



## Wisdom



A Way of Being

**“Wisdom is not communicable.**

The wisdom which a wise man tries to communicate always sounds foolish. . . . Knowledge can be communicated, but not wisdom.

One can find it, live it, be fortified by it, do wonders through it, but one cannot communicate and teach it.”

— Hesse, *Siddhartha*, p.115



## Wisdom of an Aging Warrior

"What can this aging warrior tell you about creative leadership? Honestly, I am not sure. For I am, like each of you, a peculiar balance of contradictions: a large ego and a deep humility; a decent intelligence (no more than that), albeit with periodic blind spots and stupidities; a strong presence along with a profound insecurity; an astonishing confidence, but one that is often punctuated with doubt; an intellectual bent that lacks an academic depth; an aspiring, passionate leader, but without the skills-or, for that matter, the interests-of a manager. I mention this litany to suggest that I'm no more, nor less than each one of you: just another human being."

— John C. Bogle, Chairman and Founder The Vanguard Group of Investment Companies May 17, 1997

"Wisdom is not the result of mental effort. It cannot be gained through intellectual study. Even life experiences do not make us wise if we don't process them humbly and consciously. Sadly, most of us were never taught how to do that, which is why so *few older people are true elders, with any wisdom to pass on to the next generations.*

Wisdom is a way of being—a way of being whole and fully open to a knowing beyond rational thought alone. Do not confuse this kind of knowing as lightweight, saccharine, or ephemeral. The exact opposite is true. To see in such a way requires the hard work of keeping all our inner spaces open—mind, heart, and body—all at once. This is at the center of any authentic spirituality, and it does not happen easily or without paying respectful and non-egoic attention to the moment in front of me and within me—which I could call prayer.

My fellow CAC faculty member and respected wisdom teacher Cynthia Bourgeault writes of the deep interior commitment that must be made by those who embark on this path:

A Wisdom way of knowing . . . requires the whole of one's being and is ultimately attained only through the yielding of one's whole being into the intimacy of knowing and



being known. . . . It doesn't happen apart from complete vulnerability and self-giving. But the divine Lover is absolutely real, and for those willing to bear the wounds of intimacy, the knowledge of that underlying coherence—"in which all things hold together"—is both possible and inevitable. [1]

Since the Enlightenment, Westerners have become overly reliant on the intelligence of the mind, neglecting that of the heart and body. But by heart, I don't mean just feeling and emotion. Cynthia Bourgeault calls the heart "an organ for the perception of divine purpose and beauty." [2] Tilden Edwards, founder of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, describes the spiritual faculty of heart as "a quality of intuitive awareness . . . a sense of inclusive, compassionate, undefended, direct in-touch-ness with what is really there." [3] This "undefended knowing" allows us to drop beneath the thinking mind, to touch upon real experience, unhindered by the ego's sense of self, without fear or agenda.

The Wisdom lineage offers us a healthy middle place, trapped in neither of the two alternating mediocrities of knowing: all heart and little head (lacking rational, historical, or scientific grounding) or all head and little heart (lacking deep personal experience, subtlety, or authentic love). For a holistic and mature faith, we need both head and heart grounded in our physical and sensory body."

### Gateway to Action & Contemplation:

*What word or phrase resonates with or challenges me? What sensations do I notice in my body? What is mine todo??*

### References

[1] Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming an Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart* (Jossey-Bass: 2003), 10.



[2] Ibid., 34.

[3] Tilden Edwards, “Undefended Knowing: A Conversation with Richard Rohr and Tilden Edwards” (HuffPost: 2013), [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/undefended-knowing-a-conv\\_b\\_3744513](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/undefended-knowing-a-conv_b_3744513).

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Immortal Diamond: The Search for Our True Self* (Jossey-Bass: 2013), 70-71; and

*Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality* (Franciscan Media: 2007), 13-14.

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