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The Road to Attainment Series

LESSON TWO

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

Mayan Revelation Number 294

SUBSTITUTES FOR WISDOM

FOUNDATIONS FOR WISDOM

THE NATURE OF WISDOM

CONCLUSION

HANDICAPS ON THE ROAD
TO WISDOM

AFFIRMATION

BELOVED PERFECTOR:

Wisdom is one of the supreme qualities of man at his best. To say that one is wise is to pay tribute to one who understands the meaning of life at its highest level.

Wisdom does not involve being clever. Many persons are clever in the use of their abilities, and in their relationships with people, but they are not wise. Cleverness may result in success but it seldom brings inner peace and tranquility. Furthermore, wisdom involves more than knowledge of science and the arts as such knowledge is gained through textbooks. There are men who are steeped in scientific facts who are not wise. There are people who have knowledge of literature and music, but who are childish in their relationships with people. Nor does success give assurance of wisdom. During this century we have observed the rise and fall of numerous dictators who were eminently successful for a time, but who were stupid in their blindness to the moral and spiritual values that make for stability. Many individuals demonstrate outstanding success in making money, or in achieving social prestige, but appear foolish in the narrowness of their goals.

What, then, is Wisdom?

Wisdom requires a knowledge of life, and of the Art of Living. Knowledge and art assume a certain amount of mental and physical ability, but the greatest knowledge and the broadest art demands that we know how to live. We are tempted to drift along through life, having little or no purpose or direction. When we live joyously, and with purpose, we are wise.

But how do we gain Wisdom? We face this question as we study this Lesson. Be prepared to admit that there are weaknesses as well as evidences of power in your life. Wisdom is the goal we shall endeavor to reach. The quest may give you moments of discomfort - or even guilt for past mistakes - but the achievement of Wisdom will unlock resources by which you can live with new and deeper purpose.

PRAYER

Give us this day, O Lord, a measure of Thy Wisdom. Forgive our foolish striving for that which is transient. May Thy Knowledge and Thy Love shine upon us to illumine the dark places in our thinking and in our actions. Make us willing to learn of Thee that we may in the end be filled with Wisdom from on high. In His name. Amen.

SUBSTITUTES FOR WISDOM

WE sometimes assume that Wisdom develops naturally in the process of growing older. Certainly, the passing years ought to make us more

intelligent concerning the way we should live. Yet advanced years are no guarantee of Wisdom. A prominent psychologist indicates that men and women between the ages of fifty and sixty are subject to greater fears than any other age group. It would appear that such a period ought to mark the beginning of serenity rather than additional stress. It is clear that age is no guarantee that we will be wise.

Closely related to age is the assumption that experience tends to make us wise. Experience often helps, at least in the fact that it enables us to avoid some of the pitfalls which previously had trapped us. Yet, who can look back at the events which have occurred in Europe and the world during this century, and fail to note that experience has not dulled the confident assurance that armies hold the key to national triumph? Two world wars came after nations had built vast military establishments with the expectation that war would be impossible if the military were sufficiently strong. We learn from experience but, unfortunately, experience does not make it certain that we will be wise.

During this generation the study of psychology has progressed faster than that of any other science. Psychology involves an examination of the mind and inner life of Man. Many are convinced that this comparatively new science will lead us to Wisdom. I would never disapprove of the study of human emotions and reactions. I recognize, and gladly accept, the contributions of psychology to human understanding. Yet psychology does not assure us of Wisdom. A leading British clergyman has devoted his life to a study of the relationship between psychology and religion. He is the author of several widely read books on the subject of mental illness. Yet he himself has spent two periods in a mental institution. Furthermore, a recent article reported that the divorce rate among psychiatrists exceeds that of any professional group in our society. We need the contributions of psychology to an understanding of the human mind, but it should be clear that psychology does not necessarily lead to Wisdom.

What, then, is Wisdom? You need to face this question if you are to live each day at your best. Do not be trapped by the false assumption that you are wise because you have gained success, or because you have a formal education. Yet it is possible for you to attain Wisdom in facing life's problems. It will be our purpose first to learn what contributes to making a person wise, then to look closely at those attitudes which contribute to Wisdom.



THE NATURE OF WISDOM

KING Solomon has always been esteemed as a man who reached the heights of Wisdom. We pay the highest tribute we can give to any person when we say that he is "as wise as Solomon." There is a story about this King in the Old Testament which suggests what it means to be wise. It is said that the Lord himself appeared to Solomon as a young man, saying, "Ask what I shall give thee." It sounds like a fairy tale, but the question probed the purposes of the young King. Solomon did not answer "Give me money, honors, victory over my enemies, health and long life." Rather, he replied: "I shall now be king over this great people, although I am but a little child and do not know how to go out or to come in. Give me an understanding heart to guide me! Teach me to discern between good and evil! Give me an insight to grasp what justice is!" These requests so pleased

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the Creator that He is said to have made this promise to Solomon: "Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind." The young King went about his duties with knowledge and understanding of the art of living. The passage of time has increased his image as a man who attained Wisdom.

It will be helpful for us to examine the qualities that are suggested in the experience of this ancient King to discover the elements which contribute to Wisdom.

First, it is basic that one does not presume to be wise. It is characteristic of many of us - young and old - that we think we know all that needs to be known, or that we know enough so we can speak with positive certainty upon any subject or concerning any problem that arises. Solomon was not ashamed to confess that he was a child who did not know which way to turn.

When we fail to acknowledge that we are limited in our knowledge and understanding we may not be a child, but we are childish. Arrogance is the mark of immaturity and insecurity. There is Wisdom in the ancient saying: "Claiming to be wise, they become fools."

We are not born with Wisdom; either in our mind or in our heart. We may only become wise. All of us may, and should, gain Wisdom, yet we achieve it only as we reach for it with mind kindled and hands outstretched.

Too often we assume that the proper decisions will be made if those about us will allow us to make them. We are confident that if we choose the course that should be followed, it will be the right one. It is only as we earnestly look beyond ourselves for discernment and understanding, for Wisdom and for the way to live, that we gain the insights that make us wise.

Begin with the assumption that your understanding is limited, that you must utilize every opportunity to increase your knowledge and insights. As you live day by day with a childlike expectancy that today will bring further truth to help you to live, you may not think of yourself as wise, but others will turn to you as one who possesses Wisdom.

Second, Wisdom demands a concern for the welfare of others. Knowledge may increase our personal insights and power, but Wisdom calls for a broader appreciation of the needs and concerns of those about us. The Wisdom of Solomon was not limited to stored up knowledge but was reflected in a life-long desire to meet the demands of the people he ruled. He accepted his position as an opportunity for service, not for his own advantage, but for the good of his people. His consuming desire was to be a man in the fullest sense of the word, responsible among, and with, his fellowmen. He recognized that an understanding and wise heart was essential to the fulfillment of his duties.

This is a quality of Wisdom in every age. Wisdom does not lead one to ask, "What do I need for myself?" "How can I make a living?" "What will give me pleasure?" These are questions all of us may appropriately ask at certain periods in our lives. They are important to our progress in daily living. But we may be concerned with these matters, and yet not be wise, for Wisdom always involves a consideration of others, a willingness to weigh our rights and interests in relation to the rights and interests of others.

Ask yourself these questions: "Am I content with my lot in life? Am I successful? Do I have security?" If you are able to answer these questions affirmatively you have achieved a certain measure of personal victory. But you may not be wise, for Wisdom demands that we face questions which involve responsibilities to the society in which we live. Wisdom requires that we gain insights as to why we are contented, what success really is, and the source of genuine security. Wisdom involves a broader facing of what life means. Such understanding is never a solitary quest. It hurls us into the struggle that others are facing. It makes us give consideration to the ultimate values that prevail in the Universe, and of the God Who is the Source of all we have!

Third, Wisdom requires the ability to discern between Good and Evil. It calls for us to constantly face the question of what is right and what is wrong, what is of first importance and what is non-essential.

Sometimes we assume that a person who can indulge in evil without suffering penalties from society is wise. A commentator drew a vivid picture of the difference between cleverness and Wisdom in a description of a gambler at a race-track. He said, "A clever man is one who thinks he can pick the winners - and sometimes is successful; a wise man recognizes that he can never - without inside information or fixes - make a profit at the races."

The possession of Wisdom involves a consideration of values. It makes us aware of the forces that contribute to strong character. It leads us to avoid those habits that undermine health and which destroy moral values.

At times we demonstrate that we are wise in certain areas of our conduct but are foolish in others. A bank president in Pennsylvania was arrested for embezzlement of a large sum of money. It was later revealed that he had not personally profited from the defalcation. His attorney said at his trial: "This man was wise and sympathetic in his dealings with those who needed loans, but he was foolish in his handling of money."

This might be said of many of us. We often seem wise in the way we meet our obligations to our family, but foolish in the way we temporize with the basic laws which contribute to good health.

King Solomon asked for and received an ability to decide between Good and Evil. Cultivate this quality if you earnestly desire to achieve Wisdom. Don't be deluded into accepting that which is evil, merely because it is popular. Resist the propaganda that would tend to shape you into the person you know you ought not to be. If you understand what life demands of you when you are living at your best, you are wise if you reject that which threatens the fullest realization of your noblest self.



HANDICAPS ON THE ROAD TO WISDOM

ALL of us face certain common attributes of personality which make it difficult for us to act wisely. The first of these is prejudice. Wisdom requires knowledge and understanding; prejudice flourishes wherever there is

ignorance, and there are numerous areas of common prejudice that tend to rob us of Wisdom in facing life.

First, and most common, is the prejudice against new ideas and new ways. If we are comfortable in our present circumstances it is difficult to accept with an open mind any changes that threaten to disturb the even tenor of our lives. We find it easy to persuade ourselves that any proposed change should be rejected merely because it requires a modification of our previously accepted customs.

Also, we face the prejudice against people - people of a different social class, or nationality, or race. All of the ideas that are advanced to deal with the economic and social needs of minority groups, or of people of different social and national backgrounds, are not good. They have no merit merely because they are presented as a means to improve the lot of certain groups. Yet Wisdom requires that we face the proposals for change without prejudice. If prejudice is the basis for opposition to social change we must face the fact that the improvement of conditions will inevitably come. We are wise if we do not expend our emotions and energies in opposing change merely because we are prejudiced against the groups that are involved.

Leave prejudice to others. A wise and understanding heart has no room for this relentless enemy of personal contentment and happiness.

Fear is another attitude that is the antithesis of Wisdom. It is not true that all our fears are groundless. We are foolish if we fail to consider intelligent fear as a means of protection against the threatening elements in our personal lives and in our society. But for every fear that is justified there are ten others that rob us of the happiness which Wisdom could help us to avoid! On every hand there are those who are afraid of sickness, afraid of death, victims of superstition, fearful of others. Such fears will be largely banished when held under the clear light of Wisdom and understanding.

The most foolish of all human fears is that which makes us dread to consider the nature of God. Many individuals are afraid of God because they are fearful of anything they cannot understand or explain. Often the fear is based on childhood experiences in which God was regarded as a stern and harsh judge. We should remember that Wisdom and Faith are inseparable. The wise individual knows God as the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. He may find it impossible to encompass the nature of God with words, but he is certain that God is real. He lives with confident trust in the Divine Love, and in the availability of His Power.

Wisdom will make us aware of our accountability for the material treasures and abilities that we possess, but it does not leave room for fear.

Hate creates another environment in which Wisdom can never prevail. Hate undermines personality, contributes to illness, and warps judgment. Hate is irrational. It blurs our outlook on life. It stifles creative thought.

Wisdom does not assume love for people, only Faith and religious conviction can bring about this miracle. But Wisdom does make for understanding. When we hate, we do not see clearly. We assume evil and malice where there is no evil

and malice. It tempts us to close our minds to the justice of another person's point of view, and to the narrowness of our own.

Avoid prejudice, fear, and hate as you would a contagious disease. These qualities make it difficult for us either to be intelligent or to understand the Art of Living. Without such intelligence and understanding, there can be no Wisdom.



FOUNDATIONS FOR WISDOM

It remains for us to examine several of the foundations of personality that contribute to Wisdom.

The first of these is AWARENESS. Wisdom assumes a willingness to face the facts of life, the facts of the Universe. It revolts against the closed mind. It is always eager for additional insight and knowledge.

Awareness is a quality that must be cultivated. Often we are aware of the unpleasant factors in the world around us, but blind to the beautiful. We are aware of bad weather, but we feel no lift to the spirit when we look into clear blue skies. We are aware of the formidable headlines in the newspaper that tell of a plane accident, but sense no thrill when a jet surges through the skies above our heads. We are aware of the problems created by human misunderstanding, but are blind to the host of people around us with whom our relationships are pleasant and normal. We are aware of the sordid in contemporary literature, but often fail to steep our minds in the beauty of the Psalms or the stately prose of an Emerson.

Wisdom is the product of a cultivated sense of awareness. It assumes a mind that is eager to know and to appreciate all which contributes to make up our daily lives.

Be aware today of everything that adds to your contentment and happiness. Look about for beauty and for love. See people as individuals and as persons, not merely as a crowd. Search out a poem or prose passage that will add to the inspiration of daily living!

Wisdom will never mark your life until you seize eagerly upon the opportunities that awareness makes possible for you.

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The second foundation for Wisdom is UNDERSTANDING. This requires a willingness to interpret observable facts in the light of enduring values.

For example: Think of a rainy day. You may be aware that it is raining and that it is irritating because the rain interferes with the plans you had made for the day. You had several appointments. You are concerned with the problem of transportation, and with the clothing that is necessary for such a day. But our

understanding enables us to look upon the rain as a necessary contribution to the fertility of the soil. See the rain as the promise of soft green lawns and banks of beautiful flowers in the weeks ahead.

This is merely an illustration of what we mean by understanding as a key to Wisdom. See beyond the observable and immediate results of your experience to discover meaning and value. Look upon persons not merely as attractive or as irritating, but as individuals who have problems and dreams. Get below the surface to understand the qualities that make an individual or a nation aggressive and unpleasant. Weigh the situation to learn why they act in a manner you regard as repulsive.

It was a wise man who challenged us with the words: "With all your knowledge, get UNDERSTANDING." Without understanding no amount of knowledge will make us wise.

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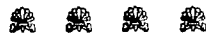
The third foundation is TRUST. Awareness can make us hectic and troubled. Understanding sometimes ends with discouragement and despair. The added quality that makes for Wisdom is trust. We learn to accept the assurance of a Higher Power that shapes our ends. We declare our confidence in a Supreme Mind that is concerned with the world and its peoples.

Trust enables us to be patient when evil seems to triumph over good in the Universe. It helps us to remain calm when outward circumstances give rise to anxiety and fear.

You will often find it difficult to trust. We feel more comfortable when we are striving to correct what seems to be an inescapable threat to our security. It is hard to wait in quiet confidence when we feel a compelling urge to rush in and give battle with the threatening situation.

Wisdom requires an attitude of trust. However we may think of God, we recognize the reality of a Higher Power that shapes the destiny of the Universe. For some of you the power may seem impersonal, depending upon confidence in the slow but steady working of natural Law. For others the trust is based upon confidence in a Heavenly Father whose nature it is to love His children.

Whatever may be your picture of Divine Power it is an evidence of Wisdom when you wait in confidence for the unfolding of Divine purposes. Your confidence is not born out of speculation, and certainly does not depend merely upon traditional beliefs. It is not predicated upon our helplessness, though sometimes we all feel helpless before forces that combine to give us anxiety. Rather, our trust is based upon a study of history and of the experience of man throughout the ages. Patient and calm waiting for the adequate power that God always makes available will bring triumph for that which is right.



CONCLUSION

Do not use this Lesson as a propelling force that sends you out with a determination to become wise. Remember that Wisdom is a product of attitudes that you cultivate, day by day.

Take the road that leads to Wisdom. Earnestly desire to become wise. Gain more knowledge with each passing day. Strive to perfect the Art of Daily Living.

In the process you will gain Wisdom. You may not become aware that the goal has been achieved, but others will seek your counsel because they recognize that you are a person of Wisdom.



AFFIRMATION

I will increase the outreach of my mind by accepting every opportunity to add to my store of knowledge.

I will earnestly seek after and follow the paths which help me to understand the Art of Living.

I will develop those patterns of thought and action that lead to Wisdom.

Blessings,

Your Instructor.