

The Leader: Seeking Wisdom

by **Frederick E Roach**

The inner drive of man to seek makes him distinctive. To a large degree, what we become is determined by what we seek after in our lives.

Knowledge is critical to success; our intellectual growth can determine our movement to new heights. Ultimately, the ability to absorb knowledge and to use our intellect to gain wisdom that can be applied brings us to the point of greatest achievement.

Knowledge is expanding exponentially. This is great, but it means nothing unless we learn to use knowledge wisely. Man always has had fantastic intellectual capacity. For a humbling experience, just study how past civilizations pursued and applied their knowledge.

St. Augustine said in the 5th century: "To wisdom belongs the intellectual apprehension of eternal things; to knowledge, the rational knowledge of temporal things." People have always held wisdom as the ultimate resource for personal and societal good. In the 1823 essay, "Characteristics," the Englishman William Hazlitt once wrote: "The seat of knowledge is in the head; of wisdom, in the heart."

There are great sources of "wisdom literature." I tend to draw on the great truths of the Bible, particularly the book of Proverbs. Solomon, who wrote that book some 3,000 years ago, said he wrote the book so "men may know wisdom and instruction, understanding words of insight." (Proverbs 1:2)

Job is considered to be the oldest book in the Bible. In that book, Job says of wisdom in Chapter 28:18, "The price of wisdom is above rubies."

At times we believe man is becoming wiser. More knowledgeable, yes! But I'd have to question our level of wisdom.

I love old books, and it's fun to discover the wisdom of men and women of past generations. Dian Stewart, one of our administrative secretaries, found in a local bookstore a book entitled, "The Light That Grows." The book's author is Dr. J. M. Dawson, who was pastor of a church in Waco in the 1920s. Dr. Dawson's book illuminates basic truths of life, including the fact that wisdom is ageless. Let me review a few of the truths Dr. Dawson shared. Even though he wrote his book several decades ago, see how closely they apply to today's world.

I. Life's Important Issues

Dr. Dawson said: "The most important things before our country today are not treaties of peace, but peace with God; not the high cost of living, but the high cost of sin; not political elections, but spiritual elections; not new laws, but new hearts; not the immigration of alien peoples, but the hateful invasion of ideas of a neo-paganism; not the slump in the price of products, but the awful moral slump; not the devilmint of our natural resources, but the development of our human resources." He then highlights what Stephen R. Covey emphasized 65 years late: "First things must come first."

II. What Is True Religion?



Dr. Dawson writes: "Religion is more than experience. It is also a service. True religion serves! The judgment test of our religion will be this thing of service. If we have passed through earth and seen the seven hungers of man . . . starving for a morsel of bread; staggering for a bit of knowledge; reeling for a show of sympathy; dying for a mite of beauty; begging for a mere chance; and gasping for the breath and bread of spiritual life . . . and we have done nothing to appease those human hungers . . . pitiful will be our orthodoxies if we cannot show hands that have in them the marks of service."

III. Servanthood: The Test Of Greatness

"Not only is service to be the judgment test of religion and its worth in this world but it is proclaimed the test of all earthly human greatness." Dr. Dawson said. "He that would be great among you, let him be servant of all. Not the possession of money, rank, title, position, authority, or any such thing, but rather one's ministry to the world is the only ideal for greatness. A life that does not serve is the most useless thing earth knows."

IV. Life As A Mission

In "The Light That Grows," Dr. Dawson highlights people who saw their lives as mission opportunities. The great missionary, Dr. David Livingston, committed his life to the people of Africa. R.C. Buckner left a legacy of benevolence for Texans. Dr. Dawson wrote: "When Buckner was dying he said, 'Please do not fold my hands across my breast. Leave them open, ready for work. I've had such joy and profit in service here, I trust the Master will have something for me to do hereafter. Leave my hands open for more service.'"