

## A Lasting Legacy

I have often thought how great it would be if somehow we could pass on the entire body of knowledge learned in a lifetime to our children and grandchildren -- all the wisdom, experiences, and lessons-learned. Wouldn't it be wonderful to receive the PhD your great-great-grandfather had earned? Wouldn't it be great to be able to instantly receive the knowledge of your ancestors? Wouldn't it be fantastic if all the history, all the stories, and all the information of the past was not diminished by the passing away of prior generations?

But that's not the way it works. Each generation must learn its own lessons and have its own experiences. We must learn what we can from those who are older while they are living -- and also study and learn and grow in our own personal body of wisdom and knowledge as we live our lives.

We have more knowledge preserved today and readily available to us through modern technology. We can "Google" just about any topic and find a good bit of information on it. No generation in existence has had this capability! We have more knowledge -- but certainly not more wisdom. There is a big difference.

Knowledge is information -- facts, figures, how-to information. We may be experts in knowledge and know how to use computers, to navigate the mysterious corners of the internet, and to glean from our networked-world warehouses of data about all manner of subjects. But how should we use this information?

Wisdom defines the "how." There is a wisdom of the world known as "common sense." I have often noticed common sense seems to be quite uncommon in today's world. Common sense is the practical understanding of how to get from where we are to where we want to be. Common sense is not found by amassing college degrees, nor is it found by personally harvesting huge amounts of data. Common sense is often learned from trial and error -- or from observing the successes and failures of others. Common sense is practical -- it watches and learns and applies. Common sense can take you far in life!

But beyond "common sense" wisdom there is what I would describe as "true wisdom." True wisdom incorporates common sense wisdom, but it is much more. In the Bible, true wisdom is said to begin with a proper respect and awe of God: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight" (Proverbs 9:10, ESV). A few verses before, we read: "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil" (Proverbs 8:13a, ESV). We begin to acquire true wisdom when we rightly respect and honor God -- and as we turn away from evil in our lives. As we honor God, we begin to learn of Him -- to seek His will over our own. We begin to learn that we have a lot to learn. As we grow in wisdom and in our understanding of Him, our entire way of thinking changes -- for the better. About wisdom, James adds: "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere" (James 3:17, ESV). Acquiring wisdom is a fulfilling, life-long process.

David Mills, Fayetteville, Tennessee  
DavidVMills@bellsouth.net

Someone once observed, "When an old man dies, a library burns to the ground." I have often felt the sting of this truth as I have watched elderly loved ones pass away -- I would think of many questions I wished I could ask them. Their passing is a great loss for this world.

But since I trust in God and in His promises, I know there is more to living than just this life. The wisdom we gain here -- if it is true wisdom -- will live on in us. And true wisdom is the most worthwhile legacy we can leave for future generations!

(Originally Written: July 27, 2019)