PRINCIPLE 2
Harness the heart
Addressing the hidden belief systems that drive our life

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Welcome back

Today we will put into practice another very important realization - one that strikes at the root of all effective prayers - and upon which all of the following lessons build.

It is progression from the lesson, ‘The Narrow Gate of Wisdom’, so if you have not completed this first, please go back, read it, listen to it, and apply the lessons therein. (Until you’ve done this first, please do not read any further - it’s very important!)

If you have though, congratulations! Thank you for your participation in this program and ‘building on rock foundations’. Jesus stated that essentially his whole ministry is ‘a house of prayer’ so let’s build together this architecture, upon a solid base.

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Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the most glorious Father, would give you a wise spirit, along with revelation that comes through knowing the Messiah fully. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his Glorious inheritance in the Saints and his incomparably great power for us who believe.”

• “I have you in my heart... and this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in St. Paul
knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless…”

• “We have not stopped praying for you, and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord, and pleasing on every way”. And furthermore- as he continues in the quote above - let’s understand why we need to pray for wisdom:

“To bear fruit in every good work”
That is: we need spiritual wisdom and understanding so that we may be successful in all our life projects - to create worthwhile, lasting and good results from our efforts; not to waste our labor on projects doomed to failure.

“To be strengthened with all Power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience”
That is: we need spiritual wisdom and understanding so that we may have that personal power to break through limitations and come up successful - to courageously face up to our fears; to resist those temptations that would distract us; to act with justice in all situations as dealing with all kinds of people… in short, so that we may be virtuous.

“And joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light”. That is: we need spiritual wisdom and understanding so that we may have complete happiness - to be part of the authentic
prosperity that is implicit upon God’s path - of realizing our complete good, within all the rich dimensions of our lives.

And those are great fruits to be reaped from the tree of wisdom, you’d have to agree.

In today’s lesson then, we’ll explore the wisdom of Jesus, who revealed the secret spot from where our good emerges, (inclusive of that very petitioned good you asked for in the preface), with the following statement: “The good man brings good things out of the goodness stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart...”

And you probably know the rest... “the mouth speaks”.

Okay, let’s begin.

**A moment of Wisdom**

The influential philosopher Søren Kierkegaard once stated, ‘prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays’. *For the purpose of prayer is not so much about changing things for us, as much as changing us for things.*

*We bring into our lives the good we seek, by the good we become.* The reason why principled prayer begins with wisdom is because by wisdom we correct our errors of action, of thought, of desire - and furthermore, store good things in our hearts. We fulfill our petitions by us becoming a central cause for good.

Or as Solomon concluded in the prayer from the last lesson:

“So the ways of them that are upon earth may be set right, and men may learn the things that please you, for by wisdom they are healed and saved, O Lord, from the beginning.”
While I don’t know specifically what your petition was at the beginning of this course, I do know that it can be of only two kinds - for an inner positive change or for an outer positive change:

• **You either stated this need for ‘inner change’ directly** - as in a prayer petition to be more compassionate, or perhaps to be free of an addiction, or to understand God’s will for your life... and so on.

• **Or you petitioned for a change external to you** - as in a prayer petition to have something external to you happen - like a blessing in your relationships, in your finances, in your health or in the health of a friend... or in your community, in your environment, in your world... and so on.

**At their essence though, principled prayers are actually always centered on the inner.** The royal road to realizing all kinds of outer goods, is that ‘we become the change we want to see’, as Mahatma Gandhi put it.

In other words, if our desire is to have blessed relations with another, we need to become a blessed relater, a blessed friend. If our desire is to have a change in our finances and prosperity, we need to have a prosperous mindset and cultivate diligence. If our desire is for world peace, we need to become an ambassador of the peace in the world... and so on.

There is a direct and profound relationship here. **Our desire for a change in the ‘outer’, is really a calling for a change in the ‘inner’**. For the possibility of having miracles happen ‘out there’, comes by virtue of who we are ‘in here’ (in the heart).

As we discussed previously, from God’s perspective, what is of primary value is our growth in virtuousness, in holiness, in ‘being perfect as He is perfect’.

While our efforts in creating outer changes are good, are great, we have to understand that they’re always temporary and always subject to change – i.e. even the greatest of empires crumble and disappear.
What we build today will most likely be gone and forgotten tomorrow, as the generations to come, will also change this matter in response to their inner images.

The wise understand that the real purpose of the changes in the outer, is but as a means for the development of the virtues in the inner. The world is like our workout playground, whereby through our application and effort, we cultivate the inner strengths and become ‘heavenly’.

As such, our effort in prayer ought to continually focus on this, which is everlasting - the condition of our soul. As Jesus expressed this concept, we are not to store up treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal – but to store our treasures in heaven, which are ever-lasting. For where we place our treasure, our values, that’s where our heart will also be.

The reason why we begin with the principle of praying wisdom first, is because through this soul virtue, all other virtues are realized. Thus, even if our prayer is directed at something external to us, we want the request to be fulfilled as a result of us becoming wiser in the process - in having been changed for things, and not in merely seeking things, in order for them to change our state of being.

That’s how our Spirit sees the problem. “For of what use is it to gain the whole world, but lose the soul…”

The hidden problem in making changes
Which brings us face to face, with one of life’s biggest dilemma - just how do we change? How do we live up to the perfect ideals we know we ought to be living, and not be a ‘hypocrite’ (in affirming one thing, and doing another)?

Of course, it is typical in today’s world to talk of change and the need to change continually. This word is haphazardly thrown around all over the place - from our need to change our health, to our economy, to our climate... to the need to make changes in our attitudes, mind-sets and actions.
But what is the reality of the change process?

For although most people like to talk of change, very few actually do it. While most would like to see it in others, very few people are willing, or capable or knowledgeable of how to make changes happen in themselves.

**Actual change is far, far more difficult than most people realize!**

Here are some sobering statistics: 98% of people who make New Year’s resolutions for example - like to exercise, or to give up a vice like smoking, or perhaps learning a new skill and so on - 98% fail on their resolution within a matter of weeks, and most often just a couple of days. Only 2% of people manage to make the change they sought, and keep their word to themselves by the end of the year.

Here’s what’s even more shocking -- even when one’s life depends on making a change, ONLY 1 in 10 is able to do so! Statistics show that 9 in 10 people who have suffered their first heart attack, and are asked by their doctor to change their health habits or risk death – they return to their old unhealthy ways within just a matter of weeks.

Whether changing one’s diet, or taking a walk once a day, or giving up cigarettes - 9 in 10 would rather face death sooner, than actually make a change. St. Paul summarized this process with the following insight:

> I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.
> For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

So what’s going? Why are believers themselves, ‘prisoners of the law of sin’? Why is change so difficult and why do most fail to ‘do good’? What is
The two types of belief systems

Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief
Mark 9:24

The idea of ‘beliefs’ is a primary understanding in all self-help programs, in all of the philosophical teachings of the wise, and of course, in theology. That’s because our belief system, is the foundation of our actions. We do what we do, based on the internal meaning or beliefs we hold to be true - i.e. mind over matter.

This idea of ‘mind over matter’ we hear quite often, but how accurate is it? For while this may sound all nice and good on the surface, there’s one major problem - we notice plenty of people affirming they believe one thing, but act in another way.

We may say we believe in a healthy lifestyle - but in practice, we forego exercise and eat poorly despite what we believe. Or we may say that we believe in charity, in good will towards other human beings, in philanthropy - but then engage little in such activities ... and on and on.

When it comes to one’s belief in God for example, we know plenty of people that ‘don’t practice what they preach’. Even in the same group of people affirming the same articles of faith, often each has a different set of behaviors from one another.

As such, we seem able to be quite separate from what we believe and what we do. So what’s going on? Do our beliefs really run our lives or don’t they?
Well, this leads us to a most important realization…

There are essentially two types of belief systems, (not just one):
One is a mental or intellectual belief system - created and upheld in the conscious mind and that can be argued back and forth, according to logical reasons, references and results we have to support this or that idea.

Belief in God or atheism for example, (which seems to be a popular topic of debate today) is most often at this level. These are the intellectual opinions one has of the world, of the universe, its origin and so forth.

While important, this form of belief system is often of little consequence in the practical affairs of life. The proof is in the fact that you can have ‘believers’ who will argue fervently for God, but in their ordinary life don’t practice what they believe.

Or as Dr. Martin Luther King put it, although they may state otherwise, judging from their actions they are in fact ‘practical atheists’ - i.e. they act as if God isn’t.

Simply put, what one holds ‘intellectually’ to be of value, this does not really guide our actions. Intellectual belief systems - like the ones we learn in schools, universities, churches, via the TV, via books, via the web or through whatever modality we tend to experience new understandings - while they certainly provide new possibilities for action, they do not truly drive our actions.

What does direct our actions, are the belief systems of the heart.

The heart belief systems are the set of beliefs that one holds ‘subconsciously’, as some authors define. They are the implicit, silent and secret forces of our lives.

The actions we bring forth are demonstrations of where our heart is and what we find deeply attractive. Because we love these ideas/values/thoughts with our heart, we put them into practice - despite what we ‘intellectually’ hold to be better intentions.
The heart belief system is what originates our actions on a day-to-day basis. This is why the good book is adamant that we ‘guard our heart’, for out of the heart flow all the issues of our lives.

The rider and the horse

Lord, make me according to thy heart.

Brother Lawrence

In the wisdom of the ages, our mind has been compared to be like a chariot and a charioteer, or as a man riding an a horse - from Plato, to Buddha - to illuminate the reality that we are in fact a composite of at least two inner selves:

- one who rationally and consciously makes choices;
- and another part that drives and moves us along, unconsciously.

Like in the dynamic of riding an animal, we (as in the conscious rational selves), are on top of, and riding a powerful ‘entity’ that seems to have a mind of its own.

This is what St. Paul means in the quote we began with – why he fails to understand his actions, why he does what he hates, why he cannot carry out the desire to do what is good - the ‘other law at work’ in the members of his body.
One of the first to describe this pattern in detail was Socrates, through the words of Plato. He compared the human being to be like that of a charioteer, who is being pulled along by two horses – one black and one white.

**The charioteer is the intellectual self or that part of our conscious self, which guides our soul towards the truth – ‘the conscious awareness’, so to speak.**

The two horses are the two parts of our ‘heart’. The white horse represents our positive passionate nature of who we are – the part which gets righteous in the pursuit of the good. The black horse represents our irrational passions, the one who gets pulled into the ‘dumb choices’ - the part which seeks pleasure at any cost... you know, that lustful and sensual part.

The rider as such, must take control of these horses and guide them onto a ‘heavenly journey’, lest they run off the road, throw the charioteer onto the ground, and drag him along.

In Eastern traditions, this horse metaphor, is described as ‘the inner karmic pattern’ one has, and Buddha compared this to riding an elephant; just the same in psychotherapy, this ‘inner horse part’ is described as ‘the id’; in modern psychology and self-help, this is referred to as ‘the subconscious mind’...

From a religious perspective though, this is known as the heart. And regardless what name we give this hidden inner force, what is important to realize is that like riding a horse - where, when and how we are to get to our intended destination, depends a lot on the desires and wants of this ‘inner animal’ - and how well it’s trained.

Jesus expanded on this prayer principle with the following insight: “whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass - he shall have whatsoever he saith.”

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GREATEST HABIT  Harness the Heart  Principle 2  11
If you seen the movie *True Lies* with actor Arnold Shwarzenegger, in this film there’s a classic scene where he’s chasing a terrorist across the city - where the ‘bad guy’ is riding a motorcycle, and Arnold is following him on top of a police horse.

At the chase climax, which occurs on top of a skyscraper, the bad guy on the motorcycle, out of desperation accelerates his high-powered motorbike through the rooftop barrier and lands on an adjacent building, in a swimming pool. Arnold, wanting to catch him, decides to try the same maneuver, atop his horse.

So he backs up and bids his horse to run full speed - who obliges. But when the horse realizes that the roof top floor ends and that it would be risking its life jumping across buildings, *it immediately halts at the edge* - catapulting Arnold forward over its body and over the building’s edge! Arnold only survives because he was holding on tightly to the horses’ reins.

I’ve posted this short clip from the Internet, if you’d like to see it on the website. And I want you to keep this vision in mind, because this is what happens for most when engaged in different ‘change efforts’.

It’s a good metaphor, for too often we pursue changes as if we are on top of a motorcycle and can just leap across canyons, “because we want to”...

So we say:
- “Yes, this New Years I decided to go to the gym everyday ...”
- “I’m going to quit smoking after this cigarette and won’t do that ever again ...”
- “From now on, I’m going to stop reacting with anger towards my partner and be more empathetic ...”

And on and on and on –and I’m sure you can insert your own personal version of this ‘leap across buildings decision’.

Yet the reality is, we are not a ‘mechanical thing’ that can just be
driven by whims and snap decisions - even if they are noble in their scope.

Unless our ‘inner horse’ - our heart - wants the same thing and believes it can do it, (without doubt), it will ‘throw us over the edge’. If the heart does not love this idea, it will stubbornly refuse to do it.

As such, many people once acquainted with this phenomenon, they simply conclude they just can’t change and that’s that. They become resigned to ‘this is just who I am’ and will use any number of justifications to simply maintain my current behaviors, even if it’s damaging to oneself, and their horse is dragging them onto the ground.

For this purpose, they will use any number of rationalizations - genetics, temperaments, addictive personalities, to ‘I was born this way’. For them, this is reality - i.e. ‘I’m just a realist’ - and I will not try to make my horse do anything it does not want to do... At its extreme end, there are even those who even blame God for having given them ‘such a horse’.

Still, some others continue to believe that they ‘could make the change’, but not yet. Without this understanding of the ‘conflicted self’, they hold on to the dream that `Look, one day I’ll be the person who I want to be... one day... but not now.

For them this ideal is reassuring - i.e. ‘Look, I’m just an idealist’ and someday I will do that. As such, ‘the rider’ holds onto the possibility of change, but allows ‘the horse’ to do the leading anyway. Thus, they indefinitely keep postponing, and they too fall into the trap of not making a change, in the only time frame one has any power – that is, now.
For whether one is on the path of realism or idealism - both these paths lead to the same ‘self-defeating outcome’. The path of the wise is that ‘narrow path’, which bridges these two perspectives and realistically brings about the realization of our ideals:

This is the path of ‘heart cultivation’ through principled prayer.

The living belief system

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.

St. Paul

The principle of heart cultivation was well illustrated by Jesus, when his apostles asked him to help “increase their faith”, so as to be able to work miracles in their environment, like he was able.

His reply may have taken them back a bit, because Jesus didn’t offer them an increase of faith as a gift or a magical transformation done ‘upon them’. Jesus didn’t wave any ‘magical wands’ above their heads and state that they are now to be filled with faith...

Instead, Jesus reminded them that all they need is to “have faith as a grain of a mustard seed, and they then might say unto a sycamine tree - be plucked up by the root, and be planted in the sea - and it should obey them.”

This in turn was a reference to an earlier analogy he made regarding that mustard seed. As he explained, this is ‘the least of all seeds: but when grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof’.

Jesus was illustrating the fundamental principle of sowing and harvesting through prayer - i.e. in taking a living idea/a belief (which is a seed) and then diligently cultivating it in our gardens, until it produces results (that is a fruit).

Prayer works by having the Word of God grow and develop into our heart, until it becomes a living heart belief system that ‘saves us’.
To expand on the metaphor we used so far, by principled prayer we train our ‘inner horse’, (our heart) so that the rider and the beast become one. Prayer is that process of cultivation by which we become united in scope and direction - fully congruent. For we shall have whatsoever we say - when we do not doubt in our heart, but whole-heartedly believe, as Jesus put it.

This is the second key principle for effective prayer - Harnessing the Heart. We are responsible to take control over this ‘inner driving force’. No one comes to Earth with a perfectly trained horse, so to speak. We are responsible to teach it to be receptive to our commands and to adopt the mannerisms of champion thoroughbreds.

And the very best training mechanism for the heart is principled prayer - prayer that continually applies wisdom to cultivate the heart.

For no matter how much intellectually we know that we should or should not do something – it is the heart beliefs that do most of the pulling.

This is especially dire when the heart is attached to old self-destructive habits. When these heart belief systems do not change, better actions are practically impossible to sustain in the long term. For we extend in action according to the nature of our heart - not what we think that we think.

This isn’t to say that our intellectual beliefs systems aren’t important. Far from it. It is the intellect that offers the heart its training. It’s with the wisdom of the intellect that one can learn how to lead the heart.

But unless we move these intellectual ideals into our heart with the practice of prayer, then we are merely ‘dou-
ble-minded' as James, (the brother of Jesus) put it: “one who’s faith wavers like the wave of the sea, driven and tossed in all directions, who shall not receive any thing”.

Or as C. S. Lewis beautifully explained in his book ‘The Abolition of Man’:
No [intellectual] justification of virtue will enable a man to be virtuous.
Without the aid of trained emotions, the intellect is powerless against the animal organism.

I had sooner play cards against a man who was quite skeptical about ethics, but bred to believe that ‘a gentleman does not cheat’, than against an irreproachable moral philosopher who had been brought up among [thieves]. In battle it is not ‘syllogisms’ that will keep the reluctant nerves and muscles to their post in the third hour of the bombardment. The crudest sentimentalism about a flag or a country or a regiment will be of more use.

We were told it all long ago by Plato. As the king governs by his executive, so Reason in man must rule the mere appetites by means of the ‘spirited element’. The head rules the belly through the chest — the seat of [the heart], of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments. The [Heart]-Sentiment — [is] the indispensable liaison officer between [the intellectual man and the physical man].

It may even be said that it is by this ‘middle element’ that man is man:
for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal.
The secret to making profound changes in life then, is to consciously educate the heart - to have our whole self aligned in mind, heart and body with the highest principles.

This is what prayer can do and should do, and why, when it is properly applied, prayer is our greatest habit. Prayer is the means by which we store goodness in our heart.

For we need much more than just ‘passing thoughts’ about goodness to become ‘good’ - but an investment of ‘heart cultivation time’, to nurture and develop this inner garden... from where all the issues of our life emerge.

We must alter our lives in order to alter our hearts, for it is impossible to live one way and pray another.

William Law

The heart of solomon
But before we conclude today’s wisdom section, let’s come back to the story of Solomon, as we have covered in the opening video. Why did his kingdom break apart towards the end of his life? Why did he end up in a state of massive depression and his worldview changed - to one that affirmed that ‘all is vanity’ and that ‘everything is meaningless’? What happened there?

Well, it was said of him that his downfall was due to having his heart moving away from God. What had happened, was that as his wisdom grew, as others began to revere his insights, pride took over and he thought he didn’t need to continue to practice in prayer, the wisdom he ‘already knew’ - i.e. what he wrote in The Book of Proverbs for example.

This began by entertaining many love interests. These interests in turn began to entertain other interests - like various idolatries, superstitions and dead-end intellectual pursuits. Solomon allowed his ‘inner horse’ now to do the leading, and one temptation led to another temptation. And as he ignored the cultivation of the heart towards God - his kingdom and personal life ended up being dragged through the dirt.
Let’s remember then the moral here - that the cultivation of the heart is really like rowing upstream:

\[\text{not to move forward, is really to fall back!}\]

The purpose of prayer is to cultivate the garden of our heart. When we stop cultivating, weeds take over.

A moment of Inspiration

Here is a prayer centered on the heart, by the diplomat, Nobel Peace Prize winner, and second Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld. He is considered one of the greatest statesmen of all time, of whom president John F. Kennedy stated, “I realize now that in comparison to him, I am a small man. He was the greatest statesman of our century.”

Here is his prayer then:

Thou who art over us,  
Thou who art one of us,  
Thou who art—  
Also within us,  
May all see thee—in me also,  
May I prepare the way for thee,  
May I thank thee for all that shall fall to my lot,  
May I also not forget the needs of others,  
Keep me in thy love  
As thou wouldest that all should be kept in mine  
May everything in this my being be directed to thy glory  
And may I never despair.  
For I am under thy hand,  
And in thee is all power and goodness.  
Give me a pure heart — that I may see thee,  
A humble heart — that I may hear thee,
A heart of love — that I may serve thee,
A heart of faith — that I may abide in thee.
To love life and men as God loves them
— for the sake of their infinite possibilities,
to wait like him
to judge like him
without passing judgment,
to obey the order when it is given
and never look back—
then he can use you —
then, perhaps, he will use you.
And if he doesn’t use you
— what matter.
In his hand, every moment has its meaning,
its greatness, its glory,
its peace, its co-inherence.

Dag Hammarskjöld

A moment of Action

Today’s principle, ‘Harness the Heart’, addresses both senses of the word ‘harness’. First, we are to use prayer to take advantage of the secret source by which our good is formed, our heart. We are to realize that prayer most effectively harnesses the hidden power of the heart - the power of our subconscious mind - to direct ourselves upon the real good.
In the second sense, we are to ‘harness our heart’ - as in to put on a harness, a strap, a yoke. In the same way that a harness gives man leverage over the power of an animal, **principled prayer is that harness by which the rational self, gains control over the animal self.**

By principled prayer we practically direct ourselves onto the Will of God - Our Total Good - and live the truths we aspire towards.

**Principled prayer is that ‘harness mechanism’ that gives us the ability to train and maneuver ourselves upon the good we ought to be doing vs. the immediate temptations our lower self would prefer.** Like a harness for a horse, prayer’s real use isn’t realized when it lays on the shelf, nor when it’s put on for mere decoration to make the horse look good - but when earnestly riding, in pursuit of victory.

There is a small parable from the Cherokee tradition that sums up today’s lesson quite well. It states that an old Cherokee chief was teaching his grandson about life. He said:

“A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy, “it is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves:

One is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, self-doubt, and ego.

The other is good - he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.

This same fight is going on inside you - and inside every other person, too.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather,

“Which wolf wins?”

The old chief simply replied,

“The one you feed.”
The old Cherokee beautifully illustrated the timeless battle that goes on within our hearts, and the way to its resolution. *Nourish the highest intentions in the heart and the good will win.*

God does not die on the day when we cease to believe in a personal deity, but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illumined by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason.

*Dag Hammarskjöld*

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In the first principle, we stressed the importance of the right prioritization in our prayer pursuit, and that we are to ask first for wisdom. *So what exactly is wisdom and why is it primary?*

There are a few definitions of what wisdom is, and they usually center on having “knowledge”, especially the *know-how ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting*. Well, that’s part of it, but in a practical sense, *wisdom is much more than that – much more than just ‘intellectual know-how’.*

**Real wisdom is in having this know-how living and breathing in our heart. Real wisdom is all about having this knowledge expressed - to do the right thing, in the right way, at the right time.**

Wisdom is especially relevant in knowing how to treat other people. It’s knowing how to dance that fine line between when to be direct with someone and when to be diplomatic for example... when to be encouraging and when to be critical... *when to be “like a dove” or “like a serpent”, as Jesus put it.*

I mean, *have you noticed how some people are able to say the right thing, at the right time, in the right manner and to effectively engage others - as to bring the best out of them?* That’s the essence of a wise person.

**Wisdom is about having this kind of constructive judgment about the right means, as to realize the right end – in our day-to-**
day choices and actions. It’s not merely “intellectual knowledge”. For how many of us know what we should do, but fail to do what we know? Or how many of us don’t know highly educated and knowledgeable people, whose life is actually a great mess - and the opposite - simple people, who have their life together?

For wisdom comes about not just through intellectual knowing, but in having this knowledge live within the heart – so you spontaneously and instinctively do the right things, in the right way, at the right time.

For example, you can read all of the great coaching books on swimming, and write a whole thesis on the practice. But unless you’ve stepped into the water and you have this knowledge in your heart and body - if you’re thrown into the deep end of a swimming pool, you’ll most likely drown. The essence of a principled prayer then, aims for wisdom in this practical, actual sense. In philosophy and in theology, this is referred to as prudence.

Principled prayer aims to bring about direct contact with the divine knowledge that affects our daily life - so that we continually act righteously. Prayer takes the great wisdom tradition, and ENSOULS it. Prayer makes this knowledge a living part of us.

Prayer is the greatest habit, precisely because it can do that - unlike any other educational method. No other habit in our life can bring about authentic wisdom, or prudence but prayer, because it is only in prayer that we learn
The spiritual wisdom of the wise is useless without prayer, because only prayer puts this wisdom into our heart - and only through our heart can wisdom become a continual part of our actions.

This is the core definition of a ‘principled prayer’ then, and only in this sense, is it the greatest habit.

And so we return once again, with heightened awareness, to the statement made by Jesus, with which we began: “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings all evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

Your heart cultivation habits

Today’s exercise is to ask yourself the following questions in your journal:

PART 1 - a: What habits or practices do you have in place, to ‘train your inner horse/ to feed the good wolf/ to store good in your heart’? (as today’s Cherokee metaphor emphasized)

Write out what do you consciously and proactively do in your day-to-day activities, to cultivate the heart with goodness. Just make a short list of the activities you believe feed the heart for heaven. (i.e. prayer, reading spiritual literature, going to church, watching spiritually uplifting shows or films... and so on)

b: How would you qualify and quantify these activities?

Having identified your best heart cultivation activities, begin to describe them in more detail, and to evaluate them. In other words,

• Quantify: how much time do you dedicate to these activities? What proportion of the week do these take?

• Qualify: of what quality is the food/ the training that you’re giving your heart?
In what spirit do you perform these tasks? What’s your attitude like?
0 And last, consider- is it enough/ good enough to ensure the ‘good wolf’ wins?

c: What could you do to improve your capacity to store good in your heart?
Consider what are some ways that you can increase the amount of good that you store in your heart? Consider this question from the perspectives of quantity and quality:
• Is there a way to add more time to an existing activity? to add some new activities?
• Is there a way to maximize those existing activities? to improve them?
So, bring to light your best ideas for how you can improve your heart cultivation process.

PART 2 - Next, consider the opposite:

a: What habits or practices do you have that sabotage ‘the training you’re giving your inner horse/ feeding the bad wolf/ storing evil in your heart’?

Write out what could be some activities that may confuse the training of your heart - so it becomes less receptive to your commands? What habits do you have that give energy to your ‘evil side’, so to speak? Think carefully about this…

b: What effects do these activities have upon your life?

Having learned from the final phase of Solomon’s life, make an objective assessment of what do you believe these habits or practices are costing you - both in the short term and long term:

• Quantify: How much time are you giving these ‘vices’? How do these compare to the good habits above? What could you have done meanwhile?
• Qualify: What spirit are you nurturing in the process? What specific qualities? How do these affect your highest aspirations?
c: What could you do to eliminate the activities that store evil in the heart?

Last, consider what are some ways to eliminate the vices that energize the lower self.

After all, just imagine if you had a million dollar thoroughbred horse... Would you really feed it junk and scrap food? Would you really let it do whatever it pleases - to wonder here and fro as it felt like?

Or would you give it the optimal nutrition to realize its peak performance, its health and vitality? Would you give it a set training pathway to ensure it’s getting stronger, faster, better?

Now if you would not do that for a thoroughbred horse, how much more important is it that you not do the same? For we are worth so much more than a horse!

This is the exercise for today’s lesson. Please complete it and build on a rock foundation. It may seem long, but it should only take 15 to 10 minutes to finish - depending on the levels of details you want to explore. (It’s worthwhile to spend more than this though - but don’t underestimate the power that just one quarter of an hour can have.)

Also, do it in your journal. Don’t just casually answer these questions in your mind - put them on paper. There’s much greater power of concentration and self-awareness available in the act of writing. You’re bringing much more of yourself into the process: the mind and the body.

The daily pray up

Based upon the insights gained in today’s exercise, write out a short prayer. In it ask that you would receive more wisdom on how to educate the heart, on how to store more good in it, on how to renew it according to God’s program.

Make the connection that the realization of your petition that we have started with, depends precisely
on the good you have stored in your heart. Ask then that you be wise enough to cultivate whatever you need - to regularly deposit that which is necessary to bring about a good harvest.

Give your heart to God that He may guide you in the process.

Once you finished writing it, pray this out loud. Affirm its message with hope - i.e. believe that God is faithful and that He will reveal to you what you need. Stand confident upon this belief and let it permeate your heart.

Tomorrow continue with this prayer first thing in the morning. Bring to mind any insights you’ve gained today.

God bless and we’ll meet again in the next lesson.