



Information Is Not Knowledge...

Wisdom, according to the prevailing notions popular early in this 21st century, is derived from access to information and the subsequent knowledge that applies that information. But just as **information is not knowledge, knowledge is not wisdom.**

One must wonder whether our 21st century infatuation with information is helping make us and our world a better place. Is passionate addiction to information retrieval systems and inordinate desire for electronic connection enhancing or endangering wisdom?

The Information Highway, as one former presidential candidate called the Internet, is not automatically producing more prudent and judicious citizens. Contrary to what some may assume, the Information Age is not our savior—on the other hand, it may have taken us captive. It's a familiar sight, isn't it? Hundreds of millions are dragging a ball and chain around with them—they are hunched over their devices, playing games, seeking information and even intimacy, and searching for meaning on social media.

This 21st century, flooded by a tsunami of information, is being forcibly reminded that data and information are no substitute for wisdom. Wisdom seems buried in a swamp of "alternative" facts, false equivalences, political partisanship and conspiracy theories.

The Internet provides data and hosts websites and dispenses information indiscriminately, so that the user must exercise discretion and discernment about information and data to be believed and information and data

to be discarded. Danger in many forms lurks on the worldwide web and many lack training and guidance in carefully discerning fact from fable.

The information society is now mired in "fake news." The primary use of the term "fake news" is by those who favor a specific political persuasion and propose that the news media is trying to twist and pervert reality by presenting a false reality and a biased perspective.

But in its wider usage, "fake news" seems to be information that contradicts the already established truth of the person who encounters it. ***Fake news, in some ways, seems to be whatever one does not wish to believe.*** It is foolish to ignore clear evidence, but as humans we are more comfortable with those "facts" that agree with our decisions and behavior.

The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who lived from 1788 to 1860, said "every generation, no matter how paltry its character, thinks itself much wiser than the one immediately preceding it, let alone those that are more remote."

Each generation battles with its own self-serving desire to do what it believes to be right and appropriate, while failing, at some level, to respect the wisdom that can be gleaned from the past. Each generation thinks itself more clever and smart than the ones before it, but being clever and smart is not one and the same as being wise.

Sidney Smith, who was an English pastor and writer, living from 1771-1845, once said, "It is the calling of great men, not so much to preach new truths, as to rescue from oblivion those old truths which it is

our wisdom to remember and our weakness to forget."

In these early decades of the 21st century it seems that many are obsessed with dismissing those who have gone before with whom they disagree—toppling their statues, wiping away their legacy and obliterating any memory of them. It seems we are quick to judge others, but slow to realize we will ourselves be judged by the standards we use to repudiate and condemn.

Wisdom is closely related to humility and compassion—one might say that humility and compassion are the siblings (maybe even the parents) of wisdom. Moral wisdom is always founded upon humility and compassion.

On the other hand, pride and arrogance are the mortal enemies of moral wisdom—pride and arrogance are self-serving and self-absorbed. Arrogant people are generally not wise. One who does not learn does not grow, change and adapt.

Proverbs 16:18 tells us, "*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*" No matter how much information is gathered, and no matter how much knowledge is accrued, without God all such attempts will end in foolishness.

It is in our humility before God, our submission to him and our trusting in him with our whole heart, in grateful yielding to him, that we receive wisdom from him. □
—Greg Albrecht

Join us for "Information is not Knowledge and Knowledge is Not Wisdom" at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of October 7, 2018.