. Be very careful who is your companion. If somebody is criticizing and attacking our leaders, they are sitting in the fool's chair. I will be sitting far away from them; I will not listen to them. I will not listen on my cell phone. I am better than that: I am a child of God! I will not pollute my mind with someone else's foolishness. Many people do not understand that. They do not understand that you do not have to sit in the fools chair to be hurt by it - just say close to the chair and it will affect you. It will attach itself to you. The word of God says that the companion of a fool will be destroyed. A wise man always keeps a guard. *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord"*. Ministry grows out of a pure heart. If you want to be used of God, if you want spiritual gifts in your ministry, if you want to raise up a great work for God's glory, then do the wise thing - put a guard around your heart and around your ears. Do not let people influence you by their critical words.

You may be thinking right now, Pastor Woodward, yesterday you were preaching and it was exciting. But today the plow has dug deep into the soil and the Word of God is plowing deep into our leadership.

You are a servant of God; you are called to be a leader, you are called to be a pastor. We have failed in our ministry if we do not protect the church - God called you to protect the church. How can someone who is called to protect the church could attack the church? That is un-Biblical.

If you are in the simple chair, find an anointed leader who is submitted to a leader. He cannot teach you to be an apostolic leader if he is not an apostolic leader.

If you are in the fool's chair (very dangerous) - you know that what you are doing is wrong, you know that your heart is not right towards the leader and you don't care...that is a very dangerous place to be in. There is only one thing that will get you out of the fool's chair - you have to repent.

If you agree with someone, that is not submission. Submission happens when you disagree with your leader, but you understand that he is over you. If you agree with your leader, that is good. Agreement is powerful. Scripture says, if two or three agree...it is powerful. You do not prove your submission when you agree. God will send you a situation where you disagree with your leaders. That will happen to everyone of us. Here is where you prove your submission - when I disagree but I submit, then I have proven that I am submitted. I have not proven that I am submitted if I agree with them and I submit, I only prove my submission when I disagree and I submit.

3. The Chair of the Scornor

The scornor is similar to the fool, but there is one important difference between them. The fool knows the difference between right and wrong but he does not care. The scornful leader knows the difference between right and wrong, he does not care *and* he criticizes those who are doing right. Critical! He is the voice who is always trying to bring division; he easily influences the fool; he easily influences the simple. The thing that identifies the scornor is that he always has a critical spirit. He criticizes those who are doing right. Always be careful of critical people, especially if they are criticizing someone whom God has put over them. That is the spirit of Absalom. He goes around the gates of the city, meets the people as they are coming in. The scornor's message is this: "If I was running the kingdom, it would be so much better. If they would listen to me, it would be so much better. David doesn't know how to run the kingdom, but I know". This is the spirit of the scornor; the same as the spirit of Absalom. If you try to discipline a fool, they will not listen to you. If you try to correct a scornor, they will hate you because they are trying to build their own kingdom.

i) Proverbs 9:8 *Reprove not a scornor lest he hate thee; reprove a wise man and he will love you.*

If you say to a wise person, I need to correct you, they will listen to you. If you say the same words to a scornor, with the same spirit with a good motive, they will hate you for it.

ii) Proverbs 24:9 *The thought of foolishness is sin, and the scornor is an abomination to men.*

An abomination is something that God hates. God hates a critical spirit. A critical spirit never does the work of God. The Bible says in James, "the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God". Scornors drag everyone down with them. They control people with their criticism. This is the way that a scornor works: they talk to you and they are critical of someone else. In your mind, the devil whispers, "you better agree with them or they will be critical of you". They try to control you with their criticism. They control decisions with their criticism. They try to control our future with their criticism.

I will tell you something about me. I'm not very strong or smart, but I am this strong and I am this smart, that I don't care if you criticize me. I am a servant of God. God gave me my ministry so I am not afraid of criticism. And I am certainly not going to agree with someone who is criticizing my leaders. Remember, God's anointing flows down. So I willingly submit to my leaders. A scorner does not understand that.

iii) Proverbs 22:10 *Cast out the scorner and contention shall go out.*

This is a word for you today from the scripture. The Bible does not tell us to cast out the simple or the fool. But because the scorner has influence over them, the Bible says we need to cast out the scorner. Cast out their influence, cast out their spirit, cast out their words and their mocking, cast out their criticism. So when a scorner talks to me, my mind does not listen to them. I cast them out of my mind and my ministry. A scorner may be talking to me and in my mind I am thinking, "you are crazy!". Then my second thought is, "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth; whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are true...think on these things. So I am going to think about good things.

We all know people that sit in these three chairs, (simple, fool and scorner) but this message is not for them. The message is for me and you. I don't want to sit in these chairs. I don't want the devil to use me in a negative way. As Paul said, I am so thankful that God counted me faithful and He put me into the ministry. That is a great responsibility. Therefore I will not sit in the chair of the scornful. I refuse to sit in the seat of the scornful.

4. The Chair of the Wise

God thinks this chair is so important, He gives us a full book of the Bible to teach us about it. He wants you to ask one question. It is the most important question you could ever ask. This question will keep you from sitting in the other three chairs. It is the most powerful question you could ever ask yourself. This is a question that will apply to every decision you will ever make in your ministry. If you ask this question, God will bless you. If you forget to ask it, the devil will get an advantage over you. This question cuts through all our excuses and the devil's deception. It will guide you through areas that the Bible has no commandment about. It sheds light on places where the Bible does not say, "Thou shalt not". If you had asked this question a few years ago, some of you could have avoided serious mistakes in your leadership. Such a powerful question. If you really want to do what is right in your ministry, you will love this question and you will ask it all your life but if there is a secret motive in your heart, you will not like this question at all. This question will expose the true motive of your heart.

Wrong question: many of you have asked the wrong question.

Is it right or is it wrong? That is the wrong question. The problem with that question is, we can always make excuses.

Right question: **IS IT WISE?**

If it say, is it right or wrong, I can make excuses. I can make my wrong decision sound like a good decision. We must honestly ask, is what I am doing wise? Is my attitude wise? Is the direction I am going wise?

We have all seen people who have made a decision who have said, my leaders are wrong, I am right. My parents are wrong, I am right. They had convinced themselves they were right.

If we ask the right question, we would be better leaders.

The human mind is very deceitful and it can convince us that we are right because we have some excuses for our attitude. But if we would ask, is it wise? then we would make good decisions. Is it wise to speak against my leader, even though I may be right and I think they are wrong?

If you are sitting in the wise chair, you will ask before every decision, every feeling, every attitude, every conversation, every direction: *is it wise?? is it wise?* is it wise to talk to the scorner? is it wise to be the companion of the fool.

You can be right in your facts but wrong in your spirit. You can have right facts but if your spirit is wrong, you are wrong. You can have the right plan but if you are not submitted, you are wrong. If you are not submitted, it is a sin in the spirit.

If you are a leader, God has put great dreams in your spirit, great plans in your heart, great hope for the future, great vision for the church. You want those things to happen. If we are not careful, we will listen to advisors who will tell us, "go ahead and carry out our plans, don't check with anybody else. God has given you that plan". And that is a trap. In the Old Testament, Joseph had the greatest dreams of anyone. Joseph dreamed that his brothers' sheaves of wheat would bow at his feet. Joseph dreamed that the sun, moon and stars would bow before him. He had the greatest dreams of anyone in the Old Testament up to that point. So what happens to Joseph? His brothers sell him into slavery. He goes to Egypt and gets sold to Potiphar. He could've been bitter and asked God, why did you allow this to happen? He was far from home. But Joseph got under the leadership of Potiphar and the Bible said that while Joseph was in his house, Potiphar did not worry about anything. *Joseph submitted himself to Potiphar*. Then Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph and he was cast into prison. He had great dreams and while he was in prison, the jailer put everything in his hands. The prison was running perfectly. *Joseph submitted himself to the jailer*. While he was in the jail, he interpreted two dreams of Pharaoh's servants. He helped their dreams come true while his dream was still locked up in prison. Finally he is brought before Pharaoh. He tells him the answer to his dream and Pharaoh says, who else could better administrate the kingdom of Egypt? So Joseph collects food during the seven years of plenty and then in the seven years of famine all the world comes to Egypt because *Joseph has administrated the dream of Pharaoh*. Then comes a certain day when Joseph's brothers journey to Egypt and they come to Pharaoh's palace and face to face with Joseph whom they don't recognize. They are hungry and starving. They bow before Joseph. At that moment Joseph's great dreams come true. Do you know how Joseph's dream came true? He put himself under other leaders, even though his dream was greater than their dream. He understood the principle of submission so he put his dream under their dream. He worked willingly for them: for Potiphar, for the jailer, for the servants, for the Pharaoh. It looked like he was going backwards. Everything went wrong. But because Joseph refused to get a wrong spirit and kept submitting himself, God used his submission to make his great dream come true.

If you will submit to your leader, God will make your dreams come true. If you put all your energy into making your leaders' dreams come true, God will make your dreams come true. Here is God's word: Go home and submit yourself. Go home and serve your leader. Serve your pastor. Serve those who have the rule over you. The blessing of God rests on those people who have a servant's heart. We spend so much time building our own kingdoms. We put spiritual

words on it so it looks like the kingdom of God but really it is our own kingdom. We don't have a servant's heart. Here is a test so you will know if you are really a servant: if someone treats you like you are a servant, and talks to you like you are a servant and there is a reaction in your heart, and you say, they shouldn't talk to me like that, then you are not a servant. You were treated like a servant and you reacted against it. When you get treated like a servant and your attitude is, I am not serving them I am serving God who has placed them over me then God will reward me because I serve them. The Bible says if I give a cup of water in the Name of the Lord, I will get a reward. There is a blessing that only comes to servants. You can say, they spoke to me wrong, they acted like I was their servant. **YOU ARE A SERVANT!!** The Bible says, in love, serve one another. The best leaders are the best followers. The highest leaders are the lowest servants.

Question: What do you do when you are the most powerful person in the room?

Many of you are pastors. When you walk into your church, you are the most powerful person in the room. What did Jesus do? The most powerful person took a towel, knelt down and washed his disciples' feet. That is what great leaders do. They don't build their own kingdom; they serve the kingdom of God. You look at them and say, they are powerful, but they know they are not powerful at all. Jesus is the one with all power and authority. It is not my kingdom! Jesus said to pray, THY kingdom come.

Many leaders do not have the courage to ask the question, is it wise? They hide behind their excuses and their own agenda. True, great leaders spend their entire lives asking one question, is it wise for me to do this?

i) Proverbs 8:11 *Wisdom is better than rubies, and all things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.*

Wisdom is precious and it will bless your ministry. Solomon said, with all your getting get understanding. Not just a position, not just a church to pastor, don't get someone who thinks you are great. Get wisdom, get understanding.

ii) Proverbs 10:8 ***The wise in heart will receive commandments but a prating fool shall fall.*** Simple people, fools and scorners do not receive commandments well but a wise person loves God's commandments. Sometimes those commandments come through the mouth of our leadership.

iii) Proverbs 11:30 *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he that winneth souls is wise.*

It disturbs me when I see leaders who are building their own kingdom, and are more concerned about power than they are about souls, who would destroy the church so they would have their own little throne to sit on. It does not matter if you have a position or not - we are all ambassadors for Jesus. He who gets involved in the harvest is wise. If you get involved in winning souls, you won't have to worry about a position. You won't worry about if they are the leader or you are the leader. God always makes room in His kingdom for a soul winner.

The wise seat is the greatest seat.