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The Serenity Prayer (Part 3 of 3): Five Reasons to Seek God's Wisdom A Commentary by Jason Curry



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"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

Reinhold Niebuhr clearly understands that there are some things that we cannot change (e.g., some of the choices and decisions of our past). In the second part of his prayer, he encourages us to pray for courage so that we can change the things we can (e.g., our thoughts and our actions that lead us away from God's will for our lives). However, the most important part of his prayer may be found in the third and final section; His need, and our need, to ask the Lord for wisdom. Undoubtedly, Niebuhr has knowledge. He can read, think and write a prayer. But, in his prayer he takes the time to ask the Lord for wisdom.

There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom, and the scriptures remind us that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom..."

(Psalm 111:10)." Knowledge often concerns facts, and wisdom often concerns values. Knowledge encourages young people to use technology to be active in social and professional networks, but wisdom says be careful who you let into your house and your life because they are able to negatively affect your walk with God.

Knowledge tries to tell some Christians in recovery that they achieved sobriety all by themselves, but wisdom reminds many of them of Step 2 which says that it was God, and God alone, that was able to restore them to sanity. Knowledge says that there is not enough money to feed the family, but wisdom assures Mama and Daddy that the Lord will make a way somehow. It is the importance of wisdom that only comes from God that made the writer of Proverbs conclude:

"Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore, get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding (Proverbs

4:7)."

This wisdom "to know the difference" comes from God. We need God's wisdom because 1) we are not perfect, but we are still able to embrace God's perfect will, 2) God's word has sustained generations, and it is able to sustain us even now, 3) we are both encouraged and expected to find a way to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, 4) we are still striving to embrace our divine destiny in spite of those who encourage us to embrace the destiny that they have constructed for us, and 5) knowledge will always have us preoccupied and obsessed with the things of this world; however, wisdom reminds us that we are in this world but not of it (John 17:14-16) and one day we will exchange our cross for a crown.