
QUOTES FROM THE EDGE OF NOWHERE

The Art of Noticing Unnoticed Life Wisdoms

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**“You have to go past
knowledge and truth
in the dictionary
before you arrive
at WISDOM.”**

Before you begin this chapter, pause for a moment to turn off all of the external visual and auditory distractions that might interfere with your reading of this introductory story. Good. Let’s get started.

Now try and recall how vibrant your imagination was when you were a child. Left in an empty room with no television, phone, computer, or interactive toys, a child can use their imagination to create a spontaneous world filled with fantasies and wonderment.

Engage your vehicle of imagination to begin a journey to a time when the earth was much younger. You arrive in a land far away from your present existence. There, you see two young siblings running in the green meadowlands of their family farm. This is the scene where our story begins...

These happy children are almost inseparable because, as fate would have it, the younger sister had become blind at an early age. She depended on her older brother to be her eyes in a world she could no longer visually perceive. The older brother took great pride in caring for his little sister. Together they roamed the meadows surrounding their farmhouse. They spent hours exploring the mysterious caves that laced the mountain range bordering their land.

Unfortunately for the family, the wealthy property owner who owned all the land adjacent to their farm had forbidden anyone to trespass on his acreage. As a result, to avoid crossing the neighbor’s land, the family had to spend an extra day of travel when journeying to the closest village to sell the family’s harvest. In their youth, the brother and sister chose to ignore the demands of the wealthy neighbor. For years they fished in his lakes, climbed his hills, and, using homemade torchlights, they explored the mountain’s eminent caves. This angered the landlord

Torch of wisdom (Continued)

because, although his servants informed him of these intrusions on his property, they could never capture the youngsters.

As the brother and sister matured, they realized their parents were growing too old to travel the long distance to the village to sell crops. They knew it was time for them to assume the responsibility for delivering the harvest to the town market. The parents reluctantly agreed. As they loaded up their wagon and set out on their journey, the siblings secretly agreed to take the forbidden, shorter route through a portion of their neighbor's property. They knew the landlord was far too old and feeble to capture them.

The siblings arrived in the village and conducted the family's annual business of selling the crops for a handsome sum of money. Anxious to get home to inform their parents of what they had accomplished, they decided to take the same forbidden route home not realizing that the landlord's relatives were lying in wait. On their return trip home, the two were robbed, beaten, and taken to the landlord who would decide their ultimate fate. Pleased with the capture, the landlord sternly gave them a choice.

Beating his chest with a closed fist, he growled, "You have taunted me for years, but now your lives are in my hands. The choice is yours. My men can take you to the high cliffs overlooking the valley where they will cast you off the edge causing a quick and painless death, or I can have them take you into the depths of the caverns that lie within the mountains. There you will slowly die of thirst and starvation or be devoured by the beasts that roam in the darkness of the caves."

Without awaiting the counsel of his sister, the brother announced his decision of banishment to the caves. He thought to himself, "This is our best chance for survival because we explored those caves many times as children." Surely, they could eventually escape from the darkness of the caves. He also knew the existence of beasts roaming in the caves was unproven folklore.

Prior to their exile to the caves, the brother cunningly asked the landlord if he would grant them one request.

He asked if they could somehow manage to escape the dangers of the cave, would the landlord promise to give his family title to all of the land laying between their farm and the village. In the presence of all his relatives, the landlord laughed and agreed to the terms confident he would never need to fulfill this promise. He knew this was the last he would ever see of these two pesky siblings.

The servants of the captors did not know the extent of the sister's blindness so they blindfolded both young captives and led them deep into the caves. They warned the children that they were not to take their blindfolds off and attempt to follow the light of their captor's torchlights to escape. If they removed their blindfolds, the servants had orders from the landlord to immediately slay them with the well sharpened daggers they had each been provided for the task.

When they no longer heard the footsteps of their retreating captors, the brother instructed his sister to stay put while he set out to find safe passage to the exit. Although blindfolded, he sensed having previously traveled on the trail his captors followed when depositing them in the cave. Just as he suspected, the armed servants had unwittingly taken the siblings down one of the many trails he and his sister had explored as children.

At this point, he removed his blindfold to verify that the servant's torchlights were gone and it was safe for him to begin his trek. He looked around and all he could see was darkness. He had never witnessed such darkness. He lifted both hands from the cold stone floor of the cave and placed them in front of his face. He knew the position of his hands, but his brain perceived only an impenetrable curtain of darkness. Fear became the formidable beast in the cave. The brother groped to his feet again instructing his sister to wait at her current location as he looked for the exit. He heard his voice echo off the invisible walls of the cave as he said to his sister, "Don't be afraid. I will be back for you."

Torch of wisdom (Continued)

After going only a few yards, he stepped into a rut in the cave's floor and fell. His next few steps forward caused him to slam into a solid object protruding from the ceiling of the cave. In his youth, he recalled seeing many of these obstacles that were easily avoided when illuminated by a torchlight's flame. They resembled the winter ice sculptures hanging from the edge of the home he was hoping someday to see again. The beast of fear continued to pursue him through the deep darkness. He thought to himself, "Is this what my sister has lived with every day since she became blind?" After several attempts to move in the darkness, he repeatedly met with unseen obstructions that blocked his advance forward. Tears began to fall from his face as he realized they would never escape their dark prison. He cried out for his sister saying, "I have failed you and our parents. Surely we will now die in this darkness."



As the now physically and emotionally injured brother lie weeping on the cold dark floor of the cave, he felt something touch him on his shoulder. Startled, he looked about in the dark thinking it was one of the mythical beasts seeking to devour him. He lay face down on the cold stone of the cavern floor expecting the beast's teeth to penetrate his flesh and seal his fate. Instead, he heard his sister's sweet assuring voice saying, "Don't be afraid dear brother, I know

the way home. Together we can find our way back to your light." You see, unlike her older brother, she was not fearful of the darkness nor was she crippled by it. She could use all of her other human senses to their full capacity to find the way to freedom. It was the sister, not exclusively dependent on the torchlight, who actually had the greater vision.

Together, they eventually emerged from the cave. Their parents, who had been informed of their banishment by the landlord, greeted them with cheers and celebration. As promised, the family took ownership of the land providing thoroughfare to the village. As the landlord signed over the deed to the land, he paused to ask them, "Without the torch's light, how did you find your way through the darkness of the cave? What or who led the way to your freedom?"

“You have to go past knowledge and truth in the dictionary before you arrive at WISDOM.”

Both the short story about the two lost siblings and the quote for this chapter came to me from the edge of nowhere. For no particular reason my imagination began to produce brief scenes of two young farm boys. (Author's note: In the original version of the story, there were two brothers riding with their parents to market on an antiquated wooden wagon filled with baskets of produce). Over the next several days, my daydreams of the tale expanded to two brothers, who after playing in the sundrenched meadows of their farm, paused for rest atop the soft, freshly harvested wheat. There, they both shared their respective hopes and dreams for the future. Their fate and the choice of the cliff or the cave was an unsettling twist to an otherwise joyful tale.

As I recall, the quote for this chapter arrived many years after my daydreams of the two children lost in the cave. One day I was looking up a few definitions in my tattered paperback dictionary. While rummaging

Torch of wisdom (Continued)

through the dictionary pages, the quote just dropped into my consciousness. It later reminded me of the story involving the farmer's children. It took me back to the final questions of the angry landlord. "Without the torch's light, how did you find your way through the darkness of the cave? What or who led the way to your freedom?"

Back in an earlier chapter (Chapter 4), I provided the reader with an advanced glimpse of things to come by introducing the path our thoughts must follow to arrive at conscious wisdom. Let's expand on what was written earlier using the tale of our two siblings lost in the cave's darkness as our guide.

Those seeking wisdom are best served by taking a proverbial route I will refer to as the "alphabetical path toward wisdom." This path begins with the letter "A" Awareness: It is wise to always have a genuine desire to become aware of the truth. The two children in our story had a natural desire to expand their awareness of a world existing beyond the borders of their little farm. This youthful curiosity led them to explore their farm and its neighboring properties.

Driven by an unconditional love for his younger sister, the elder sibling accepted the responsibility of being her caretaker. He viewed tending to his visually impaired sibling as a privileged commitment to his family. Through this bond as children, they together discovered the caverns beneath the mountains on the neighboring landlord's property. This same curiosity sparked the ingenuity necessary to create the homemade torches. These torchlights lit their way as they explored the cavern's depths in search of hidden treasures.

Together they enjoyed adventures sneaking onto their neighbor's land and disappearing into the bowels of the dark caverns. The children could not have imagined their fate of someday being left in the caves to die. With each journey through the caves, the siblings became keenly aware of each unique path coursing through the darkness. By the light from their torches, the older brother safely guided himself and his sister along the sloping paths leading into the mysterious depths of the mountain's underbelly.

He became adept at using his eyes to identify landmarks and obstacles to avoid on each path. As he led the way, he was unaware his unsighted sister perceived a different journey than his own. Using her enhanced ability to listen as they traversed the various paths, she heard the cave speak to her through sound variations caused by the terrain beneath their feet. Differences in the types of echoes reverberating from the massive stone walls announced their arrival in yet another hollow chamber of the mountain. Her sense of smell alerted her to the presence of spring water seeping from unseen crevices in the stone. She could detect the scent of vegetation growing as they neared the opening of the caverns. Unlike her sighted brother, she became accustomed to feeling subtle transitions in temperature at various depths of the cave. As she trailed along the paths, she felt a conscious enjoyment when gentle currents of wind coursed through the darkness breezing by her face. Faith in her brother's vision caused her to allow him always to take the lead as she educated herself about what she could not see.

"Seek the next landmark on our journey toward wisdom."

The capacity to be more observant, and thus more aware of information, does not immediately deliver the observer to the altar of wisdom. We cannot linger at awareness alone; we must continue further along the "alphabetical path" toward wisdom before making final decisions on how best to proceed in life. Once introduced to previously unknown information, our newly found awareness should inspire us to seek the next landmark on our journey toward wisdom. "E" Education: Use personal experiences or trusted resources to educate ourselves further about what we think we now know. By using factual evidence - not speculative opinions - we can integrate new information into our past and current life experiences to create a more precise view of anticipated future events.

Torch of wisdom (Continued)

How many of us have read the entire sacred book (i.e. Holy Bible, Koran, Torah, Upanishads, etc.) of our chosen religious belief? Some of us act as if we have. Without fully educating ourselves, we may unintentionally quote scripture out of context, speak with authority without true knowledge, teach others unsubstantiated information, or follow religious doctrine as if we were wholly educated about every word printed within the sacred document's bound covers.

As the brother and sister in our story grew into young adults, they educated themselves about how to run their parents' farming operations. By giving them "chores" to do, their parents taught them the ethics of work. The children observed how their father tilled the fresh soil each spring. While kneeling in the fields, their mother instructed them how to properly plant seeds in the earth. She taught them to distinguish weeds from young emerging crops. Through the repetition of experience, the children educated themselves on how to tend flocks and prepare crops for harvest. As young adults, they sought to validate their education by volunteering to take the harvest to market. However, in their youthful exuberance, they unwisely decided to take an illegal shortcut to and from the village. This ultimately resulted in their capture and imprisonment in the darkness of the cave.

With an appropriate investment in applied educational theories, the learner soon arrives at the next important landmark on the route toward wisdom. **"K" Knowledge:** Obtain a critical mass of comprehensive education about a topic before achieving verifiable knowledge regarding the subject under study. Newly acquired knowledge is an invaluable asset. It can be stored away for anticipated or unanticipated future use. This new knowledge can be an invaluable asset in enhancing one's personal life and/or the lives of others seeking similar knowledge.

Although the older sibling understood the cave's darkness and educated himself on how safely to navigate the cave's perilous architecture, he had insufficient knowledge in total darkness. With the constant aid of their torchlights, he had no need to educate his human senses how to adjust for the total absence of light in the deepest depths of the

cave. Without the presence of light, he had no remaining sensory resources capable of freeing himself and his sister from the bondage of the darkness. This unanticipated event forced him, for the first time in his life, to share the bondage of blindness his sister had known for most of her life.

"T" Truth: The quintessential milestone on our path toward wisdom, the truth about what we perceive in the world around us is less complex when we have accurate information to make informed decisions. In the presence of truth, we are better equipped to navigate our social environment. The pursuit of truth should always be the guiding star by which we search for serene joy in life.

In our story, it was the younger sister who had acquired a subtle, but more comprehensive, form of knowledge during the siblings' many journeys down the cave's darkened paths. She knew the concealed truth regarding the nature of the caverns. Fear of the unknown can poison our ability to use our acquired knowledge to think logically. Because the younger sister carried a concealed truth within her, she was not fearful, angered, or terrified by the grip of darkness surrounding them.

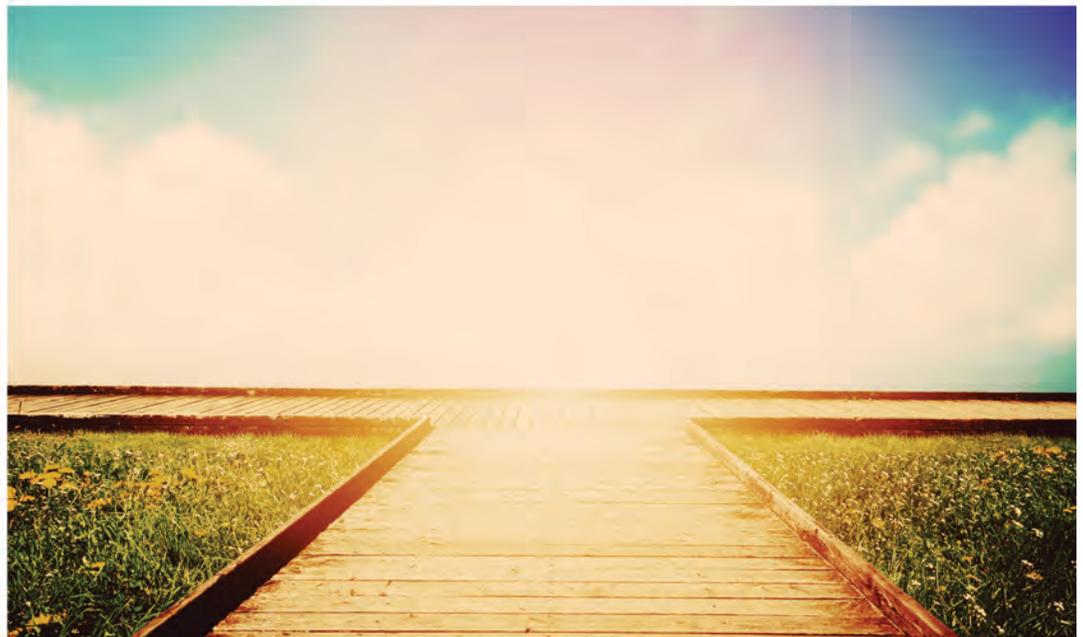
Only at the finish line do we feel the embrace of **"W" Wisdom:** There are no easy detours to this destination. In our daily lives, people often expend a great deal of energy in an attempt to convince us that achievement of wisdom requires minimal personal effort. Others will attempt to convince the masses how they alone have found a viable shortcut to the secrets of life. Do not be fooled by such pronouncements.

At the end of our story, it wasn't the older brother who led the sibling pair to safety. It was the younger sister who, over the years, acquired a special wisdom as she passively followed her brother's lead. Without the aid of the torchlight, it was the sibling without the benefit of vision who led her injured brother back through the darkness into the outstretched arms of two grateful parents waiting at the cave's opening.

Torch of Wisdom (Continued)

How can anyone find wisdom without first achieving an awareness about the deficit of knowledge? How can anyone acquire knowledge without a willingness to educate themselves with facts? How can anyone achieve an education of enduring value without verifiable truth as its foundation? Only after we have gone through the progressive steps on the “alphabetical path” can we arrive at the final destination where wisdom awaits. Dare to take the unconventional path through life. Misfits among us who walk on a path toward wisdom clearly see a future shrouded from the eyes of those trapped in the darkness of a social status quo.

Sometimes life’s circumstances lead us down paths we dare not go voluntarily, only to deposit us into seemingly inescapable situations. We can choose to sit in the darkness seeking salvation by screaming out that we have lost our way, or we can call upon our higher inner vision of faith. With hope, faith, and knowledge we can stand up to the unseen obstacles of our existence to emerge victorious at a bright, unimagined destination.



“Just because something can’t be seen is not verification of its absence. Notice the wind. It is invisible; however, we see the presence of its might and power. Some of life’s most precious gifts are within our midst; but remain unnoticed if we don’t have the wisdom to see them.”
