

“...and the wisdom to know the difference”

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Title comes from last section of the Serenity Prayer.

God. Give me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change. The courage to change the things I can change. And the wisdom to know the difference.

AA meeting. We usually end with this prayer.

In the past I have always rushed it... God, give me the serenity.

But at the AA meeting they usually start with the leader saying. God. And then everyone says ‘God’ and then we carry on with the rest.

I really like that. Because very often we forget the source of our serenity, the source of all our courage, and the source of all our wisdom. It is God.

God is at the epicenter of all human endeavor. I really like that! The epicenter. He is at the heart of our existence. At the core of our being, and very often we just say the word God without that consideration

Like God bless you... When you sneeze. I am always surprised at the number of people who say this. It's the automatic response to a sneeze for a lot of people. But really we should say it the same way as we say the Serenity Prayer. God. Bless you.

Sign of impending illness, hence the idea to say that quickly...apparently during the plague of AD 590 Pope Gregory I ordered unceasing prayer for divine intercession. Part of his command was that anyone sneezing be blessed immediately ("God bless you"), since sneezing was often the first sign that someone was falling ill with the plague.

(By the by, a typical polite response after being told "bless you" in response to sneezing is to thank the person who has said it. Or if you were Elvis you probably said. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much.

First interesting fact of the day... now back to the Serenity Prayer.

Serenity, courage, wisdom. Three important aspects of our faith.

The Old Testament reading this morning from the book of Proverbs, talked about wisdom.

You see there is intelligence.

And there is wisdom. Intelligence plus experience.

Wisdom is the discernment of the appropriate action.

Are

you to stand up and be counted... the courage to change the things I can change.

Or are you going to step back with serenity and accept the things we cannot change.

The path of least resistance.

All our actions are inherently tied up in our belief systems. We do what we do, because we believe there to be a benefit from the action. Or we don't do something because we do not believe there to be a benefit from the action. Ask any two year old. Favorite word. No. Favorite 5 words of teenagers. No. And you can't make me. Favorite 6 words of a princess. No. You do it for me.

At the heart of our belief system, at the core of our belief system, at the epicenter of our belief system, there is God. This is what we believe as Christians.

But we share our world with many other people who believe that at the heart of their belief system, at the core of their belief system, at the epicenter of their belief system, is a small man with a large microphone. Themselves.

So to someone who does not believe in the existence of God, the very idea of stewardship is nonsensical. They are not here in this world to look after something belonging to someone else. They are here to claim their possessions, their lives, their existence as their own.

We on the other hand, believe that God has entrusted this world, and the dazzling array of animals, birds, fish, plants, trees etc. ... to us.

In Genesis Chapter 1, God makes man 'stewards' of all living creatures, plants and vegetation. We look after it all, on behalf of God. And in our New Testament reading, the parable of the talents, we discover that Jesus took the stewarding idea one step further. Not only are we to look after and manage our talents, but we are expected to produce dividends. We are expected to magnify, or make larger, our inheritance, not simply store it away in a safety deposit box and pocket the key.

And what do we need to be able to live up to our side of the covenant with God to be good stewards?

We need courage to change the things we can change, we need serenity to accept the things we cannot change, and we need the wisdom to know the difference.

You see, theology is not a difficult concept to get your head around. Sure, you can make it as complicated as you like, and many academics do.

But at the epicenter, at the core at the heart of each day we live, if we are to live a good life, a life worthy of the sacrifice made on our behalf by Jesus is our willingness or unwillingness to act.

When you own something you can do what you like with it. Lose it. Give it away. Waste it. Paint it. Pawn it or destroy it. But if you are a steward, it's not yours to do what you like with it. You have to answer to someone if anything happens to it. And we believe we do answer to God for our actions in this world.

Take, for example, our church. We are stewards of our church. I am not talking about the building, even though we do a great job of looking after that... I am talking

about the people in this building. We are the church. I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together. Words from a modern hymn...

The church is not a building; the church is not a steeple;
the church is not a resting place; the church is a people.

The body of Christ, the organism which sustains Christianity in this world, is you and me. Together we make up the body of Christ. In his absence, we are to be the arms and legs, the eyes, the ears, the kneecaps. And for any body to work well, it has to be united. This I discovered the hard way this week, when my back decided to go into spasm, and refused to cooperate with the rest of my body.

1 Corinthians 12:15-20, 26 NIV

Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body....
If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

So an important part of stewardship is taking into account each aspect of our life, just as Paul talks about keeping the body in balance, so too, we are expected to keep our lives in balance, but at the epicenter, at the heart, at the core is always. God.

Because that is how faith works:

You want a strong faith. Put God first.

You want a courageous life, put God first.

You want a serene life, put God first, and you want a life full of wisdom, put God first.

In our video clip, that is exactly what all the characters did, they traded their own life, for a life that celebrated God.

On Friday evening, I went home tired, it's true. But I also went home so proud of everyone. Because we achieved a great deal together in the space of one evening.

We entertained strangers. Total strangers.

We

fed them, and we introduced them to our faith.

We also

raised money to send children to Summer Camp next year.

We peeled

potatoes, we washed dishes, we smiled, served, and smiled. And we worked together to do it. Because we are the body of Christ. We are the people that the good Lord relies on to reach out to others in his name. We are people that work hard to make a difference in our community.

God. The epicenter, the heart, the core of our lives.

Give me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change.

I cannot change the rude person who cuts me off as I am driving to work, or the pain or discomfort that comes with old age.

Give me the courage to change the things I can change. I will speak up if a child's safety is at issue. I will step forward if help is needed, and I am equipped to be able to help.

And the wisdom to know the difference... I will learn, and I will grow, and I will keep a humble heart, and listen to advice, and sometimes even take it... but at all times I will be so thankful that although in this world there are many things I do not know, understand, or comprehend, I can trust in the One who does.

And because I trust, because I love, because my hope is in His son, then
God is at the epicenter, the heart, and the core of my life, and Jesus
Christ, his Son and my risen Lord, will lead me home to him, when I have finished the
work entrusted to me on this earth; as steward of His Creation.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, as faithful stewards, we ask you to help us to open our eyes, our ears, our hearts and minds to the tasks you would have us do in your name. Be with us this day and always, we humbly pray.

Amen.

Easiest way to be generous without using money? Say 'yes.'