

BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM: WHERE IS THE LINK?**By Carmen Milka Herrera**

In today's business and professional world, we can find and gain knowledge from many places and in many ways. Wisdom, on the other hand, is not nearly as accessible. I have learned that firsthand. More than 40 years ago, a newspaper published my name for having received a full scholarship to study at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica in Campinas, Brazil. Universities in my home country of Bolivia had closed their doors, and since I was seeking technical training, my father had submitted my academic documents to the Brazilian embassy. Shortly thereafter I was no longer at home.

From Bolivia to Brazil – it was far, but not that far. From Spanish to Portuguese – it was different, but not entirely. It was a tropical country, but not exactly, since it had winter in the middle of the year. Difficult? Yes. Different? Yes, but not completely. We shared a similar South American culture. Despite that, I could not help wondering: Where was I? Without family nearby, without friends, separated from my roots, and in a way, without my faith? It felt as if my prayers had vanished from my memory. I told myself I needed to think very carefully about what to do, what to say, and who I should include in a new group of friends.

Every decision required choosing which option was the best option – and the wisest. My parents had always been my greatest sources of wisdom; I could no longer rely on their insights. I wrote letters, but it took about 15 days to reach them and as long for their replies. There were no email, text messaging or even faxes in those days. And I was already facing new issues that demanded immediate solutions.

Perhaps today you are also asking the same question: 'Where am I?' How we answer this question can affect the course of our lives. If we are followers of Jesus Christ, God is with us, but we do not always recognize we are with Him. Feelings of loneliness and fear shape how we understand the world and shape our decisions. That is how I lived: step by step, with extreme prudence and care, but also with a deep desire to be less anxious and more spontaneous. Where was I? And was wisdom with me?

According to my university professors, wisdom can be found in the number of books read, the quality of elaborate conversations, and answers supported by solid cause-and-effect arguments. They were not wrong. But later, I learned that one resource cannot be missing from any bookshelf: the Bible. As Charles Spurgeon wisely observed, "Visit many books, but make the Bible your home."

The Old Testament book of Job offers some help in answering these questions. Job 28:12,14 asks, "But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?" The deep says, "It is not in me," and the sea says, "It is not with me." And in Job 28: 20–22 we read: "From where, then, does wisdom come? Where does understanding dwell? It is hidden from the eyes of every

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living being, even from the birds of the sky. Destruction and Death say, 'We have heard only a rumor of it.'

Reading the Word of God leads us to understanding through reflection. Here are three examples:

1. Where? Job 28:23 states: "God understands the way to it, and He alone knows where it dwells."

Without the Word, I walk limited by the fear of making mistakes and the fear of guilt.

2. How? Job 28:13 says: "No one can comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living." It is not common to hear someone being encouraged to kneel before God to ask for wisdom. The intellectual world values accumulated information and personal creativity, trusting in solitary thinking.

3. Does it guide? Job 28:24 declares: "For He views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens." The One – the only one – who can truly show the way and guide your life is God.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever found yourself feeling all alone, thrust into a new situation or environment without any of your familiar support mechanisms? How did you feel at that time – and how did you respond to the circumstances?
2. Family and friends, familiar surroundings and routines. They all contribute to our sense of identity, our answer to the question, "Who am I?" Have you ever found yourself asking that? Is it a question you might still be asking today? Explain your answer.
3. How would you distinguish between knowledge and wisdom? Why do you think that with all the information available to us – books, mass media, the Internet, etc. – wisdom still seems in such short supply in many areas, including the marketplace?
4. Do you agree that an important resource for anyone seeking wisdom is the Bible, the Word of God? Why or why not?

Challenge for This Week

This week consider one or more areas of your life where you need wisdom – a difficult problem to resolve, an important decision to make, a plan for healing a damaged relationship, seeking to discern plans for your future. Where do you think you will find this wisdom?

Who is the wisest person you know? Or do you have a small team of peers or a group of trusted advisors you can turn to? Seek them out and ask for their support and prayers as you strive to deal wisely with whatever pressing issue (or issues) you are facing.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
Proverbs 1:7, 2:6, 3:13-15, 14:1,6, 15:7, 16:23, 18:2,15, 19:8, 24:5-6; Ecclesiastes 9:13-18

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