

We have heard a great deal recently from Dominic Cummings, the former Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister. Stepping aside from the content, it raises the interesting point about who politicians, leaders, and indeed ourselves choose as advisors.

Who do you listen to, who is your go-to person when you need a bit of wisdom?

When we are young, it's normally your parents or family who provide this role. Ideally this guidance from home and perhaps church, builds up your moral values and your own judgement. In the early years of work, many people have benefited from mentors who can help the inexperienced through what can often be a hostile place.

Just pause and think of those who have given you sound advice over the years. What have been the characteristics of such folk? Does this tell you something about yourself? Who do you trust? Who do you believe?

Sadly, some advisors have their own agenda, and will temper what they say for their own purpose. It is easy to misguide someone who is vulnerable. Our news programmes are full of stories such as the "grooming" of innocent children leading them into sexual abuse, or even the indoctrination of children to use them as child soldiers.

This is nothing new. Herodias was once married to Philip, the brother of King Herod Antipas, but she became Herod's wife, despite Philip being alive. She famously gave an evil piece of advice to her daughter Salome. You will find the story in the Gospel of Mark 6:14-29. Herodias' marriage was challenged by the "voice of one crying in the wilderness", John the Baptist. It was something that Herod did not want to hear. He could have had John killed, but he was fearful of John's status as a Holy Man, so he just locked him up. Herodias hated John the Baptist, because of the truth he had imparted to Herod and to all who would listen, and she wanted him dead.

The chance falls into her lap when the teenager Salome entices Herod, her uncle and stepfather, with what is often regarded as an erotic dance at Herod's birthday bash. Herod makes Salome an offer to grant her anything she wishes. She's a child, she doesn't know what to ask. So, she goes to her mother for advice. The result is that John's blooded head is presented to the child on a dish.

John's death is a warning shot for Jesus. This is how authority will deal with truth. It was not long before the Jewish Council of the day is forcefully advising the Roman Commander that Jesus also must die.

Yes, evil still stalks in the advice to rulers, politicians, and military leaders. Our duty as Christians is to call it out. We are to support actions and policies that work against war and bloodshed, that work against the trafficking of youngsters for the sex industry. At a local level, we are to call out bullying, even within marriages, partnerships, and our own social circles.

To do this well we need not only wisdom and discernment we must also base our advice on extensive listening, empathy, prayer, and Christian love. Let's lovingly share our understanding of difficult situations with fellow Christians before we give our advice. It's how a church family should work.

Very few of us will have to face a Parliamentary Select Committee, like Dominic Cumming, to vouch for the advice we have given. Yet we all are accountable to God for the guidance we give. Our prayer is for the Holy Spirit to fill us with Holy wisdom and Christian love so that we can share our guidance wisely and lovingly with others.

You see, your advice counts. So, make sure it's what Jesus wants you to say!

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