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A Wise and Prudent Friend

by John C. Kimbrough

A wise and prudent friend is something that we could all use, and many of us need.

But sometimes, we want instead, a friend who will agree with us, our biases and prejudices, or that we can control, or who enjoys and indulges in the same things that we want to enjoy and indulge in.

Sometimes it takes a bit more mindfulness to see what the quality of the friendship is, and how it is manifesting itself.

We would hope that our greatest friend would be our partner, the one we are building or maintaining a relationship with or are married to.

Unfortunately, on an almost daily basis, I meet many who have found that the greatest impingement to peace in their own life is the individual that they are married to, or have an intimate and ongoing relationship with.

Relationships are difficult and complex, and many times we have got together with someone based on our own need for emotional or physical intimacy, which seems quite natural.

It does not mean through that we are emotionally mature and know ourselves well enough to understand the commitment of a marriage or relationship, or be able to understand and handle the ups and downs of it.

How about our children or our parents?

Again what is hoped for or the ideal is not always realized.

Some people come to some sort of realization or awakening, incorrectly or correctly, that their parents, regardless of their best intentions, are partly the cause for their own confusions and burdens.

As to whether this is accurate or unfair is always difficult for one to sort out.

Our parents, and ourselves react to various feelings and emotions, and conditioning, in our striving for happiness.

Our challenges here and now may have been theirs, 10, 20 or 30 years ago.

Generations are not so different from one another.

The causes for both sorrow and happiness are universal, transcending age, gender, ethnic background and nationality.

Then, how about the children?

They can be difficult to communicate with as they have their own issues and needs to try to understand clearly and deal with.

Perhaps the bottom line is that all of us have a difficult time comprehending things in a clear manner so we are apt to get confused or have mood swings.

Our habits and behaviors may be making things worse.

Are we doing or saying something that is burdening our children?

Or are we fortunate and wise, and have a good and sharing relationship with them?

Maybe the wise and prudent friend that we want, or need is not outside of us at all?

Maybe it is inside of us, and we just have to access it, and cultivate the characteristics that it has.

Maybe when we drink and do drugs, we make the body and soul sluggish so we can not access it.

Maybe when we talk, instead of listen, we drown out it's voice and the wisdom that it can share with us.

Maybe we do not know how to access it and learn from it.

Have we been ridiculed so much that we can no longer trust ourselves?

Are we too anxious to see the light within?

A good way to start on the path to accessing this friend, or light, is to be still, and silent, and watch. Watch what comes up. Look at it from some criteria. Is it joyful? Is it angry? Is it peaceful? Is it anxious? Is it based on resentment? Envy? Jealousy? Maybe it is based on seeing something in us that is suffering and then, yes, others may suffer the same way.

What can that teach us? Or give us?

Compassion? Understanding?

How about my body?

How should I sit, or stand, when I am being still and silent?

Don't make it so difficult.

Just lay on your back, so there is no bodily distraction, no pain or discomfort to take your attention away.

In the system and practice of Hatha Yoga, this posture is known as Savasana. We can refer to it in English as being in the corpse posture, or the relaxation posture.

What else should one do in order to access this wise and prudent friend?

Learn from someone whose mind and thoughts have not been conditioned in negative or abusive ways.

Where can you find such a person?

Difficult to find, but.....

We can find their teachings and wisdom in scriptures.

The Dhammapada, a widely respected and well-known scripture in the Buddhist tradition is a good place to learn from.

The Book of Proverbs, or any of the wisdom books of the Old Testament are excellent resources for helping us cast a new look at the friend inside.

The Bhagavad Gita, considered to be the authoritative text on Yoga is a wonderful guide.

Do we really get insightful and wise feedback from television and the news and the anger and conflict that is there?

What about a movie, with drama, deceit and good guys and bad guys who are easy to spot, feel attachment and/or aversion to?

Take some time to look at what wise and prudent individuals in the past have shared with us to learn from now, in the present, as we search for a more skillful approach to life and living.

It is free, it is insightful, it is useful.

Just like the wise and prudent friend within.

“If for company you find a wise and prudent friend, one who leads a good life, you should overcome all impediments and keep this person’s company, joyously and mindfully” – Dhammapada 23:9

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