

**Misfortune Cookies #3**  
**Bad Advice Found in Church**  
**Numbers 11:11-17; 1 Corinthians 10:13**  
**11/20/16**

- This morning, we're going to talk about advice and what kind of advice we should follow. There are all kinds of sources of advice. There are very few people who don't have some advice to give. Everyone has an opinion and they are quick to share it in the form of advice.
  - There are even people to give advice for a living. Erma Bombeck was one of those. She had a humorous advice column for years. Here is some advice from one of her columns:
    - Never have more children than you have car windows.
    - Never loan your car to someone to whom you have given birth.
    - Seize the moment. Remember all those women on the Titanic who waved off the dessert cart.
    - Know the difference between success and fame. Success is Mother Teresa. Fame is Madonna.
    - Never be in a hurry to terminate a marriage. Remember, you may need this man or woman someday to finish a sentence.
    - There are no guarantees in marriage. If that's what you're looking for, go live with a Sears battery.
    - Never go to a class reunion pregnant. They will think that's all you have been doing since you graduated.
  - Even in their humor, some of those things are good advice.
  
- Advice is necessary in life. Even the Bible tells us this.
  - Proverbs 13:10 says *Pride leads to conflict; those who take advice are wise.*
  - Proverbs 13:13 says *People who despise advice are asking for trouble; those who respect a command will succeed.*
  - Proverbs 15:22 says *Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success.*
  
- The big thing with advice is we have to determine what is good advice and what is bad advice because bad advice is destructive. There's nothing worse than listening to bad advice, following through on that bad advice only to find out that it puts you in a worse position or situation than you had before. Can anyone relate?
  - The Bible even tells us this, too. Proverbs 12:5 says, *The plans of the godly are just; the advice of the wicked is treacherous.*
  - And, Proverbs 12:26 says *The godly give good advice to their friends; the wicked lead them astray.*

- Did you note who is wise enough to give advice? The godly. The godly – those who seek what God’s says and wisdom that is found in God and in His Word – those are ones who give good advice. Any other advice will lead you astray and could even be treacherous.
- So, over the last couple of weeks, we’ve been in a sermon series called “Misfortune Cookies” and it’s been all about how the wisdom of the world isn’t all that wise. It’s bad advice. It’s wisdom that seems easy and right and it probably sounds like what you want, but it can lead you to destructive decisions.
  - First, we talked about the bad advice and the common wisdom of our world today that “it’s only wrong if you get caught.” We talked about how that is such a lie. Wrong is wrong and right is right not because of what we think or how we feel, but because God determines right and wrong. His Word is the absolute truth, the best advice. It has lasted from the beginning of time and will last forever!
  - Last week, we talked about sex and how the world has all kind of bad advice about sex. We talked about six of those lies last week. Lies like “it will never happen to me” or “we’re just friends” or “sex is everything, but yet just a physical act so it shouldn’t be a big deal.”
- Today, I’m going to show you a bad piece of advice that you can actually find most often in the church. It’s common among church people.
  - You see, the church has its own sub-culture. The church even has its own language. When you’ve been in the church long enough, you begin to speak it. Those of us who have been in the church our whole life are as fluent in it as you are your native tongue. I call it Christianese.
  - And we have all of these little phrases that much of the rest of the world doesn’t even understand. In the church, we have a million of these. I call it Christianese.
  - So, we say big words like sanctification and justification. We pray phrases like “place a hedge of protection around them, Lord” or “give us traveling mercies” and those who don’t speak Christianese are like “What are you talking about??”
- Let me give you another example. In my observation, this phrase isn’t used as much here in New England. But, where I’ve from in the Midwest it is and it’s really used a lot in the southern part of the country. It’s the phrase, “bless your heart.”
  - You see, in the church you’re allowed to say anything about anyone else and it’s not considered mean or gossip as long as you say, “Bless their heart”.
  - “She can’t sing a lick, but she sure tries, bless her heart.” “He’s a little on the slow side, if you know what I mean, bless his heart.” “Look at her outfit. What was she thinking? Bless her heart.”

- Now, that use is for when you are talking behind someone's back. But, you can use it to someone's face when you'd like to say "you're an idiot" but don't want to sound mean. So, you just say bless your heart.
  - Someone exclaims to us, "Oh, I just locked my keys in my car!" We can respond, "Oh, bless your heart." Or, "I completely forgot to set the timer and I burned the whole Thanksgiving dinner!" We can respond "Oh, bless your heart!"
  - Jerry Lawson, who is a preacher in the south, in Alabama shared an experience where he preached an entire service with his pants zipper down. He never even knew it until he was sitting in the office later with Jimmy, the sound man. He noticed that his pants zipper was wide open. Pastor Lawson said, "Jimmy, I just preached that whole service with my fly down." Guess what Jimmy said. "Bless your heart." See it's just church code for "you're an idiot."
- Today we're going to look at one of those church phrases that is misused and misguided. But before we do let me ask you this.
- How many of you are stressed? Overworked? Busy?
  - We can all relate to those feelings at some point or another. Now, some think that being stressed, overworked and busy are like badges of honor. If you are those things, you are important.
  - Or, maybe we could be following some bad, crazy advice. Let's see what God says in His Word.
- We begin today with a story of Moses when he was just overwhelmed. You might remember who Moses is. Moses was the leader of the Israelite people. He led them out of slavery in Egypt and they were en route to the Promised Land that God was going to give them which was up in Israel.
- Now, this journey was taking a long time because the people were pig headed and kept disobeying God. And, there weren't just a few people, there were hundreds of thousands of people, who were going through the desert wilderness from Egypt to Israel.
  - Now, if these people are going to be pig headed, stubborn and disobedient with God, how do you think they were going to act toward their God-appointed leader, Moses? Yep, the same way.
  - They were always whining about something. They were always complaining about something. They were always on the verge of a revolt. They were ridiculous.
  - Let's read of one of these times in **Numbers 11:13-14**. We're going to read more in Numbers 11 later, so you might want to keep your Bibles open. Here, the people are tired of having to eat the same old food. They want some meat and so they had been complaining to Moses about how they want meat. (Read passage)

- So, here is Moses crying out and overwhelmed with what to do. Now what we do not have recorded is what some good Christian must have said to him.
  - “Oh, don’t worry. It’ll be okay. God will never give you more than you can handle. It’s going to be all right. Everything happens for a reason. Don’t give up. You can do it. Remember, God will never, ever give you more than you can handle.”
  - Have you ever heard any of that? Of course we have. Now, these are great on bumper stickers, refrigerator magnets, t-shirts and greeting cards. But, they’re NOT IN THE BIBLE.
  - Even though you get it from church, it’s not the wisdom of God; it’s the wisdom of the world! Somehow, maybe because it sounds spiritual and stuff and probably because even those in the church don’t know their Bible, it has been taken up by many in the church as biblical when it’s not!
  
- Where did that come from? It most likely came from a mixed up understanding of what the Bible really does say in **1 Corinthians 10:13**. I would encourage you to turn to this in your Bible and you might even want to highlight it or underline it or something.
  - That’s an AWESOME scripture with an awesome truth and promise. The truth is that whatever tempts you is nothing new in the scope of humanity. Others have been tempted with the same thing and some of them have conquered those temptations because of the promise from God.
  - That promise is that with EVERY temptation, God will show you a way out if you look for it and take it. The promise is that you will NEVER face a temptation to sin that you can’t overcome.
  - But it just doesn’t say, *“God won’t put more on you than you can bear.”*
  
- The truth is, the hard truth is that God will often allow you to have more than you can handle! Maybe you just gasped inside. Maybe that makes you frustrated, even angry. Why would God do that to us?
  - Because He wants to teach you to depend on Him. More than just about anything, he wants us to see that we cannot do life without him. We need him for salvation. We need him for forgiveness. We definitely hear that in the church.
  - But, beyond that, we need him every single day. We need to depend so completely on him to show us how to live life because on our own and in our own strength, we mess it all up!
  
- Yet, we fall into the lie that we actually can do much of life, most of life, on our own without depending on anyone. We have been taught since we were little not to depend on anyone, including God.
  - So then, we are confronted with a giant of a problem and instead hearing the wisdom to depend on God, to call upon God, to rely on God’s strength, we get false wisdom that says, “just strap up your boots and push on

through. Pull yourself up. You can do it. Try harder and harder until you make it.”

- But the fact is, many times it's not about you TRYING; it's about you TRUSTING. It's about you trusting in the One who is bigger than you and who can do more through you if you depend on him.
  - o We think it's some great accomplishment that we can go through the storm and never break. We even talk highly about people who are so strong. “Look how strong they are in the face of loss or crisis. They are amazing.”
  - o And, I'll admit it. I want to be strong. Who wants to be weak? I want to be the one who can handle things. I don't want to be broken or weak. To be weak is to be less than. Weaknesses are flaws, right?
  
- But the fact is, God wants you and me broken. That's why the storm or the crisis is sometimes there to begin with. That doesn't mean that God is targeting you. Life itself brings unfair stuff and storms just because that's life. But, God will use those storms to bring brokenness, not to destroy you, but to transform you.
  - o See, God wants you broken, pliable, and moldable. He wants us to come to the realization that we can't do life, any of it, on our own. He wants us to see just how weak we really are.
  - o Why? So, we will reach out to him and depend on him to transform us into something beyond ourselves. He wants to change you and me into His image.
  
- I believe that some of you today are right where Moses was. Oh, you're trying to be thankful because it's Thanksgiving time and all. You're trying to be all Joy to the World because Christmas is coming.
  - o But, the reality is that you are desperate and at your wits end. You are trying to juggle everything at once: job, kids, school, bills, family issues, relationships and feelings and you are questioning why everything is so bad and so overwhelming. You can't seem to get a break. You can't bear this alone.
  - o Then, you feel guilty because you have this lie in your head that *“God won't give me more than I can handle. I should be able to handle all this...”*
  
- But, the truth is - NO YOU CAN'T! You can't handle it. This is just where Moses was. Let's continue to read in **Numbers 11:15-17**. As we read how Moses is crying out to God, listen to the panic in his voice.
  - o Here Moses is, thinking that he needed to handle it all on his own. He couldn't even think about any other possible solution. He was completely blind to any other way of dealing with the problem in front of him. But, he did something that was so very wise.
  - o He cried out to God! I want us to note that is when Moses got help. Help wouldn't have come any other way. Moses couldn't think straight. He was

too consumed and overwhelmed. But, he did the best straight thinking possible when he ran to God.

- When Moses ran to God, he learned that he was right, it was too much for him to bear alone. He needed help. God brought Moses to a place where it was too much and the only one who Moses could think to cry out to was God.
  - o Listen, anything God gives you that brings you closer to Him is a gift. In this passage, God gave Moses a gift. It was the “Gift of Too Much.”
  - o Today, God might just want to tell some of us that all that is overwhelming us can also be a gift to us, if it causes us to cry out to God and brings us closer to him. He might want to show us that he is giving us, too, the “Gift of Too Much.”
  
- Let’s take a look at what the “Gift of Too Much” teaches you when God gives it. First, it teaches you than you need to put something down.
  - o You know, I’ve had come to the place in my life where I really have to judge what’s BEST for my time. I certainly haven’t mastered it.
  - o But, here’s the reality for all of us - there are so many good options.
  
- But, God wants you to wake up every day to the “Gift of Too Much” so that it forces you to priorities your time. We prioritize our time by determining what things are better and not just good. Are we going to settle with the good or are we going to strive for the better.
  - o Let me give you an example. Wil and I have had the conversation for our family about what is better. We have determined that our children will not be involved in any activity that is on a Sunday.
  - o So, Josiah has taken an interest in football. A few weeks ago, he asked if there was a football league that he could play in like he did with soccer. I told him that there is, but that he will not be playing in it.
  - o He asked why. I said, “Well, honey, because all of the football games for the younger ages are on Sunday.” I paused because I wanted to see what he response would be.
  - o He said, “Oh...no we can’t do that because we go to church on Sunday.” I replied, “That’s right. Football is fun and if you still like it when you are older and want to play in high school when the games aren’t on Sunday, you can do that. But, church on Sunday is the best thing to do on Sunday.”
  - o Now, I’m not trying to guilt anyone who does sports activities on Sunday. We have made the decision as to what is best. Extra-curricular things and children’s interests are good, but some things are better. Raising our children to make church a priority and understand the importance of meeting together as the church is a non-negotiable and we’re not willing to allow anyone or anything to come before that.

- Have you determined what is better according to what God wants? If you're overworked, stop thinking *"God won't give me more than I can handle..."* Realize that you probably do have more than you can handle and put something down.
  - o Maybe you need to learn the beauty of the word "or". See, when everything is an "and," in your life, we then make everything non-negotiable.
  - o But, the fact is that some things are negotiable. There are some expectations that you don't have to fulfill. There are things that are good, but they don't have eternal value. There are things that are good, but are they the best?
  
- Maybe there are some "ands" that can become "ors". In other words don't pick anything else up until you lay something down. You can do this or you can do that, but you can't do both.
  - o Maybe you need to think about making a rule in your home that we can't add stuff without taking something off. Maybe you need to determine what your purpose is for yourself and your family and not allow anything to deter you from that.
  - A. Here's what I'm sure of: God allows you the gift of too much to force you into His presence to prioritize what is BETTER so that you don't settle just for good. He wants BEST for you!
  
- The second thing the "Gift of Too Much" teaches you is to hand something off. Does anyone here have a problem with handing stuff off to people? Who will be honest with me?
  - o There's another time when we find Moses completely overwhelmed because he was just doing too much. He was acting as the problem-solver extraordinaire to the hundreds of thousands of people he was leading.
  - o In Exodus 18, we read that from dawn to dusk, people were coming to him for advice, for conflict resolution, for everything. Moses was giving advice, mediating disagreements, governing and he was just falling apart because it was just too much for any one person to do.
  - o He fell into the idea that no one else could do it except him or maybe he believed *"God won't give me more than I can handle, so I must be able to handle a million problems a day."*
  
- Then, Moses heard some godly wisdom through his father-in-law, Jethro. After Jethro saw all that Moses was doing, he asked Moses, "what are you really accomplishing here?" Moses told him what he was doing it because he was leader who spoke from God to the people.
  - o Let's check out Jethro's reply in *Exodus 18:17-18* "This is not good!" Moses' father-in-law exclaimed. <sup>18</sup> "You're going to wear yourself out—and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself.
  - o Now, did you notice who all is getting worn out? Moses. Yes. But there

- were others, too. “The people” were also getting worn out. Now, that tells me that maybe Moses wasn’t doing a good job.
- There were other people who were better people for the job.
- This is a lesson that we all have to learn and I am still learning this lesson. I don’t have to be involved in everything. Sometimes, I’m expected to be, but I can’t be dictated by expectations. The reality is there are people who are much better at things than I am and they can do it. I have to know my limits.
    - My job requires me to do a wide variety of things – preach, lead meetings and LIFE groups, do hospital visits, funerals, weddings, prayer time, counseling sessions, implement programs, do administrative tasks. But, here’s the thing – I’m not good at all of those things. I can’t be expected to be good at all of those things. You can’t be good at everything either!
    - So, the things that I’m not good at, I should seek to find someone else who is better at it and allow them to use the gift God has given them.
  - Here’s a good rule: Do what only you can do. If you’re a mom, there are some things that only a mom can do – make sure you do those things.
    - Students, there are some things that no one else can do for you, make that a priority. You are the best ones to reach your friends for Jesus Christ. Do that!
    - Leaders, what daily things could you hand off so you can spend your time on things ONLY you can do?
    - Listen, it’s not a sign of weakness that you can’t do everything. None of us can do everything! Instead it’s a sign of wisdom that you know what you can’t do best and you allow someone else to do that so that you don’t wear yourself out or wear others out as they suffer through you doing something for them that you aren’t good at, like Moses was doing!
  - And maybe what you need to hand off isn’t a physical task at all. Maybe you’re carrying around too much emotional baggage. That baggage is keeping you back, it’s keeping you from God’s truth for your life.
    - You need to hand that off. What godly person in your life can help you carry that burden?
    - Did you know that you cannot as fully experience the presence of God as well alone as you can with someone else? That’s why God created the church!
    - That’s why Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.”
    - We experience God’s presence more fully together because we can help bear each other’s burdens and tasks so we can then focus on God more than on what is overwhelming us.
    - Maybe God has given you to the gift of too much, so that you’ll find a prayer partner and get into the presence of God together or get involved in a LIFE

Group in the church so you can learn about God's wisdom together. I can't imagine life without people who can help bear my burdens and I thank those of you who do just that for me. That, my friends, is the church!

- And, there's someone else who can bear some burdens. This someone is often just waiting for us to realize how worrying, fretting, and being consumed will get us nowhere so that we can finally see the only one who can get us somewhere. That someone is God. He is the One who can get us somewhere. The gift of too much teaches us to give something to God. Actually, we should give everything to God.
  - o There is a beautiful promise in the Psalms for all of us. It's in *Psalm 55:22 (NIV)*. It says, "Cast your cares (burdens) on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken."
  - o Isn't that a beautiful promise? A beautiful thought? That verse just makes me smile and makes me so thankful because like most of us here this morning, I've got some burdens. I've got some things that are too much for me to bear. Decisions that are too much. People who are too much.
  - o But here, God says, "Just lay it out there and be sustained." WOW! And, he promises that the godly will not be what? Shaken. Thank you, God!
  
- But, there's a problem. It's not a problem with God's promise. He is faithful to his promise. It's a problem with us. See. I think we cast our cares or give our burdens to God in a way that isn't how God meant it.
  - o See, the word used in the original language is shalak (shaw-lak). It means to hurl or thrown. When you hurl or throw something it leaves your hand and goes somewhere else.
  - o But, that's not what we do, is it? Instead, we cast our cares and burdens like we cast a fishing line. We like to cast our problems on the Lord, but when we cast there's a string attached.
  
- I have this fishing pole up here. I'm not going to cast it out because I'm not really a fisherwoman and I don't want to accidentally hit someone in the eye or something.
  - o But, we know how these work. You cast out the line and then you bring in back with the hopes of it attracting a fish.
  - o Our problem is we do this with God, too. We like the idea of casting our problems to God. But, we also like to bring them on back in if God isn't doing what we like with our problems.
  - o So, God I'm casting my money problems on you and this is how I want you to take care of my problems. Then, when he doesn't do as we want or he tells us to do something with our money that we don't want to do, we say "Wait a minute, that's not how it's supposed to go," and we reel it back in.
  - o God, here's my family. You know they're crazy. Take them, Lord. Oh, wait...you want me to forgive them? Let me take that problem back because that's not what I was thinking.

- God, here my job. You want me to do what? Nope. I'll take that burden on back.
  - God, here's my relationship with my spouse. Why aren't you taking care of this? Never mind, I'll take that problem back and deal with it myself.
- All the while, God is saying, "If you would just let me deal with your cares and your problems and if you would just follow how I am leading, it would be so much better for you because I know how to live life – real life. I created it, so I know how to live it!"
- And, every time we take those problems back, they tend to get even bigger. That's not because God is getting back at you, but because of the choice you made. Through that choice and the problems getting bigger, God does want you to see that only he can help you. You can't do it on your own.
  - So, Church, stop telling people that God won't give them more than they can handle. Instead, remind them that Christ's grace is sufficient for them and he is their power when they are weak. Come alongside them and give them a hand.
  - And for those who are trying to be strong – stop it! You can't do it. Stop giving your problems to God and taking them back. Allow him to be your strength. Allow him to work. Allow him to guide you even if it isn't what you think should happen, knowing that he is wisdom and you are not.
- God wants us to be weak so that he can be our strength. He wants to show us his strong love for us – a love that sustains us, that empowers us, that will make sure we are not shaken.
- Where do you draw your strength from this morning? Who is handling your problems? If it's you, beloved, you've been doing it long enough. Let go, hurl it, throw it to God, give it completely to him and see what he can do.