

# The Love for Wisdom

It was suggested by my college registrar, that I major in philosophy. Not wanting to upset the academic apple cart I quickly obliged. What earthly good philosophy was escaped my college years. Back then, 1963-65 about the only use I saw for philosophy was earning a doctorate and teaching it in some small college. Having never met a “philosopher” in North central Illinois, I felt like a Carp out of the Illinois River.

My first philosophy teacher, Dr. Bauer defined philosophy as “total man’s response to the total universe.” That definition for philosophy seemed like a gigantic undertaking, impossible to pull off. I continued to learn that philosophy was to “explain the unexplainable” and that “it was a tool for the elaboration and interpretation of observation and comprehension of the relationship between ideas.” WOW!

Well, those definitions did nothing for me. The only future I could vision for myself was growing a long beard and entertaining seekers who were looking for the reasons for life. I am reminded of the television add for Lennox heat. A man climbs a mountain and asks a bearded man living in a cave, “oh wise one...”

After studying the ideas of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Kierkegaard, and countless others I felt that I was surely doomed to some sink hole in the Driftless area spewing forth my wisdom. In my final course in philosophy a different teacher, Dr. Ulrich simply taught that philosophy was “the love of wisdom.” Two words make up the word philosophy, philos, love and Sophia, wisdom, the love for wisdom. Ulrich taught that generals and empires come and go but philosophical ideas live on forever.

Finally, an aha moment, philosophy had a reason to exist for me. Life needs to be examined from many sides, there are no easy answers. Philosophy challenges me to hear out the ideas of others, to not get locked up into one set of beliefs, to be open minded, liberal to the thinking of others. Liberal here has no political persuasions but the ability to have a universal scope of interest, open to discussion and the ability to think. That is the love for wisdom, the ability to be open to new ideas.

Where does one acquire wisdom? Wisdom is based on our attitude of openness. Wisdom can be learned from family, schooling, one's experiences, reading books, talking with others, contemplation, and just being quiet and listening. Nothing guarantees us that education, IQ or experience will grant us wisdom, but openness and inclusiveness can take us a long way.

In order to be a better farmer, a better car mechanic, a better teacher, a better news reporter a better anything, we are invited to possess, to seek after the love for wisdom. It does not make me any better than others just open to all of life and its possibilities.

Listening to others, examining our own lives, the ability to change takes courage and a love for wisdom. Going through the process of seeking wisdom does not make me a smarter person, nor does it give me the answers. But the love for wisdom teaches me to seek the truth, how to live between ignorance and wisdom.

My life as a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, is knowing that my life will always be searching for what is real, true, good and beautiful. I live between being wise and being ignorant and I am comfortable with that. Life is not about having the final answers but being unbiased, the ability to use common sense and using my God given insight.

We in America seem to be stuck in a dumbing down time, anti-science, anti-Asian, anti-Hmong anti-anything, that will never bring the love and the harmony we are all looking for. May we all become wisdom seekers open to new ideas, new ways at looking at one another.

Possessing knowledge is a requirement for all areas of work but unless we add wisdom to our knowledge all knowledge is a waste. Knowledge has to do with facts, data, and information. Wisdom is our ability to discern and to judge. Through our wisdom we have the ability to apply that knowledge to the greater good.

Knowledge is the ability to measure your walk in the desert and wisdom is packing enough water for the hike. Baptist preacher great, Charles Spurgeon, 1834-1892, said, "wisdom is the right use of knowledge."

All major religions and philosophies challenge us to seek wisdom. The wisdom they speak of talks about everyone deserves a healthy community, life is good, respect the poor, possess an international outlook and be neighborly.

We can spend an entire life time acquiring knowledge but until we become wise our knowledge is for nothing.

Life is good.

Dennis Siebert