

Some Wisdom of Solomon for President Trump

Your presidency to this point has been a chaotic affair, some of which has been your own doing. A little advice from the book of Proverbs, written by a political leader who was the wisest man who ever lived, might help.

First, reflect on the incredible power of the spoken word.

Solomon had much to say about the enormous capacity of the tongue both to harm and to heal. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," he said, "and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Prov. 18:21). Never forget that, as our president, the impact of your speech is far more potent than the speech of anyone else in our land. Make it your aim to use the power of your tongue to impart life.

Second, pick your fights wisely.

When knuckleheads in our culture say and do aggravating things, it's almost impossible not to strike back impulsively, rashly and angrily. But Solomon says, "He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit" (Prov. 17:27).

You are an aggressive, combative guy and that quality has endeared many Americans to you. The American people wanted a fighter and found one in you. But it's important that you pick your spots and only fight the important fights. Solomon says, "He who loves quarrels loves sin, and he who builds a high gate invites destruction" (Prov. 17:19, NIV). Solomon is saying that a man who is always engaged in verbal combat will just wind up provoking even more hostility and increasing the intensity of those who seek to destroy him.

You love to counterattack, which is a refreshing quality in

the eyes of conservatives who have watched spineless Republicans serve themselves up as punching bags for as long as we can remember. But Solomon reminds us that, "Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam" (Prov. 17:14, NIV), which can result in the release of a catastrophic level of dark energy. All of which is to say, be selective about which battles you choose to fight. Not every hill is a hill to die on.

Third, think before you speak and tweet.

Solomon points out that, "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise" (Prov. 10:19). The more words you speak, the more tweets you send out, the more likely it is that you will communicate something you'd like to get back, but it will be too late.

When you are attacked, you fight back, and the American people love you for that. But sometimes it's okay to slip a punch. Not every verbal attack requires a flurry of counterpunches. Solomon says, "It is an honor for a man to cease from strife, but every fool will be meddling" (Prov. 20:3).

"He who guards his mouth preserves his life," writes Solomon, "but he who opens wide his lips will have destruction" (Prov. 13:3). Better to wait before speaking than to speak a word in haste that you cannot reel back. One of the marks of a man of maturity is that he carefully considers his words before launching them. "The heart of the righteous studies to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things" (Prov. 15:28).

Fourth, stop interacting with the media.

The members of the media are virtually without exception men whom Solomon calls "fools" and "mockers." They are utterly out of touch with the people who put you in office. You have no obligation to cater to them at all.

Listen to these words: "Do not speak in the ears of a

fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words" (Prov. 23:9). To use Jesus' expression, speaking truth to the modern press is like "throw[ing] your pearls before swine." Not only will they fail to appreciate your words, they will "trample them under their feet and turn around and attack you" (Matt. 7:6).

I call it the Talking Snake Media, after the slithering serpent who twisted the very words of God and deceived Eve by lying to her. The media does not attend the daily press briefings looking for information. No, they are looking for blood. In fact, Solomon says that very thing: "The words of the wicked are, 'Lie in wait for blood'" (Prov. 12:6).

Jesus encountered the same dynamic in his time. The cultural elites of his day, the scribes and Pharisees, "began to incite Him vehemently and angrily draw Him out concerning many things, lying in wait for Him and seeking to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him" (Luke 11:54). They invented the "gotcha" question, and today's media has simply adopted the same tactic with you. There is simply no reason to let them sink their fangs into you or your spokesmen.

Your instinct to just cancel press briefings altogether is wise. Alternatively, your spokesmen can deliver prepared, written remarks, then leave the podium without taking questions. Regardless, I think it's time, given who you are dealing with day in and day out, to simply refuse to take questions from the press. They don't deserve straight answers and will only distort them anyway. You have no obligation to cater to them.

As you grow in your mastery of the tongue, may it be said of you, "A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth, and the recompense of a man's hands will be rendered to him" (Proverbs 12:14).

May God bless you as you continue to lead this nation. {eoa}

Bryan Fischer *is host of the two-hour weekday "Focal Point" program on American Family Radio.*

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