

Story: Good Advice

April 26, 2026

Acts 2:42-47

John 10:1-10

What do you need to know if you're an 'elepaio? It helps that most of the 'elepaio are very curious, so they tend to ask themselves the questions and then find out the answers. Is it sunny on that side of the tree? Are there bugs to be had in that stand of koa over there? Can I catch a bug in mid-flight?

One young 'elepaio was having some difficulty answering his questions, though. He was a bit overwhelmed with options. There were so many bugs flying around him, and how was he to know which ones were OK to eat, which ones were OK to eat but tasted bad, and which ones tasted the best? The world swirled with possibilities as the insects danced around him in the air and on the branches and on the leaves.

"What should I eat?" he chirped aloud, and a somewhat devious 'amakihi heard him.

I think I've told you that most birds are basically truthful. Telling lies often means that you deceive yourself as much as anyone else, and a bird can't live on lies in the mountain forests. This 'amakihi, however, thought he might amuse himself (in a cruel way) with this young 'elepaio and keep some of the tastiest insects for himself at the same time.

"Don't you know, young one?" he called in his friendliest voice.

"Not really. There's so many choices," said the 'elepaio.

"Let me sample them for you," said the 'amakihi. "That will help, won't it?"

Honestly, the 'elepaio thought that suggesting which ones to try would be more help, but before he could say so, the 'amakihi had plucked a big spider off a tree branch.

"Oh, this isn't very good," he said, as he polished it off and laughed to himself because it was, in fact, delicious. "Stay away from these."

"Okay," said the 'elepaio as the 'amakihi plucked at another bug.

"Try one of these," said the 'amakihi. "They're very good." Which they weren't, in truth, and small besides.

"Okay," said the 'elepaio, and he didn't really think the bug tasted as good as other bugs, but maybe he hadn't developed an appreciation for fine bug dining yet.

This went on for an afternoon, as the 'amakihi enjoyed tasty bugs and recommended the sour bugs to the 'elepaio. Eventually the 'amakihi flew off with a cheery, "I'll help you some more tomorrow!" and the 'elepaio went to find his family.

"Grandmother, when will I learn to like the tasty bugs?" he asked her when he found her?

"The what?" she asked, and he explained the helpful 'amakihi whose suggestions hadn't tasted all that good to him.

"Oh, grandson," she sighed. "I wish you'd come to me or another of our family with that question. The ones who know and love you are the ones who'll give you the best advice. We care about you. We'll do the best we can. We don't know everything, and sometimes we're wrong about things, but we'll tell you the truth as we know it.

"I'm afraid this 'amakihi told you a lot of things that aren't true. And you've had a sour afternoon because of it. Here. Try this," she said, and she plucked one of those spiders off a branch, and sure enough, it was delicious in his beak.

"Two things, grandson," she told him. "The ones who know and love you will give you the best advice they can. More than that, remember: you're an 'elepaio. When you don't know, try it for yourself. That's what we do. We look at the world, we ask questions about it, and then we try to learn what's true."

by Eric Anderson