



SOUTHSIDE MIDWEEK NEWSLETTER 6.10.20

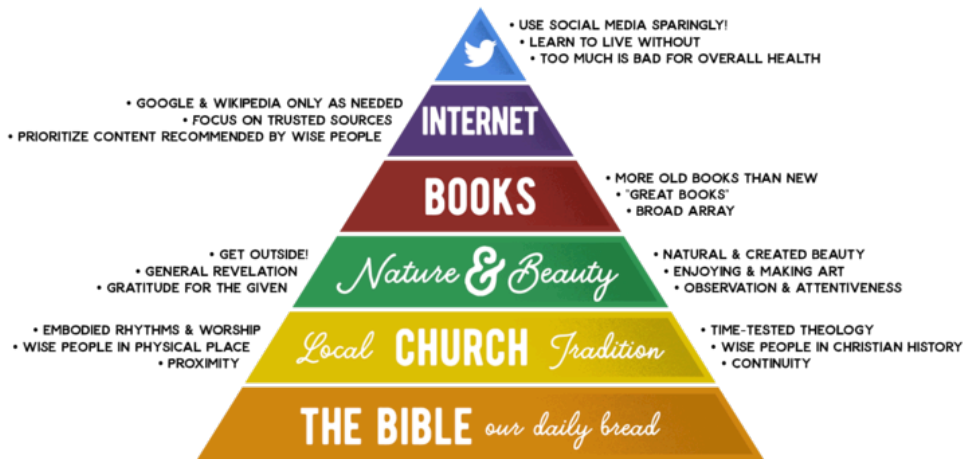
The Wisdom Pyramid – Barrett

In the wisdom book of Ecclesiastes, the writer reminds us that the “making of many books there is no end.” The point he was making at the time is still very relevant today. To put it another way, there are more ideas, thoughts, and opinions for us to consider than we have hours in the day to consider them. Someone used a term the other day that I had never heard before; it was the term *infobesity*. It occurs when someone has so much information about an issue that it actually prevents the person from being able to make a healthy decision or form a good opinion about the issue. It is also called *information overload* and this problem has been further intensified by the rise of social media in our culture.

So many news worthy events have occurred in the year 2020 and we have been inundated with information about everything from worldwide pandemics to systemic racism. I read an article that suggested the average person is presented daily with the equivalent of 127 newspapers worth of information. I think it is very important for a follower of Jesus to be educated on the current events affecting our country. However, I want to encourage you with these words from author, Anthony J. D’Angelo, “in your thirst for knowledge, be sure not to drown in all of the information.”

Several weeks ago, as I was searching for some practical advice to help me sort through all of the information, a friend sent this Wisdom Pyramid to me. It has served as a helpful guide as I am learning healthier habits for taking in knowledge. I share it with you in hopes that it will also be an encouragement to you. May the Lord give us all listening ears to clearly hear His voice among all of the noise.

Wisdom Pyramid



A Message from Joshua – Kevin

When it comes to racism, part of our problem is we don't understand that people begin the journey through life at different places. Some people not only don't understand this fact; they also don't care. Most everyone, regardless of race, desires an opportunity to improve their life, to do a little better than their grandparents and their parents, to have a vibrant career and opportunities for advancement. If someone gets a head start on others, that head start certainly provides a significant advantage.

Let me illustrate with an example from the college world. You can easily find similar examples at any age. It is not difficult to find a college student who thinks they are better than others, oftentimes because of circumstances they had zero to do with. For example, if both of their parents are still married, that's an advantage they had nothing to do with. If they had a father figure in their home, that's an advantage. If they were given a cell phone and a usage plan they didn't have to pay for, along with wifi in their home and a laptop at their disposal – those are all advantages they had nothing to do with. If they never had to worry about having plenty of food, another advantage. If they had a private education and a tutor they didn't have to pay for themselves or an ACT prep class – definitely an advantage. If they didn't have to pay for college, that's a huge advantage. Besides all of these advantages, who honestly has anything to do with their own physical attractiveness or their own intellectual horsepower? What college student has anything to do with their parents' income level or a family inheritance or the success of a family business? Yet, we look at all these things as we value one person above another, as I value myself more than I value you. Who has anything to do with the color of their own skin?

God gave the Israelites a warning as they prepared to move into the Promised Land which has an application for us when we forget or don't care that everyone doesn't start at the same place. Check out Joshua 24:11-13. Joshua, sharing the message he received from God, says this: "The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, (and a bunch of other 'ites'), but I gave them into your hands. I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you.... You did not do it with your own sword and bow. So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant." God wanted Israel to always remember the reality of their situation. They moved into a land which was not deserved nor earned nor was it a reward for good behavior. It was a gift of love. This gift should always be treated as such. Israel did zero to be in this fortunate situation. All they did was move into a fully furnished mansion, just like many of us have done. So, someone makes a lot of money. That's by God's grace. So, someone is super brilliant. Who supplied those brain cells? So, someone has a successful business. Who prompts your customers to call you? We may work hard in life to improve our lot. But who gave us the capacity, who gave us good health and a mind to pull it off?

Always remember – you and I are no better. You may be more gifted, but you are no better. What is good about your life that you had little or nothing to do with? Make that list – and stay close to the reality of the message in Joshua 24.

A Shepherd's Prayer – Jim

I've been turning over in my mind the question Kevin gave us in his article last week. Basically, he said, "Who do you think you're better than?" after laying out the notion that we're all equal in God's eyes. I'm going to share with you some of my ruminations.

No, I'm not better than anyone else for reasons Kevin nicely described. We're all precious in God's eyes. What about "friends of God" (i.e., Abraham)? I don't pretend to know the mind of God, but it's clear we are equally special and unique to God.

Yes, I think I am better than others – in at least some ways.

For almost everyone who has grown up in a family, during the adolescent years there arises a thought: "If I ever get married and have children, I'll be a better spouse and parent than what I've seen around here." That's even in the best of families, and it might revolve around little or big things. Am I better than my father – in every way? Doubtful, but maybe in some ways. I wanted to be, and I've tried.

Also, like you, I've suffered at the hands of so-called friends – embarrassment, ridicule, betrayal, abandonment. And I've vowed to be a better friend than them. I've tried to be.

Finally, we who are Christians are to live a life characterized by "[putting] off your old self . . . and [putting] on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22,24). I'm OK with that. But am I better this morning than 24 hours ago? What about last week? Hard to know, hard to tell. It's way easier for me to see the change over a longer period of time (like a decade!).

I do know that God is willing to invest considerable resources to the process of transforming me into a better version of myself **if** I'm committed to it and willing to participate. When is the change noticeable? It's a given that the further down life's path we go, the more we're aware of our frailties and weaknesses; however, that doesn't mean God isn't working on me. I want to be different ("better") than the old version of me, and I'm trying. For sure, God wants me increasingly holy, and whatever doesn't happen on this side of death will be made "perfect" on the other side.